No. 1, Vol. 36 TWICE-A-MONTH 15 CENTS

The Popular Magazine

PUBLISHED MAR. 23, 1915

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VOLUME XXXVI NUMBER 1

TWICE-A-MONTH

The Popular Magazine

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MARCH 23, 1915

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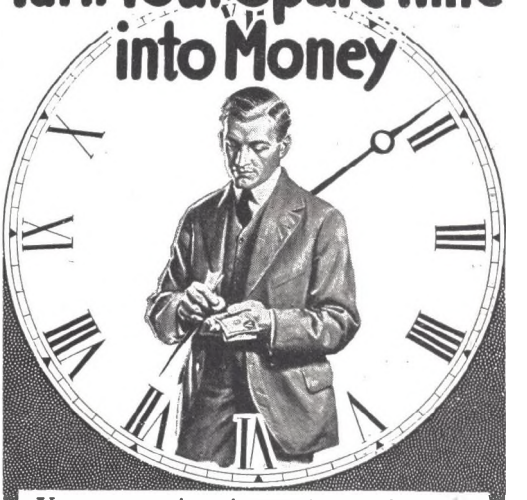

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THE POPULAR MAGAZINE

VOL. XXXVI. MARCH 23, 1915. No. 1.

When Thieves Fall Out

By W. E. Scutt

Author of "Kings of the Mighty," Etc.

Leading a double life is a job that is full of peril. How one man essayed it—an American in Paris—is told by Mr. Scutt in this novel which has for its main theme a concession in South America, a piece of crooked work there, and the journey of the avenger to France on the trail of the crook. A story of surprises.

(A Book-length Novel)

CHAPTER I.

INTO THE LIFEBOAT.

SPECULATION had almost ceased concerning the strange young man who had sat, sphinxlike and alone, for eight nights running, in the little alcove just inside the door of the Souris Rouge. Already the berouged women of the place looked upon him as a fixture of the room, like the orchestra leader, or the maitre d'hôtel, or one of the gaudy pillars. It was plain that he did not come there for amusement, after the manner of the rest of the gilded fools. For each and every one of them had, upon occasion, dropped into the chair opposite him at the little marble table, had tried to interest him, to amuse him, to break down his reserve; and all the reward they got for their trouble was a civil word, a glass of wine and no more, and a civil adieu. No one approached him now except, rarely, a girl who had not been in the place since he began coming there.

"He speaks French with an American accent," Adele Lafitte confided to the latest of the rebuffed, "and he looks American, too; but Mercedes says he speaks Spanish almost perfectly, with a trace of South American accent; so you must take your choice. But figure to yourself: the first night he came here he had on a suit of brown tweeds, and he'd got a seat and ordered a consommation before Louis saw him; and what do you suppose he'd ordered?"

"Water iced—milk—lemonade—how should I know?" replied the other, still piqued by her cool reception at the hands of the enigma.

"Beer!" cried Adele, with a peal of mocking laughter. And then, quieting her mirth, she went on: "Louis, of

course, had him put out then. Some one must have told him the custom of the place, for he was back in half an hour with a dress suit on, and has ordered his two bottles of champagne now for eight nights, and hardly drinks a glassful of it for himself."

"But what does he do here?" demanded the piqued one crossly.

Adele shrugged. "Who knows? Louis says he's an American, looking for his sister, who's doing the cocotte. I wonder!"

"Ciel! But I'd hate to be the man he finds her with," gasped the other, with a little shudder, and a sidelong glance at Ferguson. "Come; let's dance! He gives me the shivers, that mysterious one!" And the two whirled away to the music.

Thus Ferguson awaited Luke Leonard.

There was really nothing about Ferguson to frighten Adele's companion and give her the shivers. He was merely a lean, flat sort of man, whose eye was clear and gray and level, whose rugged, clean-cut face was burned brown with the sun and storm of South America, from Rio north to Vera Cruz. It was more reasonable, on the contrary, for Ferguson to be ill at ease. A man who had staked his life a dozen times, driving a gang of Venezuelan half-castes at the pistol point, merely to finish the construction of his section of the railroad before the neighboring section was done, can hardly be expected to find much pleasure in sitting for eight nights running from midnight to dawn, bolstered up in a dress suit, with nothing to interest him but such hectic sights and sounds as were constantly before him.

The orchestra, for example, droned and thrummed and blared without cessation; and corks popped, and silver clinked against china, and lovers cooed and quarreled with no regard for their neighbors; and in the cleared space in the middle of the floor a Martinique negress flung herself in a native dance, and a Spanish couple danced, and the spangled, painted women of the place danced, with each other or with the half-drunken wastrels from the four corners of the earth; while from the tables ranged against the walls came cries for "garçon," maudlin talk, and boisterous handclapping, and now and then the sounds of crashing crockery; and all this in a tiny room twenty by thirty, lit brilliantly by garish red lights, hung heavily with garish red plush, filled to suffocation with the fumes of tobacco and spilt wine.

The little room was none other than the Souris Rouge—the Red Mouse—of all the Montmartre cafés the most luxurious, the least known to the ruck of the tourists, the wickedest; and, being the wickedest, the most cosmopolitan. From mutual acquaintances in Colón, Ferguson had heard that if Luke Leonard was in Paris at all, and had a cent, he was to be seen two nights weekly, at least, in the Souris Rouge. That was the only clew he had. And already he had spent eight nights there, and not a sign of Leonard had rewarded him. Perhaps, Ferguson thought—just possibly—Leonard had been warned, and had got safe away again. That was like Leonard. Ferguson's lips drew into a grim, straight line as he pondered this possibility; for Leonard had always managed to escape.

The law—the law of a certain South American state—had cleared Leonard, and said he was innocent; and Leonard had got out of the country before any one could administer white men's law. So Fortner, Ferguson's partner in Bolivia, who would be bedridden for the rest of his days, made Ferguson promise to fix Leonard. "An eye for an eye, Dan, and a tooth for a tooth," Fortner had whispered, as Ferguson bent low over his bed in the hospital in La Paz. "Fix the snake for me,

Dan. I'd do it myself, if I could, but look at me!" And Fortner had made a pathetic sort of gesture that included the whole of the ward where he was.

So the quarrel was really Fortner's, but Fortner could not attend to it. Moreover, the victim of Luke Leonard's perfidy had been Fortner's wife, who had pulled Ferguson through the fever when a native nurse could not be hired for her weight in gold. Therefore, Ferguson promised readily enough, and a second time, to find Leonard if his money held out, and give the little sneak what he deserved, whatever the consequences.

This accounts for Ferguson's eight suffocating, impossible nights at the Souris Rouge, at the end of which he was no nearer to Leonard than he had been, for all he knew, when he took ship at Colón. Perhaps——

"'S your name Ferguson?" It was a tall, powerfully built, flashily dressed negro who had stopped in front of Ferguson's table and addressed him thus abruptly. He had a particularly brutal face, the general effect of which was heightened by a split lip, a much-battered nose, and a swollen left ear. He spoke an accent that smacked of Fifth Avenue—and One Hundred and Thirty-fifth Street.

Ferguson looked him over. "That's my name," he said.

"Gen'l'man sent you this here note."

A little Italian waiter with a twisted coral charm came running up with an extra glass. He placed a chair for the negro, and reached for the champagne in the cooler beside Ferguson. Ferguson seized him by the arm. "What are you going to do with that?" he asked.

"Pour a glass for monsieur's friend," the waiter informed him.

"Not out of that bottle, nor at this table," said Ferguson, in tones that were not to be disobeyed.

The waiter retired in surprise, and the negro, who was on the point of sitting down, glowered at Ferguson like a thundercloud.

Ferguson ripped open the note:

DEAR FERGUSON: I know what you're here for, but you hain't got a chance in the world to put anything over on me, because I've got more friends here than what you have.

But, anyhow, there hain't ever any chance of our being friends any more, so we might just as well settle our partnership in the Coralles concession, because we can't ever do business as partners. I want to clean out in South America, anyhow.

Now, I'm going to be square with you. I've got a chance to sell that bit of land for forty thousand dollars. I'll give you your half share, and let you see all the business done, so you'll see I'm not trying any phony game. At that price it's a good sell.

Of course, we've got to get together and talk it over, you and me and the man I want to sell out to. Now, I want your promise to talk this over without trying any funny work. You ought to be willing to declare a truce for a couple of hours for the sake of twenty thousand dollars you never expected to see. All I want is your word not to start anything with me while we're discussing the proposition.

Tell Phil, the nigger, whether you'll meet me or not under the conditions named at the American Express office to-morrow at two p. m. Yours, LUKE LEONARD.

Ferguson folded the note slowly and put it back into the envelope. Twenty-thousand dollars was five times what the property was worth, and precisely twenty thousand dollars more than he ever expected to get out of it. It represented two years' work as it lay, the only compensation he had ever received for overseeing the construction work on the Buenaventura harbor.

In the old days, before he knew Luke Leonard for what he really was, they had gone in together on the work. Leonard had influence with the government, and had procured for Ferguson a promise of ten thousand dollars in gold and the Coralles concession for his services, Leonard to receive half for his lobbying at Bogotá and helping Ferguson out with the supply of laborers. The ten thousand in gold was still prom-

ised—though the interest was paid with fair regularity—but Leonard and Ferguson immediately got full title to the Coralles concession, a hundred square miles in the Guajira Peninsula, called by charity a grazing concession, but worthless for that purpose because, although it stretched down to the seacoast and touched an admirable natural harbor, an impregnable wall of mountains cut the pasturage off from all facilities of transportation; moreover, the government had reserved to its own use any precious stones or metals that might be found thereon.

Ferguson's pulses quickened. It was like finding twenty thousand dollars. Leonard, of course, had found a sucker —that is, if Leonard were telling the truth—but that was the sucker's business. If a sane and mature man cared to pay twenty thousand dollars for that piece of land, well and good; caveat emptor, as the old law books put it—let him look out for himself.

But that affair of a truce! If he should grant the truce, and Leonard should get away after it, how could he meet Fortner? What could he tell Fortner? He had promised that he would call Leonard to account as soon as he saw him. No, a truce was manifestly out of the question. If Luke Leonard really wanted to sell the parcel, undivided, he could find some way to do it without making Ferguson first declare a truce. Leonard was shrewd, and was not likely to lose this chance of pocketing twenty thousand, even if Ferguson was unwilling to come to his terms.

Finally Ferguson gave the note back to the negro. "Tell Leonard," he said, "that I'm perfectly willing to meet him at the American Express office, or any other place he likes, but a truce is out of the question. If he comes, let him look out for himself—get that? There won't be any truce. Now, run along and tell him."

The negro hesitated a moment, stared at Ferguson maliciously, and left the room without a word. Thirty seconds later he stuck his head back through the door again, probably to see if Ferguson attempted to follow him to Luke Leonard's lair. But Ferguson had foreseen this stratagem, and had provided against it; therefore, the negro saw him sitting, immobile, and went away satisfied.

The door had barely closed upon him a second time, when Ferguson heard himself addressed again: "Excuse me, sport, but you're an American, aren't you?"

Ferguson looked up, to find that a genial, fat-faced American, whom he had noticed before sitting against the opposite wall, had run the gantlet of the dancers, and stood before him, beaming down. His very appearance disarmed suspicion, and Ferguson was lonely. "Yes," he replied cordially, sliding along the plush seat to make room. "Sit down and have something, won't you?"

"Don't mind if I do." The stranger squeezed in between the two marble-topped tables, and sat down heavily. "My name's Curley, advertisin' man from Syracuse."

"Ferguson's mine. Civil engineer by profession, but a little bit of everything by practice. Brought up in Detroit, but I've been mostly in South America since I left Tech." Ferguson beckoned for an extra glass, and filled it.

"I won't stay but a minute," Curley put in, as he watched the process, "but what's the use o' wastin' the minute? That'll do; thanks. 'S this your first time here?"

A trifle surprised at the bluntness of the question, Ferguson looked Curley over. Coming from most men he knew, this question would have bordered upon the presumptuous. But coming from Curley, it was somehow different; Cur-

ley was one of those amiable, affable men whom one neither has, nor wants, to put in his place.

"No, fourth," returned Ferguson laconically. "Here's how!"

Curley drank the toast, and set his glass down thoughtfully. "Well, then, maybe you're all right," he said. "Don't think I'm buttin' in, but the reason I came over's because I didn't know whether you knew the ropes or not. Americans are forever gettin' it handed to 'em in a joint like this, and, honest, I hate to see it; I'd rather see 'em bit by a good old York State rattlesnake. Say, Ferguson, did you know that big smoke you was chinnin' with just now?"

"No; never saw him before. He only brought me a note from a man I know."

"I don't want to butt in," Curley repeated, "but I'm goin' to take a chance on tippin' you off about him before anything happens. You want to look out for him; he's phony; he's a bad one to mix up with. He come over with Joe Jeanette, sort of a hanger-on around the trainin' camp. Joe used him now and then as a sparrin' partner, and he got a few work-outs in prelims around here. Then Joe found out that he was crooked and was givin' out dope he had no right to, and Joe fired him. Since then he's been livin' on his wits and fleecin' Americans. When I seen him go out just now, I'd 'a' laid a ten-spot to a tin whistle that he was fixin' to put one over on you; the look on his face would 'a' soured molasses."

Ferguson laughed. "Much obliged for the tip. He hasn't got anything against me, unless he's sore because I refused to give him a drink."

"Did you do that?" Curley asked solicitously.

"Yes."

"Then maybe that accounts for it," Curley concluded. "You couldn't have insulted him worse. Over here, these coon fighters are regular heroes; a Frenchy would rather buy wine for 'em than for the president. Naturally, they get awful cocky about it, and expect that every one's goin' to do the same thing. And when an American snubs 'em in public, like you did, right before all these sports, here, it sort o' puts a kink in their pedestal. Take it from me, Ferguson, you want to look out for that big smoke—'Fightin' Phil Ferris' he calls himself—that is, if you're goin' to stick around Paris for long."

"Thanks," Ferguson returned. "I'll watch out, all right, though I don't expect to be here long now. I might even get my business finished by morning, and, if I do, I'll take the first train out."

"Here on business, eh?" concluded Curley ruminatively.

"Yes."

"I gather it was capital you're after?" hazarded Curley.

"Why should you jump at that conclusion?" laughed Ferguson.

"A construction engineer from South America hain't got any other possible business in Europe, 's far as my experience goes. You're one of a class, Ferguson, though I admit it's a pretty small class. Am I right?"

"Yes, you're right enough," admitted Ferguson. "At least, that was the primary reason for my coming here."

"Any luck?"

"Not a cent's worth. I couldn't pry a dime lose."

"I know. There's a considerable uneasiness in the market here just now—some sort of political trouble brewin', I calculate, though I'm not much up on that sort o' dope. Why did you come here, anyhow? Why didn't you go straight to New York? Things is easier there just now than they are here."

"Well, I'll tell you," Ferguson confided, after a searching glance at Cur-

ley, "what I wanted to get capital for is to develop a tin mine down in Bolivia. American capitalists aren't much up on that country, nor on tin, either. If it had been a gold mine, I probably would have gone straight to New York. And, besides that, the French financial market knows the district I'm located in. In fact, the biggest mine in the vicinity, and the concentrating plant that takes care of my own ore, is owned by French capital. That's why I figured I'd have a better chance in Paris than anywhere else. But I might as well have gone to Timbuktu."

"Got a good proposition?"

"Safe enough—at least, from my point of view," replied Ferguson. "But I can't make any one here see it."

"Take my tip and go to New York with it. They're opening up a lot on the South American stuff since you left the States. It's a waste o' time to fish any more here."

"I realized that a week ago. I'd have been out of here by now, only I wanted to wait over to find a man I know on another proposition. I reckon I've found him now."

Curley looked Ferguson over shrewdly, but made no reply. After a space, he drained his glass and set it down with a little thump. "Well, so long, sport! Hope you don't think I'm buttin' in when I put you wise to Fightin' Phil. He's a——"

But the rest of Curley's apology was cut short by a crash of broken dishes and an unwonted commotion from the far corner of the little room. Curley and Ferguson rose mechanically with the rest of the occupants of the room and craned their necks to see what was up.

"There goes Our Leadin' Citizen, clean shot to pieces," said Curley.

In the midst of a constantly growing circle of waiters and revelers who had rushed to the spot, Ferguson managed to see a little, bald-headed man of sixty who, having taken aboard more cargo than he could navigate with, had simply given up trying, and was stretched out, limp, half on the table and half on the plush seat.

"Do you know him?" asked Ferguson, turning to Curley.

"No, not personally," Curley returned. "But I spotted him the minute he come in, with one of them touting street-corner guides that offer to show you the sights for two dollars, and make you come across with twenty before you've seen half what South Salina Street has got to offer."

"What is he?" inquired Ferguson, watching disinterestedly the efforts of the waiters to arouse the little man.

"Superintendent of the Sunday school, chairman of the Civic Improvement League, vice president of the Savin's Bank, and all-around self-boosted and leadin' citizen of some one-horse flag station in the Middle West, over here on his first trip for business and lookin' the burg over, like they all do."

Ferguson was lightly amused at Curley's obviously wide range of experience. "How do you make that out?" he laughed.

"Look him over yourself," Curley suggested. "See his mutton-chop whiskers and his gold-bowed specs and the dimple where his chin ought to be. He's leaned over a bookkeeper's desk so long that he never did get the kink out of his shoulders and the hollow out of his thirty-inch chest. Why, Ferguson, he's hall-marked so plain, with his bargain pepper-and-salt suit, and his made-up bow tie, and a boiled shirt and white choker that his wife done up for him before he left, for him to go to church in over here, that you can't miss guessin' what he is. Say, there's goin' to be trouble here before long. That guide has been throwin' the booze into him like he was a forty-quart milk can with a hole in the bottom; and if I've

got the dope right, the guide's just fixin' to lead him away and frisk him of everything he's got, return ticket and self-respect included. Oh, Ferguson, the way these fool brothers of ours are forever gettin' it handed to 'em in a joint like this——"

Ferguson interrupted Curley's lament. It was time, for the guide and a burly, uniformed commissionaire had picked the little man up, and were carrying him toward the door. "You're right there, Curley," he said. "What do you say to our taking a hand in their little game? I couldn't sleep tonight if I let that poor, meek little fool go to his slaughter like he's doing now."

Curley held back a moment. "Neither could I, Ferguson. But there's pretty sure to be a scrap over it, and a scrap in this corner of the town, with one of them apache guides and the rest of his gang, has carved up many a good-intentioned soul like you and me. I can handle my fists all right, but when they start to flashing knives—and, besides that, I can't parley-voo enough to buy a drink of water. Of course, the waiter always bring me the other stuff as soon as they see me comin', so I don't have to go thirsty, but in a mix-up like this, it's apt to be handy to be able to explain ourselves."

"I'll tend to that part of it," said Ferguson, sidling between the two tables out to the open floor, his eye searching the boisterous crowd for an opening. "You don't have to mix in, Curley; just hang around and see that I get decently fair play. I'm going after that little man as soon as I see a chance."

"I'm too scared to stay here alone, sport," confessed Curley whimsically, "so I might just as well stick to you. Lead on, Macduff, and cursed be——"

But Ferguson darted forward suddenly, and there was no more Shakespeare heard in the Souris Rouge that night.

CHAPTER II.

THE HONOR OF A GENTLEMAN.

Charles Augustus Sanborn was a man with a grudge and without a country, the former being the direct effect of the latter. Charles Augustus' career began in the late nineties, at Sheepshead Bay, when, as a budding bookmaker, known to the sporting fraternity as Cheerful Charlie, five favorites won in one day. Their backers on Charlie's books are still looking for him. Six months later a pool room in Chicago was raided by the police, but the proprietor, one Harold Burnside, alias Sanborn, managed to escape. Sanborn had to draw heavily upon his foreign bank accounts to start his next little affair, but it was in the days of feverish stock markets, and the bucket shop prospered until Sanborn opened a mail-order branch. The post-office inspectors came in the door as one-hundred-per-cent Sanborn went down the fire escape.

Arrived in Paris, an expatriate, but safe from the Federal laws, Sanborn's luck deserted him, and within a year he had lost three-fourths of his two hundred thousand in a simple little law-protected gambling house. There he stopped short, prudently reserving the balance as a life preserver, and supplemented his income fairly extensively at the expense of his less discreet fellow countrymen, tourists invariably, who found him a good fellow until the morning after. Sanborn had a conscience; he never victimized an Englishman or a German or a Frenchman unless pickings were poor. But in robbing Americans, he found a delight that transcended mere pleasure at financial gain. For he hated Americans because he hated America; and he hated America because of her foolish laws, and be-

cause he had left his luck there, and dared not go back to find it.

Mr. C. A. Sanborn was a born society man; given a few millions as a birthright, he would have run Beau Brummel a close race. He was courtly and adaptable by instinct, read extensively, and picked up a good line of small talk, assimilated the etiquette book at one reading, and supplemented it in many little ways that stamped him—outwardly—as a born gentleman. And since his parentage was unknown even to himself—his earliest memories were of an orphan asylum, which he left surreptitiously to ally himself with a racing stable at the county fair—it was a matter of no great difficulty to nurse a family tree of his own making. He discarded loud clothes and screaming cravats when he entered the realm of Wall Street, and when he arrived in Paris his social position would have been rated, at the very least, as a secretary of embassy. He looked the part, lived the part, and acted the part—publicly. He was a handsome figure of a man—tall, stately, impressive, with a tiny silken beard of iron-gray trimmed carefully to a point, a mustache of similar appearance, upon which his valet spent half an hour every morning, and dreamy brown eyes the depths of which no one had ever plumbed.

He kept a modest little coupé car, whose chauffeur was at the same time his valet. He had a modest but sumptuous little apartment in the Boulevard Haussman, at which he entertained a select group of impeccable, if slightly bohemian, Parisians—a title or two of real consequence and many minor ones, followers of the latest fads in art and literature, attachés from one or two of the minor ministries in Paris, and once, but not twice, an unsophisticated undersecretary from the American embassy. His daughter Alicia made a charming hostess on these occasions; and it was solely on her account that he forced himself thus modestly into society, eminently maintained that position, and kept his name untarnished.

Which brings to light Sanborn's one redeeming quality: he loved his daughter with a love that amounted to worship. His whole life, his every endeavor, was directed toward giving her every advantage in the world, all that she wished and more, too. And he got his reward in knowing that his love was returned measure for measure. She asked no questions concerning the source of his income, for the simple reason that she entertained no suspicions of its honesty; and her respect for him as a dignified, well-bred, honorable gentleman was worth almost as much to him as her love.

Sanborn's gravest fear was that his daughter would at some time find out the truth, and he would have cut his tongue out—or his heart—to avoid that. He had to plunder to maintain for her the position he had made. But the plots by which his income was increased were hatched and carried out as far as possible from the little apartment in the Boulevard Haussman. Sanborn, of the select clique that met there, was one man; Sanborn, of the predatory instincts directed against all Americans, whose stamping ground was the night cafés of Paris and a luxurious, wine-stocked apartment in the Rue Jacques, upon which he paid an exorbitant license fee, was quite another. So Alicia still loved her father, and, what was necessary for a girl of her character, still respected him.

But now Sanborn's fear seemed in grave danger of being realized; not by any treachery, nor yet by any indiscretion, but by a most natural order of events that even Sanborn had not foreseen. He had given his friends and associates to understand—in a tactful way—that he lived solely upon the income from his American investments; he lived obviously at the rate of twenty-

five or thirty thousand a year; therefore, those who gave the matter any thought at all arrived at the logical conclusion that Sanborn's fortune lacked but little of being a million—modest enough, as American fortunes go, but still a tidy sum. Whereas, Sanborn's capital was a meager fifty thousand.

Paul, Marquis de Peret, had the good taste to fall in love with Alicia Sanborn. Sanborn approved of the marquis, who appeared to be a decent young fellow, of good character and ancient stock, democratic to the point of preferring to drop his title and being generally known as Paul Peret; a man with industry enough to take a post of responsibility in the foreign office, and blaze for himself a path that some day would be a career. Sanborn accepted gratefully this bestowal of his daughter's affection—Alicia never referred to it as love; for it was the realization of his ambition: a titled husband for his daughter, and at the same time a man whose name must be known honorably.

Came the question of the dowry—a custom of the French people that amounts to a law, one that Sanborn could not avoid without breaking off the match. And Sanborn, possessed of barely fifty thousand, was expected to endow his daughter as a millionaire would do. It seemed an insurmountable barrier to Alicia's happiness, a grim dilemma which must plunge him into misery whichever way he turned, the culmination of a lifetime of hard luck.

Fortune was indeed threatening; but "when Fortune means to men most good, she looks upon them with a threatening eye." And, having sunk Sanborn in the depths of despair, the fickle goddess showed him the path out of the slough. A windfall came, an unexpected and an abundant one, in the shape of an impossible little person who had found the climate of South America too hot and deadly.

Toward midnight of the night that marked the rescue of Our Leading Citizen from the touts of the Souris Rouge, Sanborn, who had passed a quiet evening at home and read until late, very quietly covered his immaculate evening dress with a light overcoat, procured hat and stick, and was about to set off for his secret apartment in the Rue St. Jacques, to keep his appointment with Luke Leonard. Pierre, his Swiss chauffeur-valet and trusted lieutenant, was already there, to superintend the preparation of a select little supper. Sanborn's stealth was in vain; Alicia, who he had thought asleep in bed, intercepted him in the hall.

"I thought, papa," she said, "that you were going to finish 'Le Misanthrope' and go straight to bed."

Sanborn, whose hand was already upon the doorknob, drew off his silk hat and turned round. He was a trifle surprised at the interruption, though not at all annoyed. "I closed the book only this minute, delicious," he told her, addressing her by the pet name he invariably used. "And I'm going to bed very shortly, though I want a stroll and a breath of fresh air first." He spoke casually, with infinite innocence in his deep brown eyes. "Good night, dear; you shouldn't wait up for me," he continued, seeing that she was dissatisfied with something; for she stood, silent and irresolute, a little apart from him, staring oddly at him with a shadow of trouble in her merry blue eyes. "Did you want anything?" he asked her finally, taking a step or two toward her.

"I did want to speak with you about something, papa; but it will do as well when you come back. I'll wait for you in the library; you won't be gone long, will you?"

Sanborn began to be annoyed. He had ordered supper for one o'clock

punctually; if it were not served at that precise time, it would be ruined gastronomically. And, although he doubted whether Luke Leonard could appreciate the difference between a successful and a defective repast, as long as the little rascal had the wherewith to fill himself, the spirit of the occasion would be broken; for Sanborn knew that he was at his best only when his surroundings were perfect. But it was the lesser of two evils to get the interview over with as soon as possible, for Alicia was a resolute little body, and would sit up until he returned, even till dawn.

Curious as to her extraordinary request, he scrutinized her keenly, and his annoyance passed at once; for he fell, as always, a victim to the charm of her presence. The sight of her bewitched him into forgetting everything but that she was good to look upon. She had thrown about her a shimmery sort of pale-rose dressing gown, slightly open at the throat, that emphasized the firm lines of a graceful figure. Tiny silken mules, with generous and fluffy pompons of old gold, peeped from underneath it. Her face was flushed, her full, mobile lips slightly parted to disclose even, white teeth. And, standing as she did directly in the soft rays of the electric light that filtered through a globe of ground glass stained a pale rose—an arrangement that Sanborn had contrived for this particular effect—her wealth of blond hair seemed of red gold spun fine.

"I may walk rather far," said Sanborn evenly; "perhaps a little way into the Bois. I am restless to-night, delicious. I wouldn't ask you to wait up; let's discuss it now. What's troubling your pretty head?" Sanborn had put hat and stick upon the massive Brittany chest that stood by the door, and had drawn off his light topcoat. Now he put his arm gently about Alicia's waist, touched her forehead with his lips, and drew her into the library. There she sat upon the tufted arm of a big leather couch, while he got a cigarette and lighted it. She watched him impatiently, and at last broke out:

"What I wanted to see you for is this, papa: I heard to-day that you are a gambler. Is it true?" She spoke invariably with directness—that was like her; but this time her words tumbled out so incisively, so accusingly, that Sanborn, for a moment, was perturbed.

He snapped the dead match into the fireplace, and dropped upon the sofa in the corner opposite Alicia. "It's a soft impeachment I can't deny, my dear," he said presently. "I must admit that at times I play games of chance for money. But, then"—with a very correct Parisian shrug—"every one does. One must amuse one's self," he quoted the French proverb, and smiled fondly upon her.

"I don't mean that," she told him quickly. "I mean that you make your living out of it; that you—that you victimize men—that you make a trade of it." Her blue eyes met Sanborn's with so level a gaze—searching but not accusatory—that a less impassive, less self-mastered man than Sanborn must have been utterly routed.

As for Sanborn, he looked at her, hurt, at first; then curious; and finally he broke into a peal of modulated but merry laughter. "How utterly preposterous!" he exclaimed at last, his deep voice still shaking with amusement. "Where under heaven did you get that absurd notion, delicious?" He drew over nearer to her, and reached for her hand; but this she refused him with a gesture.

"The Countess Fiume asked me about it to-day—asked if that were not the reason I had never been received at the American embassy, although I am an American."

Sanborn sparred for time; fortu-

nately he knew the rather disagreeable old woman who bore the title, and he had an excellent defense against her rumors. "Rather an extraordinary remark for a woman to make," he said ruminatively. "Did she ask you that point-blank, to your face?"

"Yes; it came about most naturally. There was nothing catty about it. I met an American woman at her tea to-day, and she said she hoped to meet me at the ambassador's ball to-night. Of course, I was not invited, and I told her so. She was surprised, and asked me why. I said we never went there. She looked at me a second in a way that embarrassed me horribly, and finally she turned away, and cut me dead. The Countess Fiume said she felt sorry for me, and explained that the American woman thought you were one of those American criminals who daren't return to the United States; but that you weren't at all; that you were merely a gambler.

"Of course, I flared up at that; and then she was a little angry, too, and told me a lot of things that an American called Ferris had told her Cousin Pierre. I couldn't believe any of it at first, and decided not to mention it to you. But I got to thinking about it again after dinner, and I decided to ask you. Is it true, papa?" She challenged him again with her frank, blue eyes.

Her rather pitiable tale of having been snubbed in public had loosed in Sanborn a flood of finer emotions—chief of which was sympathy and poignant remorse. Hereafter, he decided, he must keep a closer watch upon her goings and comings, until he had put over the big coup in South America, and made fortune enough to enable him to retire honorably; and he thanked a kind fate that that was but a matter of days. He wanted to stroke her hand, kiss her, bestow upon her all the little tokens of deep affection she was accustomed to; but the invisible barrier she had erected between them was still unassailable.

"Let me ask you a few questions, Alicia, before I answer your question again, since it appears that my mere word does not suffice for the present. What do you know of Pierre Cartier, the countess' cousin?"

"I—I haven't any use for him," she replied slowly. "I suppose he isn't entirely trustworthy; but, still, why should he lie deliberately about you, when he hasn't anything to gain from it?"

"Exactly; why should he? Tell me this: to whom did the Countess Fiume hope to marry her daughter Marie?"

"To Paul," she admitted, staring curiously at him.

"Then you must admit, for sake of argument, that the Countess Fiume hasn't any love for you, deep down in her own heart, nor any of her family, no matter what protestations of it she makes to you."

"I don't think she meant to be catty," repeated Alicia resolutely, "when she told me that to-day."

Sanborn thought a moment. "Take a woman of a more sympathetic disposition, a kinder-hearted one, one that has no harsh feeling against you—Mrs. Rumford, for example. If Mrs. Rumford had felt compelled to tell you of her suspicions concerning me, would she have told you in precisely the same way the countess did?"

"I rather doubt if Mrs. Rumford would find it necessary to——"

"Exactly!" Sanborn interrupted triumphantly. "Nor any other woman who was not entirely dominated by hatred of you. And finally, who is this man Ferris that the countess told you about? Did she describe him to you? Tell you anything about him?"

"No."

"Well, I know him. He's one of these negro prize fighters that have been swamping Paris lately, only he's

not square. He has good reason to hate me, because I stopped a little game he was trying to pull off against an unsuspecting German the other night." And as he said this, Sanborn registered a resolve to close Fighting Phil's mouth at all costs, lest he commit further indiscretions, useful man though he was. "And now, delicious," he went on blithely, "are the foundations of your suspicion made of good firm rock, or are they the shifting sands? Are you going to believe your old dad, or would you prefer to consider him a scandalous reprobate, on the strength of such disinterested and unimpeachable testimony you've been hearing?"

"But is it true? You haven't told me yet."

Sanborn was a trifle surprised at her obstinacy. "I hadn't thought it necessary to deny such a charge in so many words—least of all to you, Alicia. But if you insist, I do deny it. I am not a gambler by profession, I do not—really, my dear, I forget the rest of the counts in your indictment; if you'll repeat them, I'll deny each one separately." Sanborn peeped clandestinely at the ormolu clock on the mantel; it marked ten minutes after one.

"That relieves me immensely," she said, impulsively throwing her left arm about his neck, and kissing him on the forehead. "You've no idea how badly it made me feel. And, though I could hardly believe it, I knew it wasn't right to go on with Paul, and marry him, and have him and the world find out after it was too late that he had married the daughter of a low-down gambler and swindler. You see how it was, papa; I couldn't take the risk of not believing it, when there was an atom of possibility that it might be true."

"Of course, my dear," murmured Sanborn tenderly, stroking her dimpled hand. "You were quite right to demand the truth of me. You're such a queer little chick, with such good, old-fashioned ideas of what's right. What other girl would have thought of its effect on Paul's name and career? And now that it's all right, you'd better run off to bed. See, it's after one. I'm going to turn in myself very shortly." He released her hand, disengaged her arm, and rose from the sofa.

"Please don't be gone long, papa. I shall lie awake until you come in."

"Oh, I shall take quite a walk to-night, I think; half an hour or more."

"Even if I ask you not to—to-night?" she inquired.

Sanborn winced inwardly. He had bungled the game by not inventing a better story than a mere walk to take him forth at this hour; an important appointment would have served his purpose better, as it had countless times in the past. But it was too late to change his excuse now; nor could he give up his project, for millions, actually, lay in the balance. It was his daughter's future content against a very tiny present discontent; the millions were not especially for himself, and, therefore, he had no free choice in the matter. "I don't think you can raise any serious objection to my going for a walk to-night, since I feel the need of it so strongly. Good night, dear, and pleasant dreams." He kissed her again, noting with a little chill her unresponsiveness, berating himself for the crudity of his excuse, and blaspheming the fate that had brought the climax upon this of all nights; caught up his hat and stick and coat, and left his apartment bareheaded and coatless.

Alicia remained sitting motionless upon the arm of the sofa, where he had left her. She did not follow him into the hall; hence her eyes were spared the haste and confusion of his rout, although her ears bore her plain evidence of it. With a clear mind she reviewed the Countess Fiume's story, in the light that her father had cast upon it, and was forced to confess that the

foundations of her suspicion—as Sanborn had oracularly expressed it—were built upon the shifting sands. But—and the words loomed big—suspicion still clung tenaciously.

She detested the suspicion, but the more she detested it, the more compelling it became. As she reviewed their life in Paris from the time she was a tiny girl, a thousand and one events ranged themselves like grim armies to batter down her father's defense. And yet, she asked herself fiercely, what right did she have to suspect her father, whom she had revered and respected and loved, whom she saw accepted and rated honorably by the impeccable world which she knew; what right to believe rumor from a polluted source as against her father's word; what right to harbor a single thought that he would deliberately lie to her. Was it not her duty, rather, to accept his denial as final because he was her father, and let their lives go on as before?

This she could not do; halfway measures were not for her. She must know the truth; not alone for herself, but for the sake of the man she meant to marry. What if he should find out the truth afterward? Would he not be justified in thinking her a party to the deception? And if he were charitable to conceal his thoughts, would life under those conditions be endurable?

"No, I must know the truth," she said to herself, surprised at her own calmness and decision.

The clang of the elevator doors closing behind her father roused her to action. She jumped off her perch, ran to her room, drew on a pair of low pumps in place of the mules she kicked off, threw a long waterproof over her dressing gown and a heavy opera cloak above that, and left the apartment as silently as she could. She hurried down the stairs instead of waiting for the elevator—a slow, mechanical contrivance, operated by the passengers themselves—and out past the porter's lodge into the street.

Sanborn's long, rapid strides rang loudly on the pavement fifty yards ahead; in the glare of the street lamps she saw his capable, upstanding figure swing rhythmically to his hurried pace, not toward the park, as he had told her, but toward the city—toward the little apartment in the Rue St. Jacques, with no time to double on his track and deceive pursuers.

With a little shudder as if she were plunging into an icy bath, aghast at what she was about to do, she drew into the shadows of the buildings and hurried after him. At the corner he hailed a passing taxi and stepped into it. There was no other in sight. With a sigh half of relief and half of vexation, Alicia realized that her short chase was over, and stopped half-heartedly to return to her house. But no! There was a municipal guard on the corner who must have heard the address her father gave. And failing this, she might be able to trace the taxi by the number, which she could read easily before the cab started again. And it was, in fact, by a skillful combination of both these clews that she managed to reach, after half an hour's search, the apartment house in the Rue St. Jacques, which had been her father's destination.

CHAPTER III.

FIGHTING PHIL'S BOMBSHELL.

Sanborn had managed to collect himself by the time his taxi arrived at the apartment in the Rue St. Jacques. Once away from Alicia, he could concoct any number of excuses to explain his late return, if she did sit up for him: meeting with an unexpected friend; an accident, which entailed his seeing the wounded man to a hospital; anything. He doubted very much, in fact, that Alicia would wait up for him, now that

her suspicions were stilled. And instead of blaspheming fate for bringing up the crisis at this most inopportune time, he thanked the fortune that was benign enough to send him this excellent chance to end his double life before Alicia had really discovered it.

He was twenty minutes late, but what mattered that, since it was only Luke Leonard who awaited him. Pierre, the chauffeur-valet, smiled as he opened the door; that smile further reassured Sanborn.

"So, everything goes well," remarked Sanborn, as Pierre divested him of his outer garments.

"Yes, monsieur," replied Pierre, in French, "the little pig thinks of nothing but his drink; he could eat raw beef that was blood warm." Pierre usually spoke English to his employer—whose French was none of the best, in spite of his long life in Paris—but since Leonard did not understand French, it was safer to couch such disparaging remarks in the Gallic idiom.

"Is he drunk now?" asked Sanborn, surveying himself in a conveniently placed mirror.

"No; he seems to be proof against it—on the principle of vaccination, perhaps."

Sanborn smiled indulgently at Pierre's philosophy, ordered cocktails and caviar to be brought at once to the smoking room, and supper to be served within five minutes. As he entered the smoking room, the deep pile of the dagestan muffled the sound of his footsteps until he came abreast of the blissful Leonard, who was stretched at full length upon a tufted couch of Spanish leather, his head pillowed luxuriously upon one arm, his feet—his frame being too short to extend the length of the sofa—bolstered up with silken cushions. Beside Leonard there was a teakwood taboret of Chinese workmanship and dynastic history, topped with a bottle of St. Croix rum, siphons, a little silver bucket of cracked ice, and a dish of bisected limes. Leonard was smoking a cigarette of his own making, from tobacco that Sanborn judged must have been the sweepings of a cheap cigar factory, his right hand clutching a tall glass that clinked merrily as, from time to time, he shook it. Leonard was enjoying himself.

"Why the devil don't you have a decent smoke?" demanded Sanborn, whose sensitive nerves rebelled against the odor. "Didn't Pierre offer you a cigar?"

Leonard looked around lazily by the simple method of rolling his tawny, thin-haired head. He saw Sanborn, and smiled. Leonard's smile was rather a ghastly affair; on such occasions, the prominent point of his jutting jaw seemed to curl upward, as did the corners of his wide, weak mouth; while his tawny eyes swam with sudden tears. Had his straight, long nose been Roman, Leonard would have been a fair counterpart of the English *Punch,* or even the gargoyles on Notre Dame.

"Hello, old cockerel, how's every little thing?" inquired Leonard jovially.

"Fine, till I smelled that rank poison you're smoking," returned Sanborn, tempering his criticism with a little laugh, and lighting one of his own cigarettes in self-defense. "Didn't Pierre offer——"

"Sure, he tried to tempt me," Leonard interrupted, "but I wasn't havin' any. Nothin' like this for a real smoke." He inhaled deeply of the noxious mixture and blew a great cloud ceilingward. "Have a seat, Sandy; make yourself at home."

Sanborn concealed a grimace of disgust, and was prevented from making some scornful remark by the opportune entry of Pierre, with little squares of toast spread with caviar, and a shaker with cocktails.

"Spent your ten millions yet, Sandy?"

asked Leonard, helping himself liberally from Pierre's tray.

"I've been considering some choice investments," Sanborn returned soberly.

"Better not go any farther just yet, then, so far as this ten millions is concerned," Leonard advised him, his words half muffled with an immense mouthful.

Sanborn, busying himself with the tray, did not at once follow up this opening. When Pierre had closed the door behind him, however, he took up the remark: "Just what do you mean, Leonard? Has the nigger got back with his answer already?"

"Ye-uh. Here at one prompt. Nothin' doin'."

Sanborn pondered while Leonard munched contentedly. "Do you think this man—what's his name, anyway, Leonard?"

"Ferguson."

"Do you think Ferguson has been tipped off about it?"

"Not a chance. The state department at Washington got Bogotá to keep the thing quiet till they got up a syndicate to take the concession over, and Bogotá will, believe me The way I got onto it is this: A friend of Ferguson's in Sabanilla, the consular agent there, wanted to put Ferguson hep; so he smuggled a letter through to Ferguson here, telling him about it. But the messenger is a friend of mine, too, so Ferguson will never get the letter, and won't know a thing about it till he hears from Washington; and by that time I hoped to buy him out. But——"

"Where is your friend now? Where is the letter?"

"Oh, he's battin' around Paris somewhere. He's got the letter safe and sound. We opened it with a hot flat knife, and sealed it up again. The letter's all safe; I'll show it to you tomorrow if you want a look at it. I'd have brought it to-night, only I couldn't get hold of Downy."

"He turned down the twenty thousand, eh?" commented Sanborn thoughtfully.

"Flat."

"Do you think it would do any good to offer more?"

"Piece of bleedin' foolishness, my opinion. He'd get wise to something in a minute."

"What was his answer?" Sanborn went on. "What reason did he give for refusing the offer? I understood you to say that he'd jump at the figure."

Leonard stumbled a trifle; Sanborn did not yet know the nature of the trouble that existed between Ferguson and Luke Leonard. And fortunately for his slow wits, Pierre came to announce supper. Leonard jumped up with alacrity, hoping that the crisis was past for the present, but Sanborn insisted upon pursuing the subject as they walked into the dining room.

"Why don't you see him, talk it over with him, point out that you want to stick in Paris, and either want to buy or sell? He'll never outbid you."

"That's just what I asked him to do," replied Leonard petulantly. "I asked him to meet me at the American Express office to-morrow; I was goin' to take Downy along—Ferguson don't know him—to pose as a guy I was goin' to sell to, and we was goin' to talk it over. But he says nix on that."

Silently Sanborn showed Leonard his chair at the showily laid supper table, and dropped into his own. "Why?" asked Sanborn incisively, shaking out his napkin. "What reason did he give for not wanting to talk about it, even? That don't sound right to me. You're keeping something back, Leonard! Out with it, or we part company right here!"

Leonard sullenly attacked his soup, a bisque of Breton lobster the excellence of which was entirely lost on him.

"Out with it, Leonard!" Sanborn repeated.

"Well, to tell you the truth," Leonard admitted, after a pause, "I'm afraid to talk with him. The only talk I'd get out of him is the bark of a thirty-eight. He's here to shoot me at sight, and he means business. That's the kind of a talk we'd have. He'd shoot and I'd squeal; curtain!"

Sanborn stroked his silken whiskers. "I expected something like that, when you asked me for Fighting Phil as a go-between. There ought to be some way of bringing him around."

"Sure—just as easy as taking an egg away from a rattlesnake," Leonard retorted sarcastically. "Say, could you do that, Sandy? Take an egg away from a rattlesnake?" The little man was evidently much pleased with his figure of speech.

Sanborn's poollike brown eyes gazed dreamily at the crystal candelabra that shed a soft light upon the silver and damask. "I could," he said quietly, "by killing the rattlesnake."

"Then go to it!" snapped Leonard. "I'm afraid of him. He's got feelers like a cat; he can smell danger a mile off. Why, when he was bossin' the construction of the hill section of the Artures-Guadalajara Railroad, I seen him one day smash a bullet into a scrub quebrachos thicket that was fifty yards away, and looked as safe as a Methodist minister's henhouse. 'What'd you do that for, Dan?' says I. 'Go look, if you want to know,' says he, cool as a cake of ice in Lima, Peru! I did, and by mighty, he'd winged a mestizo that he discharged the day before and was layin' to brain him when he went by. Now, how'd he know that if he ain't one of these here mind readers? How'd he know, Sandy, that that half-breed was there waiting for him?" Leonard pounded the table, but even that failed to elicit any response from Sanborn. "No, sir, not for mine," Leonard went on. "I'll play safe with the partnership and my half share from the American syndicate before I try any monkey work with him. If the American syndicate buys us out, he ain't got to get together at all; there won't be any hemmin' and hawin' and arguin' about it—not a word; I won't have to go and see him and try to reason him into sellin' his half share to the American syndicate; they'll make the offer and we'll sign the papers separately, and there you are, all hunky-dory, and me with a whole skin."

Sanborn heard him through without interruption; then laughed softly and deprecatorily. "You didn't put a literal construction on my words, did you?" he asked.

Leonard stopped his spoon midway to his mouth, and eyed him in genuine surprise. "If you don't say what you mean, how am I goin' to know what you mean?" he demanded.

"That was merely a bon mot that slipped my tongue," Sanborn explained easily. "It won't do us any particular good to kill him; and, of course, I'm not the sort of man to countenance that procedure. But frankly, I don't believe he's half as dangerous as you say. Aren't you man enough to take a little risk for a bigger prize? If you hang onto the partnership, and take your share from the American syndicate, you might get half a million out of it—that is, if he didn't beat you out of it. But if you stick to me, and make him sell out to you, we'll have twenty millions at the very least to divide between us, besides putting one over on him."

"Yea, bo! But just write this down on your cuff! Half a million'll keep me in beans and bacon for quite a spell; and ten million is a lot too much for funeral expenses. Why don't you go to him yourself and offer to buy him out? He'd probably listen to you. You could put up a big front, let him size you up as a sucker, and you'll have him fishin' for you, 'stead of you fishin' for him."

"I told you, Leonard, when we first started talking about this, that my name must be kept out of the business absolutely, positively. It's worse than ruin if we put it over right, and then the thing gets traced back to me. And I hate to bring a third man into it, because that means another split of the profits—— No, hold on. What about that friend of yours who's got the letter—Downy? He's wise to the game already, of course. And you've probably come to some arrangement with him already, if you had in mind to take him with you to talk with Ferguson. Is that right?"

"Sure. I'm givin' him twenty per cent for tellin' me about it, and seein' me through it. You can trust him so long as you've got both your peepers on him."

"Good enough," said Sanborn, much relieved. "Where can you get hold of him?"

"What's your scheme?" countered Leonard.

"Simple enough. Send him to Ferguson just as you expected to in the first place, to pose as a man who wants to buy the whole property, only you don't have to go with him; a letter of introduction from you will do. All he's got to do is buy in his own name, and make the transfer to you at the Colombian consul's office here in Paris. Where can you find the man?"

"Oh, he's out battin' around somewhere. Fightin' Phil said he seen him up in the Red Mouse to-night."

"He did, eh?" commented Sanborn ruminatively "You don't suppose ther's any danger of his making a fool of himself and giving the game away, do you?"

"Not a chance. He's got too many reasons to lie low for the present," Leonard chuckled.

Sanborn digested this. "Where did the nigger go after he brought you Ferguson's answer?" he asked next.

"He went back to the restaurant where he found Ferguson. Seems that Ferguson made him sore about something, and Phil's goin' to take it out of his hide, soon as he gets a chance. By mighty, I'd like to see the scrap; Ferguson ain't no slouch with his fists, believe me!"

"If I could only get hold of Phil somehow," said Sanborn reflectively, "I'd put him to watching Downy the rest of the night, and round him up here if such a thing is possible. I don't like the idea of that letter running around loose. This burg swarms with German spies, and if one of them should get hold of this proposition—good night everybody!"

Again Leonard looked his surprise. "But I thought it was with Germany you calculated to do business?" he said.

"It is, you simp! But even Germany won't pay any more than they have to. If we hold the property, we can make our own price; if they get wise to it before we get Ferguson to come across with his share, they can come pretty near to making their own price. What is it, Pierre?"

The chauffeur-valet had entered quietly, and stood expectantly by the door, waiting for Sanborn to notice him. "Monsieur Ferris has just come in, and would like to speak with you or Mr. Leonard."

"Come on in, Phil," shouted Sanborn, through the open door. "Just the man I've been wanting to see. Another chair, Pierre, and a bottle of that Monopol 1900."

Pierre gave way to the big black boxer, who was greeted, first with looks of surprise, and then by a roar of ridicule from both Sanborn and Leonard. For Fighting Phil was a sorry sight. He was collarless and hatless; shirt, vest, and coat had been ripped and torn down the front, and were held together with pins; his split lip had been cracked open again, and was bleeding, though

not so profusely as his nose, to which he still held a crimsoned handkerchief.

"Taxicab wreck, eh?" laughed Sanborn.

"Yaas, an' den some!" groaned the fighter, limping toward the table. "Two of 'em; an' then a fire engine run over me, an' somethin' else; guess it was a cyclone. Gimme a drink, for the love o' Pete, Sandy!"

Fighting Phil dropped into a chair, and tossed off the glass of champagne that Sanborn poured out.

"Been mixin' it a little with Ferguson, I see," taunted Leonard, who had laughed himself hoarse.

"Say, that boy sho' is a whirlwind," grunted Ferris, spearing the plump breast of a grilled squab with Leonard's fork. "Got a wallop in his left like a ten-pound post maul, an' he's quicker'n greased lightnin'. If I had the handlin' o' him for a month, I'd make that Jeanette boy walk tukkey."

"Tell us about it, Phil," urged Sanborn, still shaking with amusement.

What with generous drafts of Sanborn's excellent wine, and a choice morsel of squab to munch upon, Fighting Phil had already forgotten his wrath and his beating, and could afford to look upon the episode lightly.

"When I fust see the boy," said Phil, between mouthfuls, "it struck me he was a leetle too sassy for his size, so I goes back to learn him a lesson. When I gets back to the Red Mouse, there was a row goin' on upstairs, so I butts on up to see what is it. But on the stairs I meets this guy Ferguson with some other fat slob a-carryin' some drunk downstairs between 'em; I couldn't see at fust who it was. So I backs down the stairs an' waits for 'em. Ferguson sees me, leaves the drunk to the other guy, an' comes after me. We mixes in the street, an' that's about all. When I comes to, Ferguson an' the other guy was just h'istin' the drunk into a cab, an' away they goes before I gets another chance." Ferris choked down a second glass of wine, and drove for another helping of squab.

Leonard laughed till he was blinded by copious tears; Sanborn took his amusement more decorously, and recovered the sooner.

"Did you see anything of Leonard's friend Downy during the scrap? I understand he was at the Red Mouse."

"I sho' did, Sandy," grinned Fighting Phil. "He's the drunk that Ferguson an' the fat guy carted away with 'em."

"Ho-lee criminy," gasped Luke Leonard, his knife, together with its load, clattering back upon his plate, "and Downy's got the letter!"

And Fighting Phil's morsel of squab hung in mid-air while he stared at the two men, amazed at the consternation his announcement had stirred up.

CHAPTER IV.

FERGUSON FINDS THE LETTER.

Fortunately for Ferguson and Curley, the chauffeur of the taxicab, into which they had thrown the limp frame of Our Leading Citizen, alias Downy, was neither a fool nor a hireling of the powers that prey upon their fellows. Seeing the big body of Fighting Phil stretched flaccid upon the sidewalk, and hearing the uproar in the room upstairs, from which his fares had just escaped with their burden, he realized that present safety lay in flight, and darted away from the curb as soon as he heard the door click behind Ferguson. After skimming through half a dozen blocks, however, he slowed up and asked for directions.

Ferguson turned to Curley. "I suppose we'll have to search his pockets to find out where he belongs," he suggested.

"And take him home!" Curley exclaimed, with mock sarcasm. "Honest to goodness, Ferguson, you ought to study the Golden Rule a little more.

Would you want to be taken home if you was *him?* Honest, would you?"

Ferguson laughed. "Put that up to my lack of experience in such cases. I'll leave it to you, but the chauffeur, here, wants to know where we're going."

"Oh, just have him amble along down the hill and stop at the first decent hotel he comes across. We'll buy the poor devil a room and put him to bed, and leave an order for ice water at seven. He'll swear off forever as soon as he wakes up, or I'd make it absinth frappé."

Ferguson thought a moment. The hotel at which he was registered was as near as any, and he knew it was trustworthy and reputable. He gave the name of it to the chauffeur. Arrived there, Curley's aptness was eloquent of numerous similar exploits as a good Samaritan. The clerk assigned a room in Ferguson's corridor; the night porter helped carry the little man upstairs, and withdrew, while Curley relieved his protégé of collar and coat and shoes. Next Curley went through the pockets, winding the expensive watch and laying it on the night table, removing a handful of silver from the trousers pocket and putting it on the bureau, and hanging the coat across the back of a chair.

"There, old war horse," cried Curley, standing off to take a look at the pitiable little figure. "You'll wake up to-morrow morning, and wonder how in the name of the good old Widow Clicquot you managed to get to bed without your shoes on—— Poor old soldier!" Curley chuckled dryly, and turned to Ferguson. "What d'you say, Ferguson, we find out who he is, just for fun?"

"I don't care so much about that, now," Ferguson replied, "but it seems to me we'd better go through his pockets together, so that if he misses anything and tries to accuse us of having taken it, we'll be two against one; make an inventory of what is on his person, or something like that."

"By George, Ferguson, you're right there! You can't be too careful when you're dealing with a little cheese like him. If he looked a sport, I wouldn't think of doin' it, but—at that, he might have lost something at the Red Mouse before we got him into the lifeboat. You look and I'll write, and then we'll both sign it jointly."

The inventory was remarkably short. In the coat pocket they found a bill fold containing a couple of hundred francs and a ten-dollar bill, but no sign of card or letter or any other scrap of paper; there was a handkerchief of ordinary material, bearing a cryptic laundry mark, a widely advertised make of fountain pen, and a black coat button made in Chicago. The coin purse on his watch chain yielded fifty francs in gold, and the change on the bureau amounted to seven francs odd, beside sundry American coins. And an advertising buttonhook in the lower left-hand vest pocket completed the list.

"Travelin' light, eh?" commented Curley, as he handed over the list for Ferguson's inspection and signature. "Not even a scrap of paper to show who he is or where he comes from. Sure you've got everything?"

"Better have a look for yourself," Ferguson suggested. "It gives me the shivers, somehow, not to know who he is, nor whom to inform in case anything happens to him. Lord, man, he might pass in his checks to-night."

"Don't worry, Ferguson," Curley replied cheerfully, as he crossed to the bed, and began to run his fingers over the inert body after the manner of a professional detective searching a criminal for weapons—a manner almost too professional for an advertising man. "Don't you worry any about that. Most that could happen to you if he kicks across here is that the hotel people can hold you for about a thousand bucks

damages and a first-class funeral. But I'll stand half. Missed something here!" he announced suddenly, his hands passing over the narrow little chest.

After Curley's cheerful statement of the possibilities resultant upon the demise of Our Leading Citizen, Ferguson's relief at the announcement was evident in his features. And as Curley unbuttoned the vest, and pulled from an inside pocket a long, blue, official-looking envelope, Ferguson stepped toward the bed.

"Pinned there, too," Curley exclaimed, looking for the address. "I'll bet wifie did that just before she kissed him good—— Good Lord, Ferguson, run your eyes over that! Any one you know?"

Ferguson took the envelope, read the superscription, and whistled softly. Abstractedly he turned the letter over, and on the other side he found a great red splotch of a seal, the device of which he was unfamiliar with. But the envelope was of paper-covered linen, dark blue in color, without printing, identical with the official envelopes he had seen on the desk of every American consul from Punta Arenas to Nassau.

"Know him, do you?" asked Curley, watching him closely.

"I know the name, at any rate," Ferguson laughed. "The name is mine: Daniel H. Ferguson."

"Come off; you're stringin' me!" Curley was plainly incredulous.

"My name is certainly Daniel H. Ferguson," he repeated. "But it doesn't follow that the letter is for me. There may be a hundred other men with that name in the world. You see, Curley, there's no address on it—just the name; and if it was addressed to me specially, it would have my full address on. Any one who might want to communicate with me knows I'm in Paris. No, it can't be for me!" Ferguson dropped the letter upon the little night table.

Curley picked it up and weighed it reflectively. "At that, Ferguson, I've got a hunch it's for you. If it was addressed to Daniel A. Ferguson, or Daniel B. Ferguson, I wouldn't think so much about it. But Daniel H.—name and initial! What more would you want—size of your collar? Birthmarks? Thumb prints? Take it from me, Ferguson, that letter's for you!"

"Well, one way or the other," Ferguson returned decisively, "I certainly don't intend to take it now. If it's for me, I'll probably get it in good time; and if not, I don't propose to rob a drunken man. I suppose we'd better lock the door on him for to-night."

Curley examined the locks. "Old-fashioned locks, eh?" he pronounced. "The kind we used to pick with a hairpin before we got to the third reader. Not much use lockin' the door if any one wants to get in, but if you'd feel any easier about it, we might lock the door on the outside and throw the key in through the transom. Then we'll file the inventory with the clerk at the desk, and I'll beat it for the Buckingham."

"No need of my going down to the desk," said Ferguson, as they stepped outside and pulled the door shut. "I'm expecting a friend any minute now, and I want to see him in my rooms, anyhow. You'd better come in and have lunch with me—say about two—and we'll have a look in on our friend. I'd like to see you again before I leave Paris; and I want to get the six-o'clock train to Calais."

"Good enough," rejoined Curley cordially. "I'll be on deck for lunch; wouldn't miss it for anything."

Ferguson locked the door, threw the key in through the transom, bade Curley good night at the stair landing, and passed on to his own room. He looked at his watch; it was barely half past one. Then he loaded up a pipe, pulled an easy-chair over by the window, which he flung wide to the sluggish

night breeze and the scintillating lights of Paris, and waited for his friend, whose coming, if all went well, marked the end of his business in Paris; then London, Southampton, the Royal Mail boat back to Colón.

His mind reverted to his refusal to grant Leonard an armistice while they dickered over the sale of the Coralles concession, and he was content with it. Better a hundred times a paltry salary from his tin mine on the snow line of the Cerro de la Gordo, with a clear conscience and the ability to meet Fortner's eye squarely, than a fortune won at the cost of dalliance with Leonard and treason to Fortner. Besides, after he had finished with Leonard——

Came a rap at the door, a page of the hotel, and, moments later, the friend Ferguson expected. He was a Frenchman, lean, well built, somber looking. He closed the door after him, and stood still just inside the room, hat in hand, expectant.

"Any news?" asked Ferguson, turning around without getting up.

"Yes, monsieur," replied the private detective. "I followed the negro as monsieur signaled to me in the Red Mouse. He went first to an apartment in the Rue St. Jacques, rented for a long time by an American of doubtful reputation, named Alexander Brown, often called Sandy. He returned at once to the Red Mouse, where you saw him; and thence he went back to the apartment where he still is."

"Is Leonard there—the little man I described to you?"

"I have reason to believe that he is. The porter of the palais would tell me nothing; he is evidently a hireling of the American Brown. But the dame who keeps the tobacco shop just across the street tells me that the negro entered the apartment house about midnight, together with a little man who may be he whom you want to find."

"Probably Leonard," commented Ferguson, rising and reaching for his hat. "It's worth looking into, at any rate. You might follow me after a little while, and hang around till I come out of the place, to watch Leonard in case he gives me the slip. If you're still in the vicinity when I come out, step up and speak to me, and I'll tell you whether or not I'm through with you; and if I don't see you then, I'll know you're off again after my man, and shall expect you to report to me here as soon as you've found out anything. Get all that?"

"But certainly," the man bowed.

"Now don't try to shadow me closely," Ferguson warned him again. "You'll give yourself away if you do. Just come along after me. And leave me alone, no matter what you hear going on, unless I call you by name. What did you say the address was?"

"Rue St. Jacques, thirty-one." The man backed up a step to permit Ferguson to pass first.

But Ferguson paused on the threshold, returned to his suit case, and dug from beneath its disorder a small Browning pocket pistol, which he dropped into his coat pocket. Then, with the detective, he left the room and locked the door behind him.

CHAPTER V.

FERGUSON GETS A LESSON.

In the street, Ferguson repeated the address to a cabman, and ordered him to stop at least a couple of blocks away from the building. He did this solely as a precautionary move, fearing lest the stopping of a taxicab in front of the house might attract attention to his arrival; and he did not dream of the further adventures into which this little stratagem would lead him.

"Number thirty-one," said the chauffeur, as he drew up at the curb in the Rue St. Jacques, and opened the door for Ferguson to alight, "will be that

big palais just beyond the second corner from here, where you see the taximeter standing now by the curb."

Ferguson's eyes followed the direction of the man's pointing finger. "I see the place," he said, pulling out a handful of change and paying the chauffeur. "Thanks."

Before Ferguson had taken three steps, the door of the taxi that stood in front of No. 31, swung open, and a woman stepped out rather hesitatingly. She walked up to the great wooden gates of the apartment house—which are usually barred after midnight, admission being gained only by ringing up the concierge. There she hesitated, her hand upraised as if to give the signal, yet withholding it. Twice she turned back toward the cab, and as many times returned to the palais. She was obviously trying, and failing, to make some momentous decision.

Ferguson slowed down his pace a trifle to watch her. He had approached near enough to see that she was an attractive-looking girl of twenty or more, dressed in an opera cloak thrown over some long and somber garment, wearing a jaunty automobile hat from which tendrils of blond hair persisted in straggling. Finally, it appeared to Ferguson, she had made up her mind to ring the bell, for the gates opened suddenly, letting out a flood of light, and with it the burly, slouching figure of Fighting Phil Ferris.

The girl stepped back as in consternation, and the pair stared at each other for a second. Then Fighting Phil's features relaxed in what he undoubtedly considered a very fetching smile.

"I am Ferris, the American boxer," he announced in vile French, with a world of pride in the announcement, confident that it was the open sesame to further acquaintanceship.

"Oh, I have heard of you," the girl returned, in a tone that was far from flattering, but with an intonation unmistakably American. "Is—is Mr. Sanborn inside?"

Ferguson had not yet been noticed by the negro, whose eyes had been riveted upon the girl since he emerged from the building. And being surprised to find an American girl in this quarter, at this time of night, and being moreover curious to see the outcome of this conversation, he dodged into the shadows of a neighboring doorway, and listened.

Now Fighting Phil had never in his life heard the name Sanborn; nor had he any reason to connect this name, nor this charming young lady, with Mr. Alexander Brown, commonly called Sandy, who owned the apartment he had just left. But if the girl wanted news of Mr. Sanborn, he would not disappoint her. "Sho' thing, miss," he assured her, his whole face lighting up at being able to speak his own language. "He was here 'bout ten minutes ago, but he went away ag'in. Anything I can do for you? Did you want to see him?"

"I'd like to, if you can tell me where he is," she told him, shrinking back before his advance.

"Jump in, then, an' I'll take you there." He reached behind her to open the cab door.

She anticipated his designs, jerked the door open, leaped into the cab, and slammed the door shut after her. "No, no!" she cried. "I can find it if you'll tell me where. You needn't bother."

The fighter put his head close to the open window. "No bother at all, miss," he said. "Nuthin' I'd like better th'n to help a pretty li'l' thing like you, that's in trouble. I'll take you there, all right, all right." Ferris spoke a word in an undertone to the chauffeur, and money passed between them. Then he caught hold of the latch, and wrenched the door open, though it was apparent that the girl was holding it on the inside with all her force.

"Chauffeur," Ferguson heard her cry out, in French, "are you going to sit there and permit this outrage? Make this man go away! Drive on, quick!"

The chauffeur grinned. From the moment money had come into his hand from Fighting Phil's bountiful pocket, he was the fighter's man. The door swung back with a sudden jolt, and the negro lifted a foot into the cab.

Ferguson left the shadow of the doorway and started forward at a leisurely pace. Ferris looked around at this sound of footsteps, temporarily abandoned his design of entering the cab, and faced about on the curb.

"That's enough from you, Ferris," said Ferguson. "Beat it!"

Ferris whispered another word to the chauffeur, whose hand slid around under the cushion of his seat. "If you're out walkin' for your health, honey, you'd better turn around an' go the other way," he told Ferguson.

Ferguson watched the chauffeur from the corner of his eye; the man sat immobile, his hand still hidden under the cushion. "Looks to me," Ferguson countered, "as if you were hankering after another dose of that same medicine. Better beat it while you've got the use of your legs."

Ferguson's placid approach probably deceived the negro, for once more he lifted a foot to the taxi. "My laigs won't bother me none, so long's I got a taxi here," he called back.

Ferris heard the rush of feet upon the sidewalk. The chauffeur gave a cry of warning, and jumped to his feet, a knife flashing in the light. Ferguson aforetime had been the target of many a Cumana Indian's knife, so that it was no difficult feat for him to swerve his body slightly, and let the knife wing its way past him true as an arrow, and shatter against the masonry of the building. The chauffeur jumped to his feet to intercept the rush. This interruption was negligible, but it gave Ferris time to get a line on his opponent; and a line is about all he did get. Fighting Phil braced himself to forget all he ever knew about the rules of le boxe, and to put up as dirty a scrap as ever primal instinct dictated; but that put him at a disadvantage at the outset, for Ferguson, taught by necessity in the rough-and-tumble school, had nothing to unlearn.

The chauffeur was only a fly that needed brushing off, and Ferguson rushed the negro. He ducked under the guard that Fighting Phil had instinctively assumed, and landed a short-arm jab, with a hundred and eighty pounds of bone and sinew behind it, square above the juicy squab and the Monopol Sec; and before the negro had decided whether to stretch his length upon the sidewalk, or to lean against the cab while he got his breath back, Ferguson's left came up from nowhere, and was stopped in its rocketing career only by the point of the boxer's jaw. The force of the blow drove Fighting Phil to a temporary resting place against the cab, whence his body slid by easy stages, bounced off the wheel, and sprawled in the gutter.

Ferguson turned to meet the chauffeur. This little man's wind stood him in better stead; for at that precise moment, he was turning the next corner. Nevertheless, his sudden disappearance was far from comforting. The neighborhood was by no means savory of reputation. The chauffeur was undoubtedly going for reënforcements of his own class.

Alicia was naturally badly frightened. She sat huddled in the far corner of the cab, her eyes covered to shut out the sight, scarcely daring to breathe. Ferguson waited for her to say something that would give him a cue to what was expected of him. Obviously there was no time to lose in getting away from the place. Whether or not the girl would think him presumptu-

ous in forcing upon her his escort, he did not know; but there was a way out of that.

"I don't think you'd better wait till the chauffeur comes back," he said presently, addressing himself to the street at large. "Can you walk a spell?"

Alicia had not yet realized that the affair was over. Now she jumped up quickly and stepped out onto the curb, her keen eyes reading Ferguson at one glance, and conveying a message the purport of which he could not have failed to read had he been expecting it. "Of course I can," she cried. "What made you think I couldn't?"

"You didn't stir," Ferguson told her, "and I didn't know but what you might be hurt, or fainting, or something."

"And you didn't try to find out!"

"Well, I'm not exactly used to this sort of business," he excused himself haltingly. "If you hadn't answered right away, I'd have looked, of course. Now listen. I'm not going to butt in on you at all, but you must take my advice. You'll probably find a taxi within two or three blocks, and you'd better not waste any time getting into it and out of here."

Her eyes fell for the first time upon the prostrate form of Fighting Phil. "Good heavens," she gasped, "you haven't killed him, I hope!"

"No, he'll be right as rain in two minutes. I've only knocked the breath out of him. We'd better be out of sight when he comes to. I'll either go with you, or mosey along behind till I see you safe."

Alicia made a queer little sound in her throat, halfway between a snort and a gasp, as she looked at Ferguson. "Really," she said, a trace impatiently, "I'd much rather you came along with me—that is, if you don't mind."

"Whichever you like," said Ferguson.

They started off at a rapid pace, Ferguson silent and accommodating his pace to hers, while Alicia darted a quizzical glance at him from time to time.

"Why should you have walked behind me, of all things?" she demanded presently.

"I—well, I thought, perhaps, you might prefer that. I didn't want to butt in."

"How funny!" she remarked, looking at him furtively.

"Why 'funny'?"

"Most men I know would have taken it for granted that they were to walk with me. I didn't know at first but what you were afraid I'd pick your pocket, or ruin your reputation, or something. And, of course, I'd let myself in for just that by running around Paris alone at this time of night. I was angry with you for a minute."

Ferguson laughed uneasily. "Then I guess I must be a pretty measly specimen. The truth is, I haven't seen more than ten white women in the last ten years, and I've sort of forgotten the thing to do. I thought I'd give you your choice. You didn't know me from Adam. How could you tell but what I was as bad as Fighting Phil? Sort of a cave man's trick, anyway, fighting with him and knocking him over. I ought to have slapped his face and told him to go on about his business, but I've got a bad temper, and he got my goat. I figured you might be just as leery of me as of him, and I thought it would relieve you to know that you were a free agent. I'm sorry if I botched it."

"You didn't—not a bit. Only you're different from any man I know, and I was just telling you the difference. It seemed queer at first, but now I see it was the only thing to do."

"What would the men you know have done? I see I need a few lessons in deportment."

"Not from the men I know, at any rate. There's a taxi, now. I wish you'd ride home with me. I'm a trifle afraid

even of the chauffeurs now; I see one can't trust them at all."

Ferguson hailed the taxi, repeated to the chauffeur the Boulevard Haussman address she gave him, and got in beside her.

"Aren't you curious about what I was doing down there in the Rue St. Jacques?" she asked presently.

"Not a bit. That's your business, and not mine."

Thereafter she lapsed into a contemplative silence that was not broken until the cab had run its course, and had stopped by the curb.

"Here so soon," ejaculated Ferguson, unlatching the door.

"Yes, it isn't far."

Ferguson helped her out, rang the bell for the porter, and stood waiting for the gates to open.

"You must come around to-morrow and let me thank you," she said suddenly. "Remember the number—fifty-six. Ask for Sanborn."

"Oh, then your name is Sanborn," Ferguson commented quickly, recalling the speech he had heard between her and Fighting Phil; then it was her brother, or her father, she was asking for, he concluded, without saying anything: some rotten specimen of humanity who spent his nights gambling in that den of the American Brown's, some worthless debauchee whose dissipated habits had tormented this pitiable little woman into an attempt to reclaim him. Now he understood her hesitation at the door of the house in the Rue St. Jacques; the force that urged her ahead, the delicacy that held her back. He longed for nothing more, at that moment, as he met her troubled eyes, than to have a heart-to-heart talk with the rascal.

"Sure, I'd like to, awfully," Ferguson told her. "What time shall I come?"

"About one, if that's convenient."

"All right. I'll be here on the dot."

"And how shall I know it's you, when you're announced? I might have other callers, too."

Ferguson flushed, and laughed uneasily. "I guess you must think you've run up against a regular savage," he said. "I plumb forgot to tell you my name, didn't I? Ferguson; Dan Ferguson."

The porter swung the gates back. Alicia held out her hand. "Good night," she said gravely. "Till to-morrow."

"Good night," said Ferguson, clasping her hand lightly.

The gates swung shut again, and Ferguson went back to the throbbing taxi, giving the address of his hotel. He was in no mood to look for Leonard again; the morrow would do as well, and his French sleuth was on Luke's track, anyway.

CHAPTER VI.

FIXING FERGUSON.

Sanborn's disposition was too equable, his poise too firmly established by long training, to be easily upset, even over incidents of prime importance. Nevertheless Fighting Phil's announcement of the present whereabouts of Downy and the precious letter came nearer to making him lose his temper than anything in the course of twenty years; a sure sign of the ragged state of his nerves. And, oddly enough, his wrath was directed, not against fate or luck, as usually, but against the innocent negro.

"You big black ivory nut, you," he snapped out, "if you had the brains of a trained mouse, you'd have followed them, got Downy away from them—anything, instead of lying there on the sidewalk like a big blob of smoked beef, and watching 'em pull this trick off right under your nose!"

"'Scuse me, Sandy," replied Fighting Phil, with telling emphasis on the pronoun. "Keep your hair on a min-

ute. In the fust place, I wa'n't in no condition to do nuthin' like that; I reckon if somebody'd lambasted you in the face with a pile driver, you'd find the sidewalk comfortable for a spell. And in the second place, how did I know he had a letter you wanted?"

Sanborn partially regained control of himself. "We won't argue the point at all, Phil. You've got us in bad, and it's up to you to pull us out. You go back up to the Red Mouse and find out where they went."

"How do you figure I'm going to do that?" asked Phil sulkily. The command was least of anything to his liking, but Sanborn had too much on him to permit him to rebel openly, and safely.

"Go to the starter, and get the address they gave. He knows you, don't he?"

Phil made no reply. He rose slowly, spent a good five minutes removing the more obvious signs of dishevelment from his appearance, and thus went to his sacrifice.

Sanborn, chafing inwardly, but outwardly calm, got the news of Phil's fiasco from the porter, not two minutes after Ferguson and Alicia had disappeared. A chance passer-by in the deserted street found the hulking body where it lay, and gave the alarm.

"Confound the luck!" exclaimed Sanborn, as Pierre brought the news to him from the speaking tube. "What do you know about that?"

Leonard's facetious reply fell upon deaf ears, for Sanborn had already started downstairs. Together with the concierge, Sanborn examined the body; Phil was just giving signs of coming around.

"He's all right, thank God!" Sanborn commented fervently. "Just had the breath knocked out of him. But let's get him inside, Jules, before somebody starts asking questions; and I don't want this to go any farther, understand?"

The old porter nodded his comprehension; he was Sanborn's man, heart and soul. They lifted him inside the gates, and Jules locked them hurriedly. Phil stirred uneasily.

"What happened, Jules? Do you know?" Sanborn demanded, as he stepped into the porter's lodge for some water.

"I know nothing about it, monsieur. He rang me out of bed to open the gates as he came down from your apartment. I closed the gates after him, and had just got back to my bed when the bell rang again, and the man told me of the accident."

Leonard arrived on the scene and looked on while Sanborn drenched the negro's face with water, and old Jules was rubbing his wrists, as a result of which ministrations Phil speedily returned from his paradise of pleasant dreams.

"Glory—what a wallop!" were his first words.

"What happened, Phil?" asked Sanborn anxiously, bending over him. "Who was it?"

"Ferguson; I found him, all right, Sandy." Fighting Phil smiled half-heartedly at his little joke, and, with the assistance of Sanborn and the porter, struggled to his feet.

"Ferguson," gasped Leonard weakly. "Did you say Ferguson?"

"I sho' did."

Leonard's feet clattered up the stairs.

"What happened, Phil?" Sanborn repeated, with a grimace of disgust at the fleeing Leonard. "What did he want? How did you come to scrap?"

Phil did not at once reply. If he told the truth, Sanborn would certainly raise the very devil of a row; Sanborn might do anything. For Phil knew that he had no right to let pleasure interfere with business, and if he had not been so much the gallant, he would now

be safe off upon his errand; furthermore, Sanborn had ideas about women that did not at all accord with Phil's picture of a true sport.

"Don't know nuthin' about it, Sandy," he replied cheerfully. "He was just passin' by, I reckon, when I opened the door, an' he rushed me before I got my guard up. I reckon he's just nachally got a grouch against me."

Sanborn scanned him. The incidents leading up to the fight, as related by Fighting Phil, sounded a trifle too fortuitous to be convincing, but the letter was the main point at issue now. Everything else could wait. Fighting Phil's usefulness in that respect was at an end; Leonard, of course, could not be hired to move out of the building until he was assured that Ferguson was blocks away. The retrieval of the letter depended on him alone. He got Phil up to his apartment, announced his plan to Leonard, and suggested that the pair of them stay there overnight, or at all events until he returned. From the negro he tried to get more complete details of the scene at the Red Mouse, so that he might the more easily get the information he sought. Phil's ideas of the whole scene were rather vague. Leonard managed to supplement Ferris' description of Ferguson and of Downy, and added:

"It's bubble water to beer, Sandy, if Ferguson didn't take Downy to his own hotel. Downy wouldn't be likely to have his home address on him, for blasted good reasons. On your way up to the Red Mouse, why don't you stop in at the Louvre—that's where Ferguson's putting up—and inquire?"

Sanborn thought this a plan well worth trying, especially as the Louvre was directly on his way up to Montmartre, but hurried out without taking the trouble to say so. To the night clerk of the Louvre he broached his errand.

"The reason I'm interested," he confided to that officious personage, "is that the fellow that's drunk was carrying a very important document of mine, and I want to know whether or not he's lost it. Could you allow me to go up to his room and have a look through his things?"

"No, absolutely. It's quite beyond discussion," replied the clerk.

"You certainly don't lack decision, my friend," returned Sanborn urbanely. "But you needn't be quite so final about it. It means millions to me, and a little slice to you." Sanborn pulled out a fat, well-worn bill fold, and opened it.

This particular hotel clerk was a rara avis in Sanborn's acquaintance with his ilk. Upon seeing the pocketbook, he took a step backward, and raised his two hands, palms toward Sanborn, in a gesture the significance of which was unmistakable.

"I couldn't permit it," he said, "not for any consideration. You would have to buy the whole night staff of the hotel. But I will do this much: Mr. Ferguson, who brought the little man here, has made and subscribed an inventory of the articles found upon him. If your document is safe, it will be listed. I will permit you to examine the list."

"Let's see it, then," said Sanborn, his heart sinking; for if Ferguson had taken all that trouble, he must surely have come across the letter. The one chance in Sanborn's favor had been that Ferguson would get Downy to bed without looking too closely into his personal effects.

He looked the inventory over casually, and his face brightened perceptibly. "One letter, sealed, addressed to Daniel H. Ferguson," he read.

"It is safe, I see," suggested the hotel clerk, reaching for the list.

"It certainly is," Sanborn replied, dropping a gold piece as well as the sheet of paper into the clerk's hands. And, indeed, though he could hardly

comprehend it, he had every reason to believe that the letter was still intact; else why should Ferguson have put it down so carefully? If Ferguson had taken the letter, it would not have been mentioned; if he had broken the seal to read it, he would hardly have described it as sealed. Luke Leonard had been shrewd when he resealed it.

Sanborn wrote a memorandum to be delivered to Downy the first thing in the morning:

Kindly call up Luke Leonard as early as possible, telephone 34-87. Very important.

He passed the slip across the desk to the clerk. "Just get that to Downy as early as you can, and make sure that he does call up before he sees any one," he requested.

The clerk promised. Sanborn walked home in high fettle at his good fortune —to his real home, in the Boulevard Haussman. For he had no further business in the Rue St. Jacques that night. He entered quietly, listened a moment at Alicia's door until he caught the sound of her measured and gentle breathing, and passed on to his own room, completely satisfied and content.

Just before ten the next morning, Sanborn, immaculate in morning coat, top hat, ebony walking stick, and monocle, dropped into that precise seat at the Café de la Paix which had been called the center of the world. Sleep, they say, brings counsel; sleep certainly had robbed Sanborn of some of his confidence. A walk in the fresh air before breakfast, he told himself, was what he needed; what he actually wanted—this he did not tell himself—was to avoid meeting Alicia at breakfast, or, if possible, at any time before night, when he hoped to have his affairs in better order.

Alicia was not yet stirring when he left the house, and struck out at a good pace along the boulevard. For a morning of late July, it was cool, with just a hint of the balminess of midsummer. The sunshine was molten gold; the sky was turquoise without a flaw; the air was like new wine. Sanborn sniffed at it gratefully, inhaled great lungfuls of it, and felt toned and invigorated, after his late night, as if thirty years had been lopped off his age. On his way down to the Café de la Paix, he bought a paper, glanced casually at the headlines, and stopped short; for there was blazoned to the world an announcement potent with possibilities in his favor. His nerves tingled as he caught the gist of it; then, aware of the queer figure he must have made, stopping in the middle of the busy street to read his paper, he folded it up, stuck it in his pocket, and strolled on to the café.

Sanborn laid his morning paper upon the little round-topped table, and looked about him. At so early an hour the tables were almost deserted. Flat-footed, sleepy waiters, in knots of twos and threes, whipped at flies with dirty towels, and discussed in whispers the startling news which the morning journals had flung broadcast to humanity. He beckoned to one of them and ordered a café frappé; and while it was coming, he unfolded his paper again and read the leading article.

It appeared that Austria and Servia had gone to war. Whether or not it could be localized was a moot point. Sanborn's paper, as befitted his taste, was the most highly respected, most conservative sheet printed in Paris; the mere words of the article were, therefore, hopeful and pacific, but underneath them there ran a disturbing current of despair. The peace of Europe was on the knees of the gods.

If there should be war, he ruminated, Germany could not possibly avoid being the center of it. And there could be no more opportune time for pressing a hard and speedy bargain with Germany than on the brink of a great war; for it was in just such a crisis, if Sanborn knew anything of the strategy of diplo-

macy and of warfare, that the Coralles concession would be of inestimable value to the nation that owned it.

The iced coffee was brought; Sanborn sweetened it contemplatively. Then he clasped his hands across the gold top of his ebony stick, gazed at —and through—the great dome of the opera that gleamed in the sun, and dreamed out his program: get the property from Ferguson to-day; seek a private audience with the German ambassador that evening; and on the morrow fortune, a fortune stupendous in size, that would buy Alicia anything in the word she wanted; and then a truce to all this crooked business that he had grown to dread because he knew Alicia would hate him if she ever found it out. To-morrow——

But before then, there was much to be done.

In the first place, there was the property to be bought. His habits of caution in his little affairs forbade him to appear personally in the deal. At the same time, there had to be a go-between, a fake purchaser, to create for Ferguson an impression that it was all square. Time was when Downy, Leonard's mysterious friend, would have answered the purpose perfectly—that is, without demanding too large a slice of the profits. Now, of course, it was out of the question for Downy to appear in the guise of a purchaser; for Ferguson might have found out—undoubtedly had found out, that he and Leonard were old friends in—well, in crime. Whom could he approach, who would answer his purpose quickly and safely and economically?

Fate brought the answer. Paul, Marquis de Peret, came swinging down Rue Scribe on his way to the foreign office. The marquis was a tall, slim, erect figure of a man, the exceeding pallor of whose face, the more marked by sharp contrast with a black silken beard and hair and piercing black eyes, belied a state of health that was reasonably to be assumed from his easy, athletic gestures and general bearing.

Here, thought Sanborn, as he watched the man approach, was the very agent he wanted: a man entirely unsuspicious of Sanborn's proclivities, a man who was shrewd, discreet, quite to be trusted By the time the marquis had come abreast of the table, Sanborn's mind was made up. He arose suddenly, edged himself around the table toward the street, and advanced toward the newcomer with both hands extended.

"'Allo, Paul!" he cried cordially. "What good fortune brings you here just at this time?"

"'Allo, Monsieur Sanborn!" returned the marquis, with equal heartiness, grasping both of Sanborn's outstretched hands in his own. "How goes it?"

"Never better, Paul. Sit down and have something, won't you? You're precisely the man I've been wanting to see—a matter of a little affair that I want to push discreetly."

The two men sat down at Sanborn's table, and gave their orders.

"It's just this, Paul," Sanborn went on, when the waiter had departed: "I've decided to try some investments in South America. But I want to keep my own name out of it, because if it were known that I had invested, and had thus stamped such investments with my approval, there would inevitably be a rush of capital poured into the country, like the stampede following a pioneer discovery of gold. That I want to avoid—for a time. Of course, it must ultimately become known, but that I want to defer as long as possible. I wonder if you would be willing to act as my agent in the purchase of a certain piece of property—buy, that is, in your name, and transfer it secretly to me."

"Nothing would please me better," replied the young Frenchman, who liked to be associated with big affairs.

"Good! I am relying, you understand, upon your discretion."

"You are assured of it, my friend. When shall you want me?"

"Come up to the house for lunch—some time between twelve and one, and we'll talk it over more thoroughly. I'm a trifle pressed for time just now, and I assume that you'll be wanting to get to the bureau."

"Yes, I'm late as it is," rejoined the marquis, rising. "I shall see you at lunch. Au revoir, Monsieur Sanborn."

Sanborn watched the young fellow's departure with a satisfied expression. To discuss the matter at his own home was a guarantee to Peret that all was aboveboard. And, in fact, there was nothing about the deal, considering the way he meant to put it to the marquis, that Alicia might not know if she overheard them talking it over. After lunch, he could send the marquis to Ferguson and close it. If Leonard chose to go along, he knew that he could efficiently close Leonard's mouth, for the little man was his slave and would dare tell Peret only what he, Sanborn, dictated. And the chances were that Luke would not care to face Ferguson. So far, so good.

There was one other affair to be settled. He called for writing materials, and penned a little note to Alicia:

DELICIOUS: So sorry to have missed you this morning, but I chanced upon a most distressing accident in the Bois last night—a pitiable crossing sweeper run over by a careless chauffeur, who raced on without looking back. I saw the wretched man safe to the hospital last night, and this morning am off to look in upon his wife and two children, who, I understand, are in bad straits. I shall be back as soon as I can arrange their affairs, and have a surprise for you at luncheon.

Meantime, to assure you that I am not as negligent of you as I may seem, I am sending you this little volume to occupy you until I return. Most affectionately, DAN.

He folded and sealed the note, paid his account, and set off at a swinging pace down the avenue, stopping at the first bookstore he came across. Here he chose an exquisite edition de luxe of "The Master Builder," inclosed his letter, and ordered the package sent at once, special delivery, to Alicia. Thus he felt strongly girt for the rest of his forenoon's work; for the Rue St. Jacques and Phil Ferris and Leonard.

Leonard was up when he arrived. One look at his face sufficed to rob Sanborn of the sanguine assurance he had managed to evolve from his tonic exercise.

"What's the trouble, Luke?" he demanded, with misgiving.

"Letter's gone," announced Leonard.

Sanborn laid his stick upon the table, dropped into the first chair he came across, chose a cigarette for himself, and lighted it with studied deliberation. "The letter is gone, eh?" he remarked finally.

"So I said the first time."

"How do you know?"

"Downy called me up an hour ago and told me so."

"What did Downy say?" asked Sanborn, after an interval.

"Nothin' else that amounts to anything."

"Just what do you mean by that—'that amounts to anything?' Every little detail may be important. When did he discover the letter was gone?"

"Soon as he woke up. When I said 'that amounts to anything,' I meant just that; and I reckon I'm as good a judge as you are, Sandy."

"Leonard, you're a confounded crook! You're always keeping something back. If you expect to do any business with me, you've got to be frank, which you certainly aren't now. If you'd only told me in the first place about the trouble between you and Ferguson, we'd have engineered the thing differently, and probably we'd have the deed to his share this very minute. Now you're keeping something back

about Downy; I want to know what it is."

"That's Downy's own business."

"All right. Then we cut this deal out right now. I'll give you just three minutes to get out of here; and if you aren't out of here in that time, I'll throw you out on your neck!"

Leonard looked at Sanborn through half-closed eyes. "Aw, chop it, Sandy!" he said presently. "Honest, Downy's business ain't got anything to do with you. But if you want to know, I'll tell you. Downy's wanted; a big job in Philadelphia. He's got a hunch they're on his track, and he's skipped. That's all. He said he had the letter at the Red Mouse last night; he said it was put down in some fool inventory Ferguson made; but this morning, when he woke up, the letter wasn't there. He couldn't find it anywhere. Somebody's took it; Ferguson, of course."

Sanborn tossed his cigarette into the fireplace, leaned forward with his elbows on his knees and his strong white fingers clasped, and studied the floor. It was a logical conclusion that Ferguson had taken the letter. And yet Sanborn doubted it. Sanborn was a keen judge of character; and, although he did not know Ferguson, had not even seen him, he had heard enough of him from Leonard to realize the sort of man he was. If Ferguson had entered upon the list of articles found upon Downy "one letter, sealed, addressed to Daniel H. Ferguson," he felt quite sure that Ferguson would not meddle with that letter, nor take it without Downy's consent. On the other hand, so important a matter as the discovery was must leak out sooner or later; Germany must hear of it; and Paris was infested with German spies. But one way or the other, his sole salvation was to fix Ferguson so he could do business with no one but Sanborn, Leonard & Co.

"Has Phil gone out yet?" Sanborn asked.

"No, he ain't feelin' none too well this mornin'. Pretty well loaded when he went to bed, and besides that he took a couple of good beatin's last night."

Sanborn jumped up with a new hope. "Good!" he exclaimed. "That's just what I want. We've got him, now, Luke, if you'll do your share. I don't suppose you'd mind doing business with Ferguson if he was shut safe behind the bars, would you?"

"Nothin' I'd like better," replied Leonard lazily.

"If we can once get him shut up, Luke," Sanborn went on thoughtfully, "we ought to be able to buy him out before any one else can get track of him, no matter who's got the letter. Am I right?"

"Sandy," drawled Leonard, "if I used such language, I'd say you were a marveel-yus bright boy; that is, if you can pull it off. Of course, I don't want to perjure myself for nothin', but——"

"You couldn't perjure yourself, Luke; you don't know the meaning of an oath. Now shut up while I fix this."

Leonard cackled with amusement over this gibe; while Sanborn hurried to the telephone to make arrangements with one of his trusted lieutenants to find Ferguson, and keep an eye upon him constantly until he could bring his plot to a head.

CHAPTER VII.

THREE'S A CROWD.

It was well after eleven the next day when Ferguson left his room, walked along the corridor, and knocked at the door of that room in which he and Curley had found sanctuary for Our Leading Citizen. No response; not even to the second knock. Ferguson went downstairs and inquired at the desk.

"The room is vacated," the clerk informed him. "The gentleman paid his

bill and left his key early this morning."

"Did he leave any message for me?" Ferguson asked him.

"Not a word, sir."

"Queer," thought Ferguson. And then aloud: "I suppose he found everything all right," he said.

"Very likely, sir; at least, he made no complaint."

Ferguson hurried out and over to the Hotel Buckingham, to call off his appointment with Curley. He ran face to face with him in the lobby of the hotel. Curley was a trifle off color, a trifle dark beneath the eyes; but his jolly face was as beaming, his spirits as buoyant as ever.

"Hi, sport!" he cried jovially, catching Ferguson by the arm. "Just on my way over to drag you out of bed. How's the boy this morning?"

"Meaning me, or the Sunday-school superintendent?" laughed Ferguson.

"Present company first, of course."

"I'm fine as silk; and you?"

"Perfectly able to take nourishment, and needin' it the worst way. Seen anything of the old soldier yet?"

"No, he's gone; was gone when I got out about fifteen minutes ago."

"You don't say! By criminy, maybe I was mistaken in him, after all. Seems a regular devil, don't he, Ferguson, hikin' out like this after the cargo he took aboard last night?"

"I guess he must have had a speaking acquaintance, at least, with the Widow Clicquot, before last night. Seems queer, though, that he didn't leave a word to either of us."

Curley eyed him sharply. "How's that? He didn't leave any message at all?"

"Not a word."

"Then I s'pose everything's all right, eh?" Curley went on.

"Appears to be, or we'd have heard from him."

"Not even about that letter addressed to you, eh?"

Ferguson laughed, and turned toward the door. "Oh, forget about it, Curley. That was nothing but a letter of introduction or something of the sort; certainly nothing important, or it would have been addressed to me and registered through the mail. Any one who wanted to write me an important business letter knows my proper address, or my forwarding address at least."

"I s'pose," returned Curley apologetically, "you think I'm buttin' in a considerable, but I swear I don't want to see you lose anything; and you can never tell what that letter might be."

"Always supposing, too, that the letter is meant for me in the first place," laughed Ferguson. "And say, Curley, I'm dog-goned sorry, but I stumbled onto another invitation to lunch to-day, after I left you last night, and I accepted it before I remembered the two conflicted. If it's all the same to you, can't we make it dinner together to-night, and my show? I can't very well ask the other people to put me off, and I decided to take a chance on making another date with you."

"Oh, sure; lunch or dinner; it's all the same to me so long as it's one of the two. Better have an eye opener before you go; there's an American bar just around the corner."

"No, thanks; I'll be late as it is, I'm afraid. Call for me at the Louvre at six, will you, Curley?"

With Curley's promise and a jocular adieu following him, Ferguson departed for the Boulevard Haussman, and the Sanborns' apartment.

It was not until the next morning that Alicia realized the crisis into which her impulsive, though entirely sincere, invitation to Ferguson had led her. Ferguson had to be accounted for to her father before lunch time; her sudden acquaintance with him had to be ex-

plained. It was not going to be a welcome task to confess to her father the cause and the facts of her midnight escapade; that, too, had been entirely the result of a sudden impulse, and, though justifiable, she felt that it was not an affair she could relate to Sanborn without being embarrassed and a trifle ashamed. Yet there was no other explanation possible. The confession had to be made before Ferguson arrived, to avoid complications and further embarrassment before him. The sooner it was made, the better.

"Tell papa I want to see him in half an hour," she requested the maid who brought her coffee and rolls.

It must be admitted that Alicia was somewhat relieved when the maid returned to inform her that Sanborn had gone out at nine; for that meant, Alicia knew from experience, that her father would not be home to lunch, and that the explanation might be deferred. Bowing to conventionalities, she cast about her for a chaperon, and finally decided to ask Mrs. Rumbold over; Mrs. Rumbold was a motherly, kind-hearted Englishwoman, who, she knew, would accept the situation without question. And she had barely finished writing a note to her, when the messenger arrived with the exquisite edition de luxe of "The Master Builder," inclosing Sanborn's diplomatic letter.

She read the note, and threw both book and letter upon the table with a little snort of vexation. Here was proof positive of her father's duplicity; now a scene was inevitable. She stood a moment in indecision, annoyed beyond measure, not alone at the paltriness of his excuse, but as well because events could not have shaped themselves worse.

Now it became a question whether or not Sanborn should arrive in time to have the inevitable scene over before Ferguson appeared; it was a question, indeed, if he might not show up after Ferguson had arrived, and thus make the position doubly difficult, if not impossible. However, she was not to be outgeneraled by fate; before half an hour was gone, she had evolved plans to fit any contingency, and carry off any situation without annoyance.

By the time Ferguson arrived, she was radiant, elated, in a state of semi-exaltation, a mood that mantled her cheek and kindled her eye and added perceptibly to her charms. She remembered that Ferguson's only sight of her had been when she was dressed in a most somber and unprepossessing get-up, composed chiefly of a long, shapeless raincoat. And so she exerted herself with creditable success to make him forget his first impression in the glory of his second. She massed her blond hair high upon her head, to give her more height, drew it low across her broad forehead, and confined it with a fillet of pink velvet. She chose a gown that her father had frowned upon for being too dashy, or, at least, too little subdued: coral pink, with a coat of sheer silk flowered with tiny knots of mauve. She still remembered the sensation it had caused at the Auteuil races, and the lecture her father had read her afterward, a lecture inspired, she felt sure, by the disapproval of one Marquis de Peret, commonly called Paul, who undoubtedly found it a trifle too outré for a staid young lady already as good as engaged. And as she thought of Paul Peret, she indulged in a little grimace of rebellion that had begun to smolder.

Quite unconscious of the riot she stirred up, her first words set Ferguson's pulse to racing. "I expect papa here any minute," she said, after the greetings were over.

"Oh," exclaimed Ferguson, with half a gasp, "then it was your father——" And there he stopped, for he had decided to make no mention of the previ-

ous night, and the exclamation had been wrung from him unconsciously.

"Then you knew——" she began uneasily.

"Yes, I heard you ask Ferris for some one by the name of Sanborn," Ferguson returned apologetically, "and I naturally concluded."

"Perhaps you know papa," she hazarded, scanning him intently.

"No, I haven't the pleasure."

"I thought, perhaps, you might. You seemed to know Ferris, and—after all, your being there in the Rue St. Jacques was—was most opportune." She tried to avoid any appearance of subtle censure either of tone or of words, and was chagrined at her failure.

For Ferguson was decidedly sensitive upon the point, and feared what she might think of him for being there—"most opportunely," as she expressed. He hastened to exculpate himself. "It certainly was opportune," he said heartily. "The truth is, I have been looking for an American in Paris here for a week—using private detectives and all that. And just last night one of my men located him there in the Rue St. Jacques; so I hurried around to get him before he got away."

"And you missed him through me."

"I'll find him again, right enough; my man is still on the job there."

"What do you know of that place, Mr. Ferguson?"

"Not very much. There's an apartment there run by an American called Brown, Alexander Brown. Seems to be sort of a hang-out place for—for homesick Americans. How long have you lived here?"

"Eighteen years," she replied casually. "Quite long enough for a man to recover from any homesickness he may have suffered, so father must find some other sort of attraction there."

"It's possible," Ferguson admitted, "though I'm sure I don't know anything about the place. I've never been inside it in my life."

"You know, of course," she went on, her eyes level with Ferguson's, "that I was looking for father there last night. I'd only just discovered his—his penchant, and—and, well, no matter now. Of course, you'll meet him at lunch, and——" She stumbled and dropped her eyes; it was harder than she thought to invite Ferguson to be a party to any duplicity.

Ferguson was quick to see her grave concern. "I don't see why it should be at all necessary to refer to last night," he said. "Personally, I'd rather not have it generally known that I was interested in that part of the town. I hope you don't mind."

This ready shouldering of her disagreeable burden fixed Ferguson the firmer upon the pedestal she had set up for him. The sudden appearance of a liveried attendant to announce lunch obviated the necessity of making any immediate rejoinder.

"We won't wait for papa," Alicia said, rising. "He's likely to be here any minute, and equally likely not to be here at all. Let's go in."

She led the way into the dining room.

"How long do you expect to stay in Paris?" she asked Ferguson, as the butler served the soup.

"I did intend to go back as soon as I had finished this business with Leonard—he's the man I wanted to see at Brown's apartment. Still, I may stay on a little longer now," he said, obviously an afterthought.

Alicia did not fail to sense the subtle meaning in his words, and dropped her eyes a trifle confusedly. "Your business won't take you so very long, then," she said, merely to make talk.

"It ought not to—not my business with Leonard. I intended to make two killings with one trip. I did hope to get capital to develop a little tin mine I've got down in Bolivia. But nobody here

will look at it. I didn't see why, at first; but now it's plain enough that this war scare has tied up capital. So I might as well kiss that proposition good-by."

"A tin mine! In Bolivia! How interesting! I didn't guess that you were from South America. Do tell me about it!"

"There's not much to tell," Ferguson deprecated. "My partner, Fortner, and I did some harbor-construction work and fortifications on Lake Titicaca for the Bolivian government. They promised us some cash and an old dump on the Cerro Gordo where the Spanish conquerors took out gold—and the Incas before them, most likely. It's up on the line of perpetual snow, fifteen thousand feet above sea level. We never got the cash, but the dump turned out pretty well, considering. If we had the facilities for handling it in bulk, we could make a good thing out of it. It's a low-grade ore, with now and then a streak of silver, easy enough to handle up there because it's all been worked over once. But the difficulty is getting the stuff to the concentration mills; they're a good three thousand feet below us, over the worst kind of a mountain trail. We have to use llamas to pack the stuff down now. That costs us a good bit over a dollar a ton alone, and, besides that, it limits our production. With the ore running not better than fifteen per cent, there's not a great deal in it at that figure. In fact, if we clean up eight or ten thousand a year between us—and that means about half what it would mean here, on account of higher living expenses—we consider ourselves lucky. Still, this can't interest you. When I once get wound up I——"

"On the contrary, it does, immensely," she protested warmly. "I had no idea that there was any money much in tin, of all things."

Ferguson laughed. "Well, you'll be surprised, then, when I tell you that if we could afford to build a ropeway down the mountain to the concentration plant, we could deliver our ore at about ten cents a ton, instead of a dollar we pay now, and would be dividing a good hundred thousand a year, instead of the ten thousand we get now."

"How much capital do you need?" she asked.

"If we could get a third man to put fifty thousand with what Fortner and I have got, we could do it, and give him a pro-rata share of half the profits."

"That's a trifle too deep for me," she said, puzzled.

"It's like this," he explained: "We didn't want to get up a stock company; we'd rather have a third partner who could look after the business end of the game. We'd naturally have to have something for our interest in the claim —fifty-one per cent would be the proper figure if we did organize a company. So we figured on reserving half the profits on account of its being our property to begin with, and allow the third man to draw on the rest pro rata with the amount he puts in. He ought to get twenty-five thousand a year out of it. Of course, we'd have to have pretty good references from our third partner, as to his character and all that."

Alicia's face fell. From the time she heard of Ferguson's need of capital, she had firmly resolved to ask her father to look into the matter as an investment for some of his wealth, though primarily to assist Ferguson; she had even decided to make it a matter of so grave importance to her that he could not well refuse to deny her this boon. But this business of references—references as to an excellent character, after what she knew of her father—that was like a wet blanket thrown upon the blazing flames of her inspiration and her hopes.

Ferguson's sympathetic eye was

quick to note her change of mood. The idea of her finding capital for him had not occurred to him; he had rattled on and on about the mine merely because it appeared to interest her, and furnished common ground for talk. "There," he cried regretfully; "I didn't realize what I was doing. Once I get wound up——" he unconsciously repeated himself.

"But what have you been doing?" she interrupted.

"Boring you to death with all this talk of my mine."

"Not a bit." She shook her head resolutely, but the sudden peal of the doorbell checked whatever else she had to say.

Ferguson looked quickly and questioningly at her.

"No, it isn't father," she told him, in a low tone, replying to his unasked question. "He never rings."

The butler appeared and announced: "Le Marquis Paul de Peret." Instantly the head of the tall young fellow appeared over the butler's shoulder in the doorway. And if Ferguson wondered why the color fled from Alicia's face with the announcement, it cannot be doubted that Peret, who was a remarkably observant man, wondered still more, and as a result of his wondering found fruitful cause for misgiving. His state of mind asserted itself in a stare that was at once direct and insolent; one that said plainly enough "who the devil are you, and by what right are you here?"

Ferguson was not a man to misconstrue the meaning of such a glare, nor yet one to sit idly and permit himself to be the target of so much impudence without resenting it. Paul Peret, of the domineering eyes, found his match, and more, too. Ferguson's eyes met the Frenchman's squarely, and shot back the insolence tenfold. Hostilities were declared then and there; only the presence of Alicia restrained the men from jumping at each other's throats. As for Peret, it was much as if Ferguson had hit him in the face with a well-directed blow of the fist; like a bully dodging battle with an equal, he trained his baleful glare upon Alicia, and strode quickly toward her.

"Good day, mademoiselle," he said formally in French, bowing over her finger tips. "I was merely looking for your father. I had no idea I was interrupting so congenial a tête-à-tête luncheon. Pardon the intrusion." Ferguson's blood boiled at the tone he employed.

"It is an intrusion," Alicia declared hotly, enraged at his manner. "You might at least have waited until Henri had announced you."

"It is too bad that I didn't," returned Peret. "As it is, unfortunately, I am here."

Alicia fought for self-possession. "Don't be nasty," she said in a low tone. "I want you to meet Mr. Ferguson, an American friend of mine. Mr. Ferguson, the Marquis de Peret." The men bowed frigidly. "We've just finished, Paul, or I'd ask you to lunch with us," she went on.

"I haven't had coffee yet," persisted Peret. "If you don't mind—I see you are just having yours." Peret seated himself resolutely in a vacant chair, and beckoned to the attendant. "Are you a very old friend of Miss Sanborn's?" he asked Ferguson, while he awaited his coffee.

None of this little drama was lost upon Ferguson: the young fellow's assumption of empire over Alicia, his obvious familiarity with the household, and, above all, Alicia's discomposure at his abrupt entry. There was no mistaking the relations between them. Ferguson would have liked nothing better than to take this impertinent puppy by the collar and shake some decent manners into him, either literally, or in a sparring match of words. For the

girl's sake, however, that was impossible. He would have swallowed almost anything to save her from further annoyance; and he saw, with deep chagrin, that his very presence at such a time increased her agitation. The only decent thing for him to do was to get out as quickly as possible, and as gracefully; later on, there was always the possibility of running across Monsieur le Marquis, and reading him a lecture upon gallantry; and, later on, too, there was the certainty of seeing Alicia again without the presence of this disagreeable interloper. For Ferguson had no mind to let a little thing like the engagement he suspected between the girl and this Frenchman stand in the way of his seeing Miss Sanborn when he cared to, if she was willing to receive him.

"Not old enough a friend, at any rate," Ferguson told the Frenchman, "to feel free to treat her uncivilly."

And while Peret spluttered some unintelligible retort, Ferguson looked deliberately and composedly at his watch. "I had no idea, Miss Sanborn," he said, "that the time had gone so fast. I'm afraid I must be going. I've an important appointment at the American Express office at two."

"I'm so sorry, Mr. Ferguson," said Alicia, rising and letting her hand rest in his for a second. "It's been so pleasant to have you here. Do drop in again!"

"Thanks; I will." And, without a word to the enraged Peret, Ferguson left the room.

"What sort of a savage is it?" demanded Peret scornfully, when the outer door had closed behind Ferguson. "Studying his watch during lunch; shaking hands; flaunting a business engagement as an excuse for leaving you? Where did you pick him up?"

"I won't hear him criticized; not from you, at any rate," Alicia declared hotly. "If manners make a man, you'd better beg him to give you a few lessons."

"I ask you, mademoiselle, to inform me who he is, and where you found him, and why you have him here to a luncheon alone, without a sign of a chaperon?" Peret caught the end of his mustache in his strong white teeth and chewed at it viciously.

"That is my affair," Alicia told him promptly, her eyes level with his.

"As much mine as yours," snapped the Frenchman.

"You may think so," she said evenly, "but permit me to correct you. From this time on what I may do is none of your affair."

The blood surged into Peret's face, flushing it purple. "Just what do you mean by that?" he rasped.

"That I do not consider myself bound to you in any way."

Peret studied her with staring eyes. "Why this?" he said, after a moment. "Some temporary infatuation with that —that semisavage who left just now?"

Alicia stirred the dregs of her coffee with the point of the tiny spoon, evading, for the first time, the young man's eyes. "On account of your ridiculous behavior," she said at length, "if for no other reason." And, after a space of silence, she added: "I am glad that I have seen the two of you together, after all; it makes comparison easier."

After a moment, Peret arose resolutely, assuming a forced calm to show his self-mastery. "I can't, of course, accept this as final. It is evident that you are not quite yourself. I shall see your father about it at the earliest opportunity."

"Do, please," she rejoined.

He stood looking down at her for a moment without a word, and then turned on his heel and left the room and the apartment. He was in a raging temper, and dared not speak for fear of making a fool of himself. One

thing he decided upon, that he would lose no time in laying the matter before Sanborn, and in bringing this foolish girl to her senses. He was too munificently blessed with self-love to think that Alicia really meant what she said; but her cutting remarks had rankled deep, and he meant to make her bend the knee to him. He was too excited to wait for the elevator, but stamped down the stairs in a high dudgeon, his rage gathering headway with his every step. But once in the street, he was treated to a sight that appeased his wrath like a sop of meat to a baying dog.

Not half a block away he saw Ferguson marching along between two stalwart members of the municipal guards, the steel of the handcuffs upon his wrists glistening in the sun. Here was a pretty story to pour into Alicia's ears.

CHAPTER VIII.

CURLEY PLAYS THE SAMARITAN.

Ferguson had walked straight into the arms of the municipal guards, who had traced him to the Boulevard Haussman, and had waited in the porter's lodge for him to descend. Surprised and indignant, he insisted that some mistake had been made, and was inclined to resist arrest with all his force. Upon seeing the warrant, however, wherein he was charged with "assault upon the person of one Phillip Ferris, black, an American," he abandoned his spirited protests, and submitted, and that without misgiving.

It was a clear case, he thought, of Fighting Phil's vengeance, and unavoidable. The worst that could happen to him was a fine and a reprimand, and possibly the demand of a bond to keep the peace. There was no question of public disgrace for him. The only person who could hear of it, for whose opinion he cared a copper cent, was Alicia Sanborn; and surely she would need no explanation of the circumstance. All things considered, it was a small price to pay for the pleasure he had got out of the escapade.

And even when the officers drew out handcuffs and insisted upon snapping them on, he made no complaint; for he imagined that this might be the common procedure in Paris, even if he were guilty of no more heinous an offense than the breach of the peace. They took him to the station house of the arrondissement, and shut him in a detention cell, pending his examination by a *juge d'instruction*, or police magistrate. And there his surprises began in earnest.

The appearance of Luke Leonard within half an hour was his first. Ferguson was sitting upon the iron shelf that served as bed, chair, and table, nonchalantly smoking a pipe, when he heard footsteps along the damp corridor. Thinking that they had come to take him in for his hearing, he jumped up and knocked the ashes out of his pipe; but when he saw Luke Leonard, under the convoy of a uniformed guard, and a third man in plain clothes, who turned out to be an interpreter, he settled back upon his hard seat, and filled his pipe again.

Leonard came straight up to the door, put his face close to the cross-barred grating, and clutched the vertical bars with either hand. Ferguson, drawing the flame of a match out over his pipe, glanced at him curiously, but without a word.

"By mighty, Dan," said the little man, his face grave, his voice lugubrious with assumed sympathy, "I'm sure sorry to see this, for old times' sake."

Ferguson met his eyes, but said nothing.

"Of course," Leonard went on imperturbably, "if Fightin' Phil had been himself I wouldn't have let this hap-

pen. But the law stepped in, and what could I do?" he asked plaintively.

"What are you driving at, Leonard?" Ferguson asked finally.

"Why, this business of yours. It sure looks awful serious to me, Dan. I wouldn't have had it happen for a million dollars, if I had had anything to say about it."

"No, of course you wouldn't," said Ferguson ironically. "I'm perfectly well able to look after myself, so get your business over quick, and get out! If you've come here to make a bargain about that Fortner affair, I warn you I'll not discuss it now. You know what's coming to you, all right."

"So far as I'm concerned," Leonard replied suavely, "that Fortner affair was settled up months ago by the court in Bogotá. What I'm here for now is to help you out of a bad hole. It's a question, Dan, whether Fightin' Phil ever pulls through this; you sure did give him an awful beatin' up."

The shot told; though it was surprise and not anxiety that caused the sudden change in Ferguson's expression. "How do you mean, 'pull through'?" he asked.

"Just that," Leonard told him. "The poor devil was unconscious when they found him in front of Brown's apartment, and he hadn't come around yet when I left him just now. The doctor says it's almighty doubtful whether he'll ever get over it; in fact, the doctor don't really expect him to live till night. It was the doctor who swore out the warrant against you; I tried my best to argue him out of it, but he said it was his plain duty. So there you are."

Ferguson crammed the ashes into his pipe with a stubby forefinger, while he milled over the situation. That being the case, things certainly did look bad. If Fighting Phil died, it would be no simple charge of assault against him, but manslaughter, or even murder. No wonder, then, that the officers had insisted upon snapping the handcuffs upon his wrists!

"I understand," Leonard went on, after a space, "that you won't be arraigned for a while—not until they see how the injuries will turn out. And, if you are, you'll be remanded, or let out only under whalin' big bail."

To this Ferguson made no reply.

Presently Leonard went on: "I just come around to see if there was anything I could do for you, for old times' sake; maybe get a good lawyer for you, or something like that. How are you fixed for dough, Dan?"

"None too well," grunted Ferguson. He thought of Curley, who was the only man he knew in Paris whom he felt free to call on for help. Curley might see him through it; Curley, at least, would be good enough to cable for more funds. For besides his return ticket to Sabanilla, he had barely three hundred dollars balance on his letter of credit.

"I'd be only too glad, Dan, to let you have any amount, if I had it; but the truth is I'm pretty well strapped myself till I can put over that deal I wrote you about—the Coralles concession deal, I mean. And if we did, it would fix you up about right, though I don't want you to feel forced to sell your half if I can get this party to take my half alone, an' can get enough dough to see you through this. I was goin' to show up at the American Express, anyhow, this afternoon, an' take my medicine, even though you wouldn't declare a truce; I need the cash the worst way."

Ferguson ruminated upon this point. "What did your man offer for the whole parcel?" he asked presently.

"Forty thousand dollars, undivided. Of course, if we had to divide it, there'd be the expense of a survey and a suit for division, so I couldn't realize more'n a quarter of that for my half. All the same, I don't bear you no ill feelin's,

an', as I say, I don't want you to feel forced to sell your half just to accommodate me."

"What terms of payment does your man offer?" Ferguson asked.

"Spot cash."

"What have you been telling him about it, Leonard? What did you tell him to make him want to sink forty thousand in that pile of rocks? We haven't got any mining privileges."

"He wants it for grazin' purposes," replied Leonard innocently.

"Does he know that the only way he can get his cattle to market is by dropping them off a mountain eight thousand feet high?"

"Sure! I told him all about it," Leonard assured him.

"Can you bring your man around here to talk it over?" inquired Ferguson.

"Sure thing," exclaimed Leonard delightedly. "So you'll sell, eh?"

"I certainly will, if the man wants to buy after I've got through telling him about it. I give you fair warning, Leonard, that I'm going to tell him he's buying a ticket in a lottery when he buys that property; and then if he's fool enough to go ahead with it, all right."

"You can't tell him anything I hain't already told him, Dan," rejoined Leonard emphatically. "I'll go get him right away, an' I ought to be back here in half an hour at the latest. So long, Dan; don't worry; this thing'll come out all right."

Leonard and his little convoy disappeared down the corridor, and Ferguson stretched himself out to take it easy until he returned. But this little boon was to be denied him. Within five minutes the same pair of officers—a uniformed guard and a plain-clothes attendant, an interpreter to censor the prisoner's conversation—returned, bringing with them this time a ray of sunshine in the shape of the advertising man from Syracuse, Curley.

Curley was in a graver mood than Ferguson thought possible for this blithe and hearty compatriot of his; the jaunty swing of bearing and his cordial smile were lacking. Ferguson arose and walked to the door of his cell to meet him.

"This is darned tough luck, Ferguson!" Curley began.

"How the deuce did you find out about it?" asked Ferguson in astonishment.

"Oh, I manage to find out a whole lot more than most folks give me credit for," was Curley's enigmatic reply. "Say, what did that wizened-up little shrimp who just left want of you, anyhow? Who is he? Do you know him?"

"Yes, I know him," replied Ferguson, somewhat amazed at this direct question. "His name is Leonard; he's an old partner of mine in Colombia. Why?"

"What did he want?"

"He came around to offer me a little of the sympathy stuff, and, besides, we had a business deal on for this afternoon?"

"Is he level?"

Had any other man asked him such a question, Ferguson would have told him to go straight to the devil; as it was, Curley's direct and personal questions annoyed Ferguson sorely, especially since he could comprehend no reason why Curley should have put them. But from what he already knew of Curley, he found it difficult to be short with him; for Curley was likable and incapable, he thought, of deliberate meanness. "I'm sorry, Curley," said Ferguson, "but I never did like the idea of passing one man's reputation on to another without some darned good reason for doing it."

"Oh, that's all right, Ferguson," Curley replied promptly. "Mistake of mine to ask that question. I got a little too enthusiastic; a little ahead of my horses.

It don't really matter to me whether your friend's straight or not. But for your own good you want to keep a sharp lookout on any business deals you put over right away. I'm inclined to think that you're gettin' a raw deal; that this game of gettin' you jugged is a plant. That's what made me ask you what that little guy was after."

"What gives you that idea?"

"Well, that letter, in the first place, is for you; and, what's more, it's worth its weight in—in radium; and, what's more yet, there's somebody almighty crazy to get hold of it before you do. You'll have to take that for what it's worth; I can't back it all up with facts."

Ferguson pricked up his ears; Curley spoke with such solemn conviction that Ferguson was inclined to believe him, in spite of the absurdity of it. "What are your facts, Curley?" he asked. "Who's after that letter?"

"A crook named Alexander Brown; an American, and the smoothest proposition in Paris."

"Brown, eh?" rejoined Ferguson. "Is he the fellow that keeps the dive in the Rue St. Jacques?"

Curley nodded. "Yes, he's the same guy. Know him, Ferguson?"

"No, only by name. I understand he keeps a gambling joint there. Leonard and Fighting Phil hang out there, too. I went around there last night to find Leonard, and found Fighting Phil first, and that's why I'm here."

"So it was there you mixed it with the big smoke, eh?"

"Yes, right in front of the house."

"What started it?" asked Curley.

"He was getting a little too fresh with a girl there, so I stepped in to put a stop to it. But let's hear the rest of this story of yours about Brown. What makes you think he wants that letter?"

"Well, I'll tell you: I know for a fact he was at your hotel last night after you had gone to bed, askin' the clerk for that letter of yours; crazy to get his fingers on it; told the clerk it was worth millions to him, and offered the clerk a big slice to see him through it. The clerk turned him down. But you want to fight shy of that man Brown. He's fixin' to put something big over on you—something big, understand?"

"How did you get hold of that?" demanded Ferguson.

"Never mind how I got it," Curley returned. "It's straight. I had a hunch that gang was baiting you, when Fightin' Phil Ferris spoke to you in the Red Mouse last night—Brown's got Phil in cahoots with him, got him hog-tied, body and soul. Now, don't for criminy's sake think I'm buttin' in too much on your business, but I know that crook Brown, and I know he was after that letter of yours last night, and offered big money for it, and I know just what he said when he asked for it—'it's worth millions to me'—just like that. Brown's too wise to start anything with you in person, I guess; but he's got a bunch of phony ones together, in one way and another, that would jump off the Eiffel Tower if he whistled. And my advice to you is that you don't do business of any kind with any one whose pedigree you don't know from the time he put on pants; anyhow, not until you know what's in that letter, or get me to hand you down an opinion on his rep. Now, you know this guy Leonard better than I do, but you needn't split on him to me; all is, I've got a hunch that he's Brown's partner in this deal, and that you're goin' to be done out of a wad that would choke an elephant."

Ferguson looked Curley over thoughtfully. "That all sounds fine, Curley, and I'm much obliged to you for the interest you take in me. But I'm afraid you're on the wrong track. The fact is, I imagine Leonard's fixing to put one over on your man

Brown, or perhaps on some other man who is a victim of Brown's. The deal is all square and aboveboard between Leonard and me. You see, he and I own a strip of land together down in Colombia. The land itself is all right for grazing, but the way it's situated it might as well be seven miles beyond the hot place, for all the stock a man could get to market from it. And the government has reserved the mining rights on it, so you can make a pretty close estimate on its actual value. But Leonard has picked up a sucker that wants to give forty thousand dollars for it, and if the sucker wants to buy, after I get through telling him the truth about the property, well and good; I'll let him have it."

"Don't sell!" put in Curley decisively. "Don't sell at any figure till you look into it a little farther."

"Why not?"

"Because, you'll be done if you do—pasted square in the eye to the tune of seven or eight figures."

"What reasons have you got for thinking so?"

"I—I've got a hunch," Curley repeated stubbornly.

Ferguson was fast becoming irritated with Curley's obstinate "hunches," with his pertinacious warning of some fabulous storm about to break. Had he been almost any other man, Ferguson would have pointed out long since that he had managed his own affairs for thirty years, and had not yet been adjudged incompetent to continue to do so. But with Curley it was different. His motives were obviously the very best; his concern for Ferguson was clearly altruistic; his anxiety for Ferguson's welfare was the sole desire that actuated him in pursuing this line of conduct. Nevertheless, there are limits to any one's patience.

"A hunch is all right, Curley," rejoined Ferguson, "when you're bucking luck, but in a straight business proposition it don't stack up worth a cent. I'm afraid I can't see myself turning down a clean profit of twenty thousand dollars on the strength of one of your hunches. And, besides, I've got to have a little something back of me to get out of this scrape. Leonard tells me that there's a chance of the big coon's kicking in from his injuries, and in such a case I'll have to hire lawyers, and maybe put up big bail; I've simply got to have that twenty thousand."

"If I could get hold of the money easy, Ferguson, I'd let you have it this minute; but since I can't, I'm goin' to do the next best thing. This thing is all a put-up job, and a dirty one, at that. Phil Ferris is as healthy this afternoon as you and I are, except for a hang-over; but they've got him covered up so close that I'm goin' to have the deuce of a time to prove it in court. They're scarin' you into sellin' out quick; that's what they're up to.

"But you leave it to me, and we'll have you out of here before to-morrow noon. Maybe I won't be able to prove that they've perjured themselves about the big smoke, but I've got another string to my bow. You just sit tight, and wave your fingers at 'em when they come around to close that deal, and you'll come out of this all right. I'll go see a lawyer right away. I'll get him to hurry your arraignment along, and it's dollars to doughnuts if they don't turn you loose as soon as a magistrate gets the truth of this business. So you just wait till you hear further from me before you sell that property; I've got a hunch it's worth a darned sight more than ten times forty thousand."

"It depends on how long it takes you to deliver the goods," said Ferguson. "But you can't reasonably expect me to rot in this hole much longer on the strength of one of your hunches."

"Well, sport, I'm some little hustler when I get started. You won't have to wait long if things break my way.

So long; I'll look in again before evenin'."

Curley hurried out, and ten minutes later there was delivered to Ferguson a box of as good Havanas as there were to be had in Paris, with this note on a blank sheet torn from a notebook:

Nothing like a good cigar to help a hunch along.

"Poor old Curley and his hunches!" said Ferguson to himself, half laughing, half serious.

But if Ferguson could have seen exactly what steps Curley was taking to further his designs, there would have been no half laughing about it. For Curley, as he himself suggested, knew more than most people gave him credit for. From the St. Lazare station, Curley went as unerring as a hound on a fresh scent to 56 Boulevard Haussman, and asked for the Mademoiselle Sanborn, in French that would have passed muster in the Academy.

"Tell her," he said to the butler, "that it's about Mr. Ferguson, and most important."

"Mademoiselle will see you," the butler told him a moment later, leading him into the drawing-room.

Figuratively speaking, Curley shivered in his shoes while he awaited Alicia; for she was his chief card, and an unknown quantity as well. But when she appeared, he looked her over with complete approbation; he could not have chosen a better ally. And the Curley who spoke to her was not at all the one whom Ferguson knew; he advanced to meet her with a courtliness that no one would have expected to see in the advertising man from Syracuse.

"I was afraid, Miss Sanborn," he said, "that I might have come upon a fruitless mission, but I see I haven't."

"Your verdict may be a little premature," she told him, looking at his card again. "Did you say you had come about Mr. Ferguson?"

"Yes. I shall be forced to ask you some rather direct and personal questions. Please don't take offense. I'm doing it only for Ferguson's sake, and that is the only way I can get at truth."

"Won't you sit down, Mr.—I don't know just how you pronounce your name," she said, dropping into a chair.

"It's plain Gough, to rhyme with cough, and not with though," he replied, choosing a seat for himself.

"I don't promise to answer all your questions, Mr. Gough," she went on. "But, at any rate, I shan't be insulted if you aren't."

"In the first place," began Curley, "I'll tell you the circumstances of the case, so that you may know what it's all about. There is a group of men in Paris, headed by one called Alexander Brown, who are plotting to swindle Ferguson out of a sum of money that reaches into the millions. In order to force him to come to their terms on the sale of a certain piece of property, the value of which he hasn't the slightest notion, Brown and his gang have engineered Ferguson's arrest upon the charge of assaulting a negro prize fighter named Ferris last night in front of the premises known as thirty-one Rue——"

"How perfectly detestable!" cried Alicia, jumping up suddenly, her face flushed with righteous indignation. "We must get him out at once, Mr. Gough. I was there; Mr. Ferguson happened along just as the negro was insulting me most horribly, and merely did what any man's duty would have been."

"Then I am right!" cried Curley in turn, his broad face suffused with triumph. "I didn't dare ask Ferguson about it, because I knew he wouldn't tell me. I knew he was out here to lunch, and I knew the fight was something about a woman; so I put two and two together and came to see you on a mere chance. But we can't do anything just yet; I want to tell you the rest of it."

"So Mr. Ferguson didn't tell you it was my quarrel!" she remarked, sinking back into her chair.

"No, not a word. I know him well enough to be able to state most decisively that he would take the limit without a whimper, almost, rather than ask you to appear in his defense publicly. I am doing this on my own responsibility and my own initiative. I would prefer that Ferguson never knew my part in the matter."

"I promise you I shan't tell him."

"Let's get ahead, then. This American, Brown, has arranged things so that Ferguson is likely to be kept in prison some time, merely by swearing that the negro's injuries are graver than they are really are, and that the negro is in mortal danger as a result of them; he will ask that Ferguson be held in heavy bail pending the negro's recovery or death. That puts Ferguson to the necessity of selling his property to raise bail and attorney's fees. I want to get him freed before he feels compelled to do that.

"Through counsel of my own, I have got his arraignment scheduled for to-morrow morning at nine. This Alexander Brown will be there to give his testimony, in the hope of having Ferguson remanded to jail or held in heavy bail. Now, you may be aware that the French judges are very lenient in cases in which the safety of women is concerned, and if the facts of the case were disclosed in court—your testimony, in fact—my counsel is of the opinion that Ferguson would be at once released without bail, upon the mere recognizances of my counsel; and thus he would be relieved of the necessity of selling for a song his property that is worth millions. The point is, would you be willing to appear in court to-morrow morning at nine, and testify as to the cause of the assault?"

"Most certainly I shall be there!" cried Alicia resolutely. "I shall be only too glad to tell everything I know."

"Excellent!" commended Curley heartily. "You are a most courageous young lady, under the circumstances. I only hope you realize what your presence in court entails—the whole story."

"I understand. I must tell what I was doing there, and everything, if I am called upon to do so."

"Precisely that. It will be your testimony against Brown's; yours being, of course, more credible than his."

"You can't frighten me off, Mr. Gough, so there's no use trying," said Alicia eagerly. "I'm only sorry that I can't do it at once."

"That's impossible, worse luck! I'll send a cab for you to-morrow morning in plenty of time to get there, and confer with my attorney before the case is called. You should be ready about eight, I think."

"I'll be ready. But isn't there any possibility of my seeing Mr. Ferguson before then? I feel that I ought to go and call on him, at least, and do something to make it a little pleasanter for him."

"No, please don't! It would only confuse everything. And now I must be off. I've got a lot of things to see to. Good-by, Miss Sanborn, for the present."

And Curley, much satisfied with the success of his errand, hurried off about his business.

CHAPTER IX.

LAUNCHING THE PIRATE SHIP.

The Marquis Paul Peret stood for a moment in the archway of the apartment house where the Sanborns lived, watching Ferguson out of sight with a grim and sardonic satisfaction, and framing the speech of denunciation he intended to make at once to Alicia Sanborn. He had just turned to go back upstairs when a taxi spun down from

the opposite direction, stopped at the curb, and disgorged the imposing figure of Charles Augustus Sanborn.

"'Allo, Paul!" he cried, as he espied Peret's slim figure. "Just a minute! Sorry to be so late, but it was unavoidable. Have you been waiting long?" He rushed across the sidewalk and greeted the Frenchman cordially.

"I was here on time, at least," returned Peret coolly. "And in time to see a most interesting spectacle: your daughter, lunching quite alone and tête-à-tête with one of your compatriots, a most boorish, ill-mannered fellow. And I descend just now, to see him arrested and taken away in handcuffs. I would advise you to look more carefully to your daughter's associates; if that fact were generally known, it would ruin me and my career: that is, if you still desire the match."

"My dear Paul," rejoined Sanborn urbanely, "what is this you are telling me? I'm sure I don't understand."

Peret repeated his account of the astounding event to Sanborn, whose incredulity was shown plainly in his fine-featured face.

"There must be a mistake somewhere, Paul," Sanborn told him decisively. "I'm quite sure Alicia wouldn't—— Did you get his name, by the way?"

"Ferguson, or some such."

"Ferguson!" gasped Sanborn, his usually impassive face stirred with a riot of emotions. "Ferguson! Lunching with Alicia! Impossible! It must be some other man of the same name!"

"Then you do know him?" said Peret, his keen eyes fixed upon Sanborn, who had started to pacing the flagging of the entrance in a state of agitation he had never thought possible in this suave and well-poised man.

"No, it can't be the same one!" Sanborn said, more to himself than to Peret, whose amazement was growing by leaps and bounds. "It can't be; Alicia would have no way of meeting that one."

"You could easily ascertain the truth by asking Alicia herself."

"That I can't do, Paul; it's out of the question till I know whether this is the same man."

"Why?"

Sanborn glared helplessly at Peret. That misstep bade fair to cost him his reputation with the man Alicia was to marry; if the deal had been fair and aboveboard, as he told Peret that very morning, surely there was no good reason why Alicia should not be told of it. Peret met his eyes relentlessly; he was after the truth and nothing else.

"Because," Sanborn stumbled finally, "because—Ferguson is the man I wanted you to buy that property from; that is, a Ferguson. I wonder if it can be the same man? Hold on a minute. Did you say, Peret, that he was arrested here?"

"Yes. The guards waited for him in the porter's lodge. But that is beside the point; why don't you care to approach Alicia upon this matter? I fail to see any reason why you shouldn't."

"We'll go into that later," said Sanborn in desperation. "Tell me this, Paul: do you know upon what charge he was arrested?"

"Murderous assault, the porter tells me, upon the person of one of your badly bleached compatriots; I don't know the name of his victim."

"Wouldn't that gall you!" groaned Sanborn, lapsing, in the stress of his emotion, into the old and forgotten slang of the stable.

"I beg your pardon," said Peret, "but I didn't understand you."

"It's nothing—some silly slang that Americans use," Sanborn explained, setting again to pacing the stone floor of the court.

Peret did not press the point; Sanborn's facial expression told him well enough the drift of the exclamation. The Frenchman must be given credit

for some shrewd and rapid calculating at this precise moment. Now the scales were stricken from his eyes, so far as concerned Sanborn. For a long time he had felt doubtful of Sanborn's uprightness—the result of a keen intuition rather than of definite knowledge; but as long as the American managed to conceal his proclivities, Peret was willing to smother his doubts under the prodigious weight of a million dollars dowry with his wife. But now Sanborn had been driven into the open; Peret could no longer wink at his doubts. A matrimonial alliance with a dishonored strain would ruin his career. Furthermore, it was quite possible, after what he had heard from Alicia's own lips, that there might not be any matrimonial alliance at all. Hence all his visions of a fat dowry in the immediate future, and a life of luxury, and prompt payments of pressing debts were dissipated by the clear light of the past hour's events. It was high time, Peret decided, to look out for himself.

As for Sanborn, his mind whirled in a maze of confusion. Now the deal had to be put through at all costs, without the loss of a minute. He must stay away from Alicia until it was a fait accompli. He was afraid to face her now, for he did not know how much she might have learned or suspected. He did know, however, that if he were assured of success, he could face her with his usual confidence, banish her doubts with his usual enthusiasm, lie to her—for the last time, thank God!—with his usual imperturbability; and, moreover, after he had got his fortune, he could compensate to her in so many ways that she must soon overlook and forget his one lapse from grace.

And he must keep Peret away from Alicia until everything was finished; for Peret suspected crookedness, and would, therefore, question Alicia, and between them bring to light the whole plot. He wished now that he had not called Peret into the affair at all. Had he known what he knew now, he would have cast aside his usual caution, gone to Ferguson himself with the offer for the concession, and risked discovery of his connection with the crooked deal.

Now the sole plan of action that occurred to him was to get into communication with Luke Leonard at once before Leonard had gone to St. Lazare prison to feel his way with Ferguson, go there himself with Leonard, and put the deal through at the first meeting. That would serve to keep Peret in the dark as to the development of the business, and at the same time hasten its consummation. Then, and not until then, could he breathe easily. But how was he to make sure that Peret would not compare notes with Alicia? How, indeed, unless he took the young Frenchman partially into his confidence, made him a party to the swindle, and thus effectually closed his mouth?

He scanned the marquis carefully, wondering whether or not his vaunted uprightness were real or counterfeit; whether or not he would spurn the offer or denounce him at once to Alicia. And Peret must have seen Sanborn's indecision, for he spoke just the word that carried Sanborn over to his side of the fence.

"After all, Monsieur Sanborn," he said, in the tone of one who has made a sudden decision, "I can't blame you for not telling Alicia. I am quite sure that if I were involved in a business deal of whatever nature, I most certainly would not take into my confidence the female portion of my household."

Sanborn gasped with relief; the marquis had made his position plain. He hesitated no longer in making Peret a party to the fraud. True, it would cost him his reputation with the young fellow; but what mattered that, so long as both were defiled in the same mudhole,

and Alicia's eyes remained forever blind to their defilement. It would cost him a fair amount of money, but that was nothing as compared to keeping from Alicia actual knowledge or acute suspicion of the nature of the deal; and, besides, Peret need never know just how great a fortune Sanborn was to net from the affair. Half a million francs he could spare easily from the amount; and surely Peret would be more than satisfied with that!

"To tell you the truth, Paul," he said, "I ran across a chance to make a snug little sum in cash outside of my regular investments, and I'm taking it. I'm giving Ferguson what he thinks is twice the value of his property, and he will be well content with it. I'm sorry I ever went into the thing, but now that I'm started, I hate to turn back. We ought to divide half a million francs, and, since I took it up more as a gamble than anything else—a little diversion, you understand—I'll let you name your own terms of division. Are you game?"

"But certainly!" replied the Frenchman readily. "I'm glad to help you in any way I can."

"Come along, then. We'll start the ball rolling right away. The first thing on the program is to telephone the man who's going to talk the thing over with Ferguson."

They jumped into Sanborn's waiting taxi, and stopped at the first branch post office, from which Sanborn telephoned to his apartment in the Rue St. Jacques.

Phil Ferris answered the phone. "Luke hain't here," he said. "He's gone up to see Ferguson; left here not five minutes ago."

Sanborn was angry. "Phil," he cried, "you're a blasted fool! Go to bed and stay there. If you can't do it any other way, pour the booze into you till you're dead to the world; there's enough of it there. Only don't be walking around the place, and answering the phone and the door, or you'll gum the whole game, and get us all in trouble. Get that?"

"Then who's goin' to answer the phone?" demanded Phil, grumbling.

"Where's Pierre?"

"Hain't he with you?"

"No; why should he be?"

"Somebody telephoned, and said he was you, and told Pierre to come right away quick to some address he give; so Pierre hiked out."

"Well, then, either Pierre lied," said Sanborn, "or else some one put up a game on him. But, anyhow, you stay right in bed, and let the phone and the doorbell ring their clappers off before you answer them. It's the jug for yours if you don't! I'm coming down there right away."

Sanborn put the instrument up with a profound misgiving. Pierre would not lie. The faked message was a ruse, some mysterious play by some mysterious player. Some one else had taken a hand in this game, some one whose identity Sanborn could not even conjecture. Who was it who had lured Pierre away from the apartment, and why had it been engineered? These were the questions that Sanborn was milling over in his mind as he got off the high stool before the telephone and turned to go out and join Peret in the taxi.

He halted short. "You here!" he exclaimed in perturbation. For the young Frenchman, whom he had left outside, stood at his very shoulder, and had heard the whole conversation with Ferris; and Peret understood English as well as he did French. Just so much more to be explained to him! For a moment it disconcerted Sanborn, and made him sicker than ever of the whole business. But he regained his sang-froid instantly. "You startled me," he laughed, "standing so near. I thought you were outside."

"I didn't mean to intrude," Peret returned, with a smile. "I thought that since we are partners now I should lose

no opportunity to put myself au courant with the affair."

"Quite right, Paul! Quite right!" exclaimed Sanborn heartily. "Now we'll hurry down and see this fellow I've been talking to. His name is Ferris, one of the negro fighters that have been swarming to Paris lately. He knows too much about this deal, and, since he's not quite trustworthy, I've been trying to keep my eye on him for a week or so. A friend of mine is keeping him in his apartment down in the Rue St. Jacques."

"I understand," said Peret. "And what is your friend's name?"

"Brown—Alexander Brown," said Sanborn, with perfect nonchalance. It was safer, he felt, to admit so much of the truth, than to lie about it, for Peret might look farther into the matter. Both Ferris and Leonard were in the habit of calling him Sandy, a nickname as easily derived from Sanborn as from Alexander, and, therefore, not likely to evoke suspicion in Peret's mind. Thirty seconds alone with Phil Ferris would suffice to render the negro dumb before Peret; and not an hour before he had likewise found a potent bludgeon to hold over Luke Leonard's head and keep him quiet before the young Frenchman; so that, altogether, there was small chance that his future son-in-law should ever find out the truth of his Doctor Jekyll and Mr. Hyde existence.

"Brown has kept this little place for quite a number of years," he explained to his companion. "I go down there quite often; a man can usually find a good little game going on there. Brown's out of town just now."

Peret made no comment—proof positive, in Sanborn's mind, that the affairs of Alexander Brown were either satisfactorily explained, or else failed to arouse any interest.

Arrived in the Rue St. Jacques, Sanborn leaped to the curb, turned round, and spoke to Peret. "I'm going upstairs just one minute, Paul, and there's really no use of your coming up now. I'm expecting to find a man called Leonard. If he's here, I'll bring him right down, and we'll hurry off to see Ferguson. And, if not, I'll come down myself, and we'll go off and have a bite of lunch while we wait for him. I won't be a minute."

Peret assented readily enough to this proposition, for he was glad to be rid of Sanborn while he carried out a scheme of his own.

And so Sanborn mounted alone to the apartment, and let himself in with the latchkey. Pierre was not yet back; Ferris was in the dining room, lunching off a cold meat pie and a bottle of champagne, garbed in a gorgeous dressing robe of Sanborn's. Sanborn saw with one glance that Phil was none too sober, and that he could scarcely be trusted with an important message; he was not too far gone, however, to heed a warning.

"Ferris," said Sanborn, standing close to him and speaking low, "I'm in a hurry, and I want you to get every word of this: I'm working just now with a young Frenchman who thinks my name is Sanborn. If you meet him, either alone or with me, just remember that. And if you let on to him that I'm Brown or that I have anything to do with this dump here, except to play here occasionally, I'll see to it that you get put away where you don't do any more fool tricks. Get that?"

"Sure I get you, Sandy!" Ferris replied shrewdly, his clumsy mind reverting, oddly enough, to the request made of him the night before by that pretty American girl. "Your name is Sanborn. Say, Sandy, is that a real name or a fake one?"

"That's none of your business! I'm going to leave a note for Luke Leonard, and you see to it that he gets it

the minute he comes back. Can you get that through your thick head?"

"I reckon so," grinned Ferris.

Sanborn went into another room and wrote hastily:

DEAR LEONARD: As soon as you return come to the Café Riche in the Boulevard Italiens. I'll be lunching at one of the tables outside with a young Frenchman named Peret, who is going to act for me in purchasing the half of that concession.

He knows me as Sanborn. Remember that, both when we're together and when you're alone with him. If you tell him any different, or give away about my being Brown, and having anything to do with this dump, I'll see you fixed good and proper, and this is how:

Sporting Tim Gough is in Paris looking for you. Yours, A. B.

Sanborn reread the note, made a double underscore under the last sentence, and stuck the letter into an envelope, which he left unsealed for Fighting Phil's further education.

"There's the note," he said, reëntering the dining room, and throwing it on the table in front of Ferris. "Remember what I told you; and for the love of Mike keep away from the door and the telephone!"

Ferris grunted his complete understanding of instructions. Sanborn hurried out and rejoined Peret below, whom he found waiting patiently in the taxi. Thence they went to the Café Riche, where Sanborn dawdled for an hour over an excellent lunch, and Peret sipped weak solutions of raspberry sirup, both mightily impatient with Luke Leonard's tardiness.

But finally a messenger approached the table, under the guidance of the waiter, and pulled an envelope from the little leather bag he carried.

"For Mr. Sanborn," he said.

Sanborn reached for it, and tore it open. He read:

DEAR SANBORN: If Sporting Tim is on the rampage, yours truly crawls into his little hole and pulls it after him. If you want to see me, you've got to come home; I don't show myself any more than I have to.

And say, Ferguson leads like a hungry steer. He never got that letter. He don't know anything about it. He grabbed the bait and half the line. Yours, L. L.

Sanborn could not have concealed his supreme satisfaction had he wanted to. Here was success in his hands. The most difficult part of the deal, the part that had given him most uneasiness, was to make Ferguson sell his half of the concession at a reasonable price. When the letter from South America, describing the real value of the property, had been taken from Downy, at the Hotel Louvre, Sanborn had been practically sure that Ferguson had taken it, and so had almost despaired of being able to consummate the purchase.

But now all that was necessary was haste. Now he was convinced that it was German spies who had taken the letter; and, very likely, German spies who had maneuvered Pierre away from his apartment, though for what purpose he could not imagine. Now all he had to do was to beat the German spies to Ferguson, and get the deed to his half of the property before the Germans could tell him the real value of it.

"It's going to be plain sailing, Paul," remarked Sanborn in as even a tone as he could muster, considering his jubilancy. "It appears that all I've got to do is to take my hundred thousand francs in cash, and the Colombian consul general to take official acknowledgment of the execution of the sale, go around to the St. Lazare prison, and buy the property. Things are breaking my way, after all."

His air of triumph, and his profound relief, was not lost upon Peret, who marveled, no doubt, that so rich a man as Sanborn should take so much to heart a simple little business deal that he had started merely for sake of diversion. "If I might be allowed to suggest," he said, "would it not be a

good idea for me to go get the consul general while you go to the bank? It would save time. Then we could meet somewhere—perhaps at your friend Brown's apartment—and proceed upon our business."

"Excellent idea!" responded Sanborn heartily; for he wanted an impressive word with Luke Leonard before Leonard should meet Peret, and this arrangement would give him precisely the opportunity he desired. "We haven't any time to spare."

Peret arose quickly, for he had some little affairs to look after, the prosecution of which, without arousing Sanborn's suspicion by the extra delay necessary for them, needed to be pushed with all speed. And before Sanborn had paid the bill, he had jumped into a cab and was away.

Sanborn went directly to his apartment in the Rue St. Jacques, for he kept there sufficient funds to pay for the land. On the way down, he debated whether it would not be better to leave Peret out of the affair; for, with matters running so smoothly, an intermediary was not strictly necessary. However, he decided that some one must go to Ferguson with Leonard, both to keep an eye upon the little scoundrel, and to give the deal the appearance of a bona-fide sale. That caution which had been a habit with him for fifteen years made him shrink from showing himself to Ferguson, and thus giving direct evidence against himself. On the other hand, the deeper Peret was involved in the swindle, the more careful he would be of concealing it from Alicia; and it was only through the young Frenchman that Alicia could hear of his own guilt.

True enough, by some freak of fate, the three young people were already mutually acquainted. But Ferguson could not know Alicia very well, and, besides, he would be returning to South America before many days, according to Luke Leonard. Peret must understand that his sole salvation at Alicia's court was to keep Ferguson away from her; let Peret attend to it! Thus Sanborn shifted the responsibility from his own shoulders to those of his future son-in-law.

Luke Leonard met him at the door. "Where did you see Tim Gough?" he demanded anxiously.

"Never you mind where," replied Sanborn gruffly. "He's here, all right, staying at the Buckingham, registered as James Curley, from Syracuse. Tell me what Ferguson said!"

"Crazy to sell. Has Tim seen you?"

Sanborn strode past Leonard into his smoking room, and sat down, his legs crossed comfortably, his silk hat at a rakish angle.

"No, he hasn't. If he does, what I shall tell him depends on you. You read that note of mine, did you, every word?"

"Sure!" replied Leonard complainingly. "I hain't quite such a fool as you give me credit for. Say, there's a telegram here for you, Sandy," he announced, diving into a pocket and handing the envelope to Sanborn.

"When did it come?" asked Sanborn, ripping it open.

"I don't know. I found it on the table here when I got back?"

Sanborn's forehead wrinkled with puzzlement as he read it through once and again:

Hope it will be fine to-morrow.

A FRIEND.

"What's the trouble, Sandy, can't you read?" asked Leonard.

"Not enough to get any sense out of that," Sanborn replied, throwing the paper to Leonard. "Unless——" he stopped and thought a moment. "When did that wire come?" he demanded again sharply.

"I don't know. I found it here, I tell you, when I got back."

"Where's Phil Ferris?"

"Listen! Can't you hear?"

Ferris' strident snores came from somewhere in the rear of the apartment.

"Just a plain nap, or——" began Sanborn, rising.

"Drunk to the world," explained Leonard.

Sanborn swore, and sat down again. "It's a fake, a game of some kind; that confounded German secret service again! I wonder——"

But Sanborn's rumination was interrupted by a sharp peal of the doorbell. He went himself to answer it, and came back with Paul Peret, who had made very creditable time, everything considered.

"Couldn't you get hold of the consul general?" asked Sanborn in alarm.

"Yes," Peret replied. "He's going straight to St. Lazare. I thought it might be better not to bring him down here. I told him to meet us there in twenty minutes."

"Wise move," commended Sanborn. "Mr. Peret, meet Mr. Leonard. Luke, this is the gentleman who's going to buy Ferguson's half of the Coralles property."

"I thought it the best plan," said Peret, acknowledging Leonard with a slight bow, not caring to explain that he had not seen the consul general at all, but had saved so much time by telephoning to him.

"Then I'll get you the money, Paul, and you two had better get a move on." He went into his library, twirled the combination of a safe built into the pedestal of his library table, and came back with a thick sheaf of large French bank notes to the amount of a hundred thousand francs, ready counted out and bound into a bundle. "There you are, Paul," he said, with a slight tremor of eagerness in his voice.

"Do you want a receipt?" asked Peret, reaching for them.

"No," said Sanborn, after a moment's hesitation. "It's the understanding, before Luke, here, as a witness, that you have received the sum to buy the property on my behalf, you to have the deed made out in your own name, to be transferred at once to me. Is that right?"

"But certainly," agreed the Frenchman. "Are you ready, Mr. Leonard?"

Leonard looked at Sanborn questioningly. "I don't know, Sandy, as I'd better go," he said dubiously, "with Tim Gough loose."

"Tim Gough would never look for you going deliberately to jail," Sanborn told him sarcastically. "Take a closed cab from here, and no one can see you."

"All right, then, Gaston," said Leonard to the Frenchman, after a moment's hesitation; "let's move along. And the first thing I do when I get back is to light a cigarette with a thousand-dollar franc note; I always wanted to. S'long, Sandy!"

And thus did Sanborn's ship go out; with what a cargo was it to return!

CHAPTER X.

DISPOSING OF THE TREASURE.

"You own half of this property, I understand?" Peret said to Leonard, as they spun along in a closed taxi toward St. Lazare.

"Ye-uh," admitted Lonard curtly.

"What is there about it that makes Sanborn so anxious to get it?" the marquis went on.

Leonard was mindful of Sanborn's vengeance. "That 'u'd be tellin'," he said.

"You mean by that that you don't intend to tell?" commented the Frenchman.

"Exactly."

Peret was silent for a moment. "Who is this fellow Tim Gough, whom you were discussing with Sanborn when we left?" he asked finally.

"It strikes me, Gaston," replied Leon-

ard independently, "that you're a trifle nosey, and then some."

The marquis smothered his indignation; he could well afford to, for the stakes in this game were big. "I'm sure I didn't mean to be," he rejoined apologetically. "I merely asked because Mr. Gough—Mr. Timothy D. Gough, called at Sanborn's apartment, in the Boulevard Haussman this afternoon, and I was wondering——"

"The devil you say!" Leonard ejaculated.

"Yes," went on Peret quickly, "and you have only to ask the porter there, to prove it."

"I don't need to prove it," Leonard explained, after a moment's pause. "Sandy told me himself that he had seen Sportin' Tim this afternoon, but I didn't think—gee mighty—but that's a rich one!" Leonard broke suddenly into uncontrollable laughter.

The marquis looked at him more with impatience than with curiosity. Here was one of his cards trumped. He had hoped to show Leonard that Sanborn was playing him crooked—in fact, from certain private information he had received, he had good reason to believe it—and by using that knowledge as a club, to force from Leonard complete information of this mysterious business. But instead of startling Leonard, and far from setting Leonard against Sanborn, his cherished secret had the remarkable effect of setting the little man off into fits of vulgar and ribald laughter.

"Why is that so funny?" he demanded coldly.

"Oh—oh, because!" Leonard gasped, still in the throes of his mirth. "Say, I don't know much about Sandy's home life, but has he got a daughter, or some other womanfolks arounds?"

"Yes, a daughter."

"Well, then, she's the one that got Ferguson into the jug. What do you know about that?"

Peret pricked up his ears; a weak link in his chain bade fair to be strengthened by this discovery. "Just how do you mean?" he asked.

"Why, Fightin' Phil got into a scrap with Ferguson, you know. And neither Sandy nor I could quite make out just how it happened; but after Sandy went away that night, Phil told me that he was shinin' up to a cute little American girl, who'd come to the house askin' for a guy name of Sanborn, and, of course ——" Leonard checked himself; he feared he might be saying too much.

"And, of course, what?" demanded Peret.

"Of course, we didn't know Sandy had a daughter."

Leonard was thankful that their arrival at the police station had checked further explanations that Peret might demand, and felt quite sure that he had said nothing that could call down upon his head the dread vengeance of Sanborn.

The lieutenant of the municipal guards, who was on duty at the desk, looked with disfavor upon this second call of Luke Leonard's within the space of an hour. "One would think," he said sourly, "that this fire-eating American we have here were holding a reception, from the number of guests he has."

"Who has been to see him before?" asked the marquis.

"This man once before," replied the lieutenant, pointing to Leonard, "and shortly afterward an American named —named Curley, and——"

"Curley!" gasped Leonard. "Curley, did you say?"

"Yes, monsieur," said the lieutenant.

"Why, what of that?" demanded Peret curiously.

"Just this, Gaston," cried Leonard in alarm, "Curley is Tim Gough's alias, name he's registered under at the Buckingham, Sandy tells me. Gee

mighty, what an escape! Say, captain, what did he want of Ferguson?"

"We can divulge such matters only by order of the court," replied the lieutenant. "However, he appears to be arranging for the defense."

"For the defense, eh?" commented Peret musingly.

"Did he say whether he was comin' back right away?" inquired Leonard anxiously.

"I didn't hear him say so," returned the officer.

Luke turned quickly to Peret, who had been listening intently to all this talk, and was drawing therefrom some very shrewd conclusions. "Say, Gaston," he said, "let's get this thing over as soon as we can. I don't want to hang around this dump any longer than I have to, 'cause if this Tim Gough once gets his peepers on me, good night, everybody!"

"We can't do anything till Señor Arteaga arrives," protested the marquis. And then, to the lieutenant: "Have you seen anything of the Colombian consul general? He was to meet us here to take the acknowledgment of the execution of a deed of sale."

"Not yet, monsieur," returned the officer.

"And we don't wait for him, either," Leonard broke in decisively. "I like waitin' around here, with Tim Gough apt to drop in any minute, just about as well as waitin' in a powder factory that's on fire."

"You don't have to wait," the marquis informed him, secretly glad that he was to be rid of Leonard. "In fact, there wasn't any use in your coming here at all. Just write a little note of introduction to Ferguson, saying that I'm the man to buy his land, and everything will be all right."

Leonard assented to this plan with pleasure, scribbled a few words on the back of an envelope, and hurried back out to the closed taxi. At Peret's request, the lieutenant summoned an orderly to take him in to Ferguson; for the marquis wanted to have the bargain made by the time the consul general arrived to make the sale legal.

"So you're the man," Ferguson cried, with amazement, as he read the note, "who wants to buy this property of mine?"

"I am," said the marquis stiffly.

"Well, I don't know but what I'd as soon sell to you as to any one, all things considered. Darned funny coincidence, though. Where's Luke Leonard?"

"He wouldn't come. He's afraid of Curley, for some reason," said Peret.

"Oh, does he know Curley? Who is Curley, anyway?"

"An American crook, dodging around Paris," Peret explained, watching Ferguson's face closely. "A man that's hardly to be trusted. That name's only an alias; his real name is Timothy D. Gough."

Ferguson, who was even then smoking one of Curley's excellent cigars, looked his surprise. "I don't believe it," he said suddenly. "Leonard's been filling you up with lies, or else you're trying to put one over on me."

"I didn't get it from Leonard," expostulated the marquis calmly, "and I don't care whether you believe it or not. You merely asked me for an explanation, and I've told you what I know. The thing before us now is the sale of your property. I understand your asking price is twenty thousand dollars?"

Ferguson stifled a smile of satisfaction. After Curley had left him, Ferguson had made up his mind to take the Syracuse man's advice. As he milled over their conversation, he was convinced that Curley knew more than he admitted. If Curley did manage to get him out of his predicament, he would not need the twenty thousand in such a hurry, and would have more time

to investigate and ascertain the truth. And if Curley didn't get him out, there was still time to get hold of Luke Leonard's sucker and put the deal through. Considered at length, and at a distance, Curley's arguments, mysterious as they were, certainly had a convincing note. But in spite of his decision, Ferguson decided that it would be good sport to bait this impertinent Frenchman.

"What do you want to buy the property for?" he asked.

"To pasture cattle on," Peret replied promptly, for he had been primed upon these points.

"Do you know that it's a plateau, five to eight thousand feet above sea level, stuck up on a mountain whose seacoast sides are as steep as that wall, and that the only way you could get your stock to market is by driving 'em inland two hundred miles, or building a railroad for that distance, before you can get down to anything like level ground? Did Leonard tell you all that?"

"Yes, just that. We shall erect an abattoir, however, upon the property itself, and lower the meat products by cableway to the harbor."

"Piffle!" cried Ferguson impatiently. "That's too weak for me to swallow! Either Luke Leonard and his gang are trying to swindle you, or you're trying to swindle me. But whichever it is, the deal stops right here; I won't sell!"

"You'd be very foolish not to, it seems to me," objected Peret smoothly. "You haven't the capital to develop the grazing resources of the property——"

"Cut out that fable about grazing. Let's get down to bed rock. I've got a hunch that you're being robbed, for the very simple reason that I can't comprehend why that Coralles land should have any value; and, if that's the case, I refuse to sell to you. If you were an ordinary fool that I didn't know, I might; but I'm hanged if I shall deliberately swindle a friend of Miss Sanborn's, no matter what a disagreeable pup he may be, nor how hard he asks for it. And, on the other hand, if you're trying to put one over on me, for some reason that nobody short of a Trinidad obeah could tell me, I certainly shan't bite at any such bait as you offer. D'you see where I stand on this proposition? I refuse to sell, and there's no other way to look at it."

"You've explained yourself clearly enough, at any rate," Peret told him. "But there is, after all, another way to look at it. Where did you first meet Miss Sanborn, and under what circumstances?"

"That's none of your business!"

"Let it go at that. Why are you here?"

"You know as well as I."

"Let that go, too. What is Timothy D. Gough, alias Curley, doing for you?"

"I object to being questioned about something that's none of your business. If you've got anything more to say to me, get it over with and get out!"

"I didn't expect you to answer," Peret told him, with a quizzical smile. "I merely asked the questions to put you into a proper frame of mind to receive my argument. Now, listen to what I've got to say. The reason you're here now is to make you sell that property for the price you already know. You'll be kept here until you do sell, unless your friend Curley can arrange to get you out. On the other hand, as soon as you sell, the charge against you will be dropped. Do you understand me so far?"

"Yes, I do. What of it?"

"Just this: Curley has gone to Miss Sanborn and told her the whole game against you. He is relying on her testimony to get you out of here, and she will certainly appear and give it in order to free you—that is, unless the charge is dropped. In other words, if you refuse to sell, and the charge is pressed, she will appear in court and

be called upon to tell her whole story. But if you do sell to me, here and now, the charge will be dropped, and she will have no occasion to appear in court. The question is, are you going to permit the girl to bare her soul in a public court, or are you going to make a slight sacrifice and prevent her doing that?"

Ferguson's eyes met the young Frenchman's squarely. "You've made out a pretty strong case," he admitted. "But you've jumped at one conclusion too many. I don't hanker to have her dragged into court as a witness, but she certainly won't have to swear to anything that can possibly disgrace her. And, since that is true, I know her well enough to state that she would be darned angry if she thought I was fool enough to sacrifice myself out of ten cents for sake of saving her from what she probably considers her duty. You understand I'm looking at this thing from what her point of view would be, and I don't relish the idea of stacking up as a silly fool in her eyes. Get the point?"

"Did I understand you to say that 'she certainly won't have to swear to anything that would disgrace her'?" asked Peret shrewdly.

"I said that."

"But if you thought that her testimony must inevitably disgrace her and shame her in the eyes of every one she knows in Paris, you might think better of it?" suggested Peret.

"That's not to be considered, because I don't believe it."

"Nevertheless, it's true. Alexander Brown, the man who wants to get this property for sake of turning a hundred-per-cent profit, is one of the smoothest crooks in Paris, and could be arrested on a hundred charges. He will be present in court to testify against you. That name is an assumed one; his real name is Charles Augustus Sanborn, the father of the Miss Sanborn you and I know. Alicia doesn't know it, doesn't suspect it, doesn't even dream of it. You may be able to realize the shock she's going to get when she gets up in court and finds she's testifying against her father, and that her testimony can send him to jail. Now, do *you* get the point?" Peret asked savagely.

"I don't believe it!" Ferguson declared bluntly.

"Have you ever seen either Alexander Brown or Sanborn?" the Frenchman asked, delving into his inside coat pocket.

"No."

"Well, here is a photograph of himself which Sanborn gave me some time ago. It's autographed, and if that isn't proof enough for you, you can't miss the similarity of features between him and his daughter."

Ferguson examined this proof which Peret had secured that very day to establish this dual identity to his own satisfaction, and was convinced of its credibility. "Yes, but——"

"And as for Alexander Brown," the marquis interrupted, "I can get you here, at this police station, Alexander Brown's application, together with his photograph, as required by law, for a license to conduct a gambling establishment in the Rue St. Jacques. Do you want to see it?"

"I do," said Ferguson, although he was already convinced that the Frenchman had told him the truth.

"I'll get it for you," promised Peret. "And, while I'm away, assume that my case is proved, and decide whether you're going to expose Miss Sanborn to the fate that is inevitable, or whether you'll sell the property at what is ten times its value, for all you know, and permit her father to make what little he can out of it. He has a sucker on his string, I'll admit, but there are limits to what even the most hungry sucker will pay to be swindled. So you can

imagine that Sanborn's profit will not amount to much."

"Get me that picture!" Ferguson commanded.

Leaving Ferguson pacing the short length of his cell, while he threshed the matter out, Peret hurried out to the lieutenant's desk, demanded and received, by flashing his name and official connection, the document he sought, and returned to Ferguson.

"You say," said Ferguson, after examining the application for license, "that if I part with the property now, that Miss Sanborn will have no opportunity to testify, no matter how much she may want to?"

"Yes; I said that I mean it."

"Then, of course, there's no question about it," said Ferguson slowly, handing the paper back to Peret. "And listen to this: Anything like taking a price for this property would be nothing but a bribe to have the case dropped. You see that as well as I do. My price for the property, therefore, shall be the very smallest consideration that makes a legal sale—one franc, or one dollar, or whatever it is."

"I suppose you're right there, Mr. Ferguson," returned Peret, congratulating himself upon being the richer by that sum, if he could only engineer the future to suit him. "The Colombian consul general is outside now with the paper, ready to take the acknowledgment of your sale. Are you ready to do business?"

"Bring him in!" bade Ferguson grimly.

And in the space of five minutes, Ferguson had formally transferred to Paul, Marquis de Peret, his title to half that property known as the Coralles concession, with all rights and appurtenances thereunto, and was content with his decision to sell. He had figured it all out for himself during those few moments that Peret had been absent after the photograph of Mr. Alexander Brown. From Curley's story—which he believed implicitly—he knew that his arrest was merely a part of Brown's plot against him, and by his own inferences corroborated the young Frenchman's statement that once he had transferred the property as Sanborn desired, the charges against him would be dropped. He had had ample proof of what was in store for Alicia if she had persisted in testifying in his defense, and was as content as any man should be that he had avoided for her what, without his own sacrifice, would have been inevitable.

But his contentment vanished in thin air when Curley, shortly before his bread-and-cabbage-soup dinner, appeared to inform him, among other things, that he was a fool, that his sacrifice was in vain, that his arraignment and Alicia's testimony could not possibly be avoided by any such means as the Marquis de Peret had promised. Which miscarriage of plans was due to none other than the marquis himself.

CHAPTER XI.

LEONARD RUNS TO COVER.

Upon emerging from his audience with Ferguson, Peret sat for an hour at a neighboring café, over some harmless but high-colored iced drink, while he carefully plotted his own path from the mazes that, like some enormous spider's web of which he was the center, opened away from him in every direction. Finally he decided to return to the Rue St. Jacques. For there was still one secret that Sanborn alone could disclose to him—the true value of the Coralles concession. If Sanborn, being crooked to the backbone, were willing to give him any such sum as half a million francs for his simple share in the matter, what stupendous profit might Sanborn be expecting to clear from the deal? And why should he give any one else the lion's share, when the property

was at present in his own name? But —he must blaze his path cautiously, lest he stumble upon hidden pitfalls.

He found Sanborn pacing the length of the hall, from where Fighting Phil snored sottishly in the bedroom, to the smoking room in which Luke Leonard puzzled over a Canfield layout, smoking his vile tobacco. Sanborn was much agitated, and with reason. For Leonard had just confronted him with Peret's tale that Tim Gough, alias Curley, had visited the Boulevard Haussman apartment upon some pretext or other; whereat Sanborn was not alone much mystified, but exceedingly perturbed, and more than ever convinced that he dare not face Alicia until success should be assured him.

It may be imagined, therefore, with what relief he heard the story of Peret's successful mission. "Thank God!" he exclaimed fervently, as Peret, without a word, handed him the title deed to the Coralles property. "He fell for it, after all!"

"He was—how do you say—tickled to death to sell," Peret told him; Peret had no mind to confess to Sanborn the arguments by which he forced Ferguson to sell the property, for such a confession would entail his forfeiting the twenty thousand he had taken from Sanborn to pay for the property. He felt quite safe in this procedure. Ferguson certainly would never claim it, and Sanborn had got what he wanted for it, and would not dare have recourse to the law to recover it.

"I knew he'd jump at it," came Leonard's cracked voice. "Now the rest is up to you, Sandy, and the quicker you put it over, the quicker I can shake the dust of this burg off my feet and wave my fingers at Tim Gough."

"I'm going after it right away, Luke," Sanborn promised. "How about this, Paul: Luke tells me that a man named Tim Gough has been calling at my house."

"Timothy D. Gough—yes," replied the marquis. "So the concierge told me."

"What did he want?"

"He went up to see Alicia; that's all I know about it."

Sanborn was lost again in a vain and painful attempt to figure out just what Tim Gough could want from Alicia; but Peret brought him back to earth.

"When may I expect to have my share for this business?" he asked, without too much show of interest.

"Just as soon as I can realize upon it myself," Sanborn returned.

"And pending that time, I suppose you don't object to my keeping the title in my name as a sort of guarantee," Peret went on, his tone a trifle hardened.

Sanborn eyed him steadily. It came as a shock to him that Paul Peret would even suggest such a thing as a guarantee to keep his proffered word; but that was the first sign of the shattering of his reputation, and he was forced to accept the condition without comment; that procedure was better than whining, he calculated. "Of course," he said, "if you feel it necessary."

"Not precisely necessary," Peret remarked smoothly, "but merely preferable, in dealing with such large sums. And when do you expect to be able to realize upon your investment?"

"I'm going to sound a possible purchaser at once," said Sanborn, with alacrity. "If you will wait here until I get back—a matter of half an hour—I may be able to tell you with more precision when you are to get your share."

"Very well," agreed the marquis readily, "I shall wait here. It is understood, of course, that I get my price before I pass title."

Sanborn was uneasy, annoyed, and angry. "The title will pass when I say so," he snapped out. "The property never was yours. The money with

which you got it was given to you for the express purpose of buying the parcel for me. However, Paul, I shan't press the matter now." He picked up his hat and stick, and started for the door.

"No," Peret sent after him, "there's nothing to be gained by quarreling about it—now."

And Sanborn pulled the door shut with a vicious bang.

Left alone with Leonard, Peret turned to the little man with a gesture that was almost savage. "Where is he going?" he asked.

"German embassy," Leonard replied, without looking up.

"What's he gone there for?" Peret went on.

"To sell this property."

"What can the German embassy want of it?" Peret insisted.

"I don't know nothin' about it," Leonard evaded.

"I don't believe you," Peret declared, reading Luke's placid countenance.

"Nobody's asked you to."

Peret tried another tack; this time he was more amiable. "Listen to me a moment, mon ami," he said ingratiatingly. "You're making a great mistake in pinning your faith to this man Sanborn. He's a crook, and you know it. You think he's straight with you, but he isn't. You think that unless you obey him to the letter, he will turn you over to this man Gough. You are wrong. He's fixing to railroad you precisely as he railroaded Ferguson. I'll tell you how I know. I am engaged to be married to his daughter, and therefore I am in her confidence. I know from her that Gough's visit to their house this afternoon was to make plans for betraying you at the right moment."

By this time, Leonard had lost all interest in his game of solitaire, and sat with his eyes glued upon Peret's, listening to every word. "That don't seem like Sandy," he said, in a low tone.

"Well, I can vouch for the truth of it. I tell you, you're very, very foolish to listen to all he says. The first thing you know, you'll have the choice of being done out of your half of this property, or being handed over to Tim Gough. What do you suppose your half is worth?"

"I don't know anything about it," declared Leonard. "All I know is that Sandy sees a whole lot more in it than what I do. He won't tell me what it is, and I don't understand his proposition any too well; so I'm leaving it more or less to him."

"You don't know anything about it, eh?" Peret made certain.

"No," Leonard lied, still bound by chains of habit to Sanborn, no matter how much Peret had done to break them.

"My advice to you, then, is to make yourself scarce around this place. Tim Gough will be downstairs here at seven o'clock to-night, waiting for the tip from Sanborn, who will be urging you to sell out to him at that time. If you're still here then, you'll be between the devil and the deep sea."

"But I can't afford to break with Sandy yet," Leonard protested. "It looks as if I've got a good chance to get something out of that bit of land, and I want to hang around till Sandy puts it over."

"That's all right," the marquis assured him. "If you'll promise to give me ten per cent of what you make on the deal, I'll look after your interests. I'll keep in touch with Sanborn, and when he is ready to do business, I'll let you know. Does that suit you?"

"Sounds reasonable enough," admitted Leonard. "Any way to avoid runnin' foul of Tim Gough, and at the same time gettin' something for my half of the Coralles land suits me. But where can I stay?"

"I'll fix that for you. For to-night, you can't do better than stay with me; I live over on the left bank. But it certainly isn't safe for you to stay here."

"I reckon maybe you're talkin' sense," said Leonard, jumping up quickly. "I reckon I'd better make myself scarce around this joint. Say, do me a favor, will you? Just run down and see if this fellow Gough is anywhere in sight. And if he isn't, I'll go along with you right now. You can come back later, when I've got safe away."

The marquis was not unwilling to grant Leonard this small boon, and while he made his fruitless journey downstairs to the street, to look for an ambush, it struck him that he had withheld from Sanborn a bit of information—or advice, rather—that might involve them both in trouble. Upon remounting the stairs, therefore, he sat down and penciled a brief note to Sanborn:

> I quite forgot to tell you, and probably it is unnecessary, that it is useless and undesirable, for many reasons, to continue to press charge against Mr. Ferguson. P. P.

He read it over and was satisfied. He could not make it any stronger without revealing too much of the details of the sale he had just consummated. Leaving this note, he and Leonard shook the dust of the Rue St. Jacques from their feet.

And while this was going on, Sanborn was racing away to the German embassy on an errand that was life itself to him. Arrived at the chancellery, he found the anteroom and the first two offices packed to overflowing with a crowd of resident Germans who frantically sought information as to their standing in case the threatening war cloud burst above them. Sanborn managed to elbow his way through the crowds to a uniformed clerk, who sat at a desk in the outer office, trying his very best to maintain order in the midst of the chaos, and managed to whisper a word in the clerk's ear.

The clerk looked him over suspiciously, as if he doubted Sanborn's announcement, but was evidently convinced by Sanborn's polished appearance and impressive bearing that he was not to be held in light esteem. "If that is your business," said the clerk, at last, "you should have no difficulty in seeing his excellency at once. Wait one minute, please."

Thus did Sanborn secure an immediate audience with the ambassador himself. His excellency stood with his hands clasped behind his back, his feet wide apart, gazing intently out of the window. He was a tall man, of powerful shoulders and torso; but even his great figure seemed bowed and depressed by the gravity of the events of the day. Sanborn stood a moment in indecision, and finally ventured to speak. "Your excellency," he said softly.

"Yes, Mr. Sanborn," the ambassador replied, without turning round. "What is this extraordinary proposition?" Sanborn was surprised to hear him speak in the purest of English, and was glad enough to lapse into that tongue himself.

"A proposition," said Sanborn, "that cannot fail to be of the greatest interest to Germany, and especially in these present times when war seems inevitable: no less an affair than what corresponds to a coaling station upon the coast of South America, within easy reach of the Panama Canal."

"Explain yourself, Mr. Sanborn," asked the ambassador, turning his head casually, to look at Sanborn over his shoulder.

"On a certain property of mine, in the Goajira Peninsula of Colombia," returned Sanborn, "vast deposits of petroleum have been discovered, within three miles of the seacoast. It is

hardly necessary to point out that, in these days of oil-burning cruisers, an oil port like that is equivalent to a coaling station. Furthermore, if this property be taken over by private capital—under the direct influence of your government, of course—no neutrality laws in existence can interfere with your replenishing your fuel supply there; for your private corporation can sell to whomever it likes."

The ambassador turned abruptly, and dropped into an easy-chair beside the window, waving Sanborn to a seat at the same time. He had sought to cloak his interest in the matter, had assumed a calm reserve up till now, in order not to betray his ambassadorial opinion and thus commit himself in any degree. But this affair was too alive with possibilities for Germany for him to maintain his mask with entire success.

"In general terms," he said, "and some slight exception of detail, I grant what you say. An oil port, such as you describe, would undoubtedly be of the utmost strategic value to any nation having indirect control of it. But —what proof can you offer me of the truth of what you report?"

"A private letter from a friend of mine there, smuggled through to me here."

"'Smuggled through,' you say," commented the ambassador, raising his eyebrows.

"Exactly, your excellency," returned Sanborn triumphantly. "And that should be your best proof—pending your investigations, of course. I say 'smuggled through,' because Washington has requested Bogotá to keep the matter silent until they can organize an American syndicate to take the land over, and surprise me, by the very enormity of their offer, into an immediate acceptance of their terms. You understand that that is the only way Washington can keep the oil port free from foreign control, and thus maintain the Monroe Doctrine—by getting it into the hands of an American syndicate."

"You know," said the ambassador, "that it is Washington's desire to keep control of the oil lands through an American syndicate?"

"Yes," replied Sanborn.

"And you are an American, are you not?" insisted the ambassador, in a tone that, in earlier days, would have made Sanborn blush and hang his head.

"Yes," Sanborn rejoined heartily, "but that makes no difference to me. I owe nothing to America—not even respect."

The ambassador looked him over carefully. "You want to sell to Germany, then?" he said, at length.

"That was my purpose in coming here."

"What do you propose to ask for your property?"

"A hundred million marks—twenty-four million dollars," said Sanborn, meeting the ambassador's eyes squarely.

The ambassador's impassive face gave no sign of how he considered this price. "I will telegraph at once to Berlin," he promised, "and acquaint my government with your offer. You must understand, of course, that it will require some careful investigation before any bargain can be made or any offer accepted. However, I have reason to believe that no time will be wasted, considering present conditions."

"When can you expect an answer?" inquired Sanborn, quieting his voice only by an effort of will.

"I should know to-morrow morning whether or not they will take the offer under advisement," the ambassador told him. "But the necessary investigations——"

"Of course," Sanborn interrupted, getting to his feet in a tremor of nervousness. "Let them investigate all they want to; I know they will be satisfied. Only it will relieve me a great deal to

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"But I can't afford to let it go at that. You understand why he takes that stand, and I don't think you're the kind of a woman to stand by and see him robbed of a million for any such reason as he gives. Now it appears to me that we can accomplish the same end if you will go on the stand and give evidence just the same, producing that letter to show that Ferguson realized he was being practically blackmailed when he sold the property. And if Ferguson once sees that you're determined to see him through it, even against his wishes, he can't do anything, after you've already sacrificed yourself in his favor, but make a claim for the restoration of the title, and in the end he can't help but think a whole lot more of you than he already does. I don't know if I've made myself plain."

"You have, very," she said, in a low tone; and Curley, watching her from the corner of his eye, saw a flush suffuse her face, even to the tip of her ear that peeped from beneath the veil.

"And are you still willing to do it?" he inquired.

"I would hardly stand by and see Mr. Ferguson swindled out of ten francs—Mr. Ferguson or any one," she amended hastily, "if I was able to hinder it—— It is for precisely that reason that I shall go upon the witness stand," she added very decisively, so that Curley had to smother a smile at the earnestness of her disavowal.

The police magistrate was just taking his seat as they arrived in the dark, crowded little courtroom in the St. Lazare arrondissement. Curley thoughtfully ensconced her in a seat away back, under the gallery, so that she might avoid as long as possible those fixed and curious stares which the courtroom habitués train upon a pretty and attractive woman in the police court.

"We shan't need you for some time yet," he told her. "You'll be all right here; no one will notice you. And when we get ready for you I'll come back and get you. If you want me for anything, just send word down by that orderly there." He pointed out one of half a dozen men in uniform who stood about to maintain order. "Now," he advised her, as he took leave of her, "whatever you do, don't lose your nerve. You won't find it trying at all."

"I'll be all right," she assured him, looking about with interest. "And there's so much to be seen that I won't have time to think about what's coming. Don't worry about me."

Curley left her, walked down the aisle, and joined a keen-looking, white-haired man of obvious breeding, whom she took to be Monsieur Cartier, the legal adviser of the embassy. And from them her eyes wandered about the place, studying the types that were strange to her.

Ferguson's was the first case. He was brought in between two burly men, shoved into the prisoner's box, and locked in. The public prosecutor and the witnesses for the prosecution come down an aisle on the side of the courtroom and took seats upon the benches assigned to them. The judge's gavel rapped sharply, a profound hush fell upon the room, and the judge called the first case.

The public prosecutor jumped to his feet to present his charge. He was a pallid little man, with snapping eyes, a pointed black beard, a shock of thick black hair; he spoke with obvious nervousness and exaggerated gestures.

"Your honor," he said, "we shall show that the prisoner did, with malice prepense and murderous intent, assault the victim as charged, and that said victim is now lying in a grave condition of mind, amounting to unconsciousness, and that his ultimate recovery is despaired of."

His first witness was the commission-

aire posted at the Red Mouse, who swore that he had seen Ferguson assault Fighting Phil severely and without provocation, afterward running away. The second witness was the porter of the house in the Rue St. Jacques, who related upon his oath how he had been called to the gates by a stranger, had found there the negro's unconscious form, and had summoned Mr. Alexander Brown, whose guest the victim had been.

Thereafter Mr. Alexander Brown was sworn. Sanborn bowed courteously to the judge, took his seat in the witness chair with studied composure, rested his right elbow upon the arm of the chair with the forearm upright, and leaned his handsome head upon his hand, as if he were resigned to this duty —a painful duty, but a duty none the less. He made a better witness than the two preceding ones, who had been extremely ill at ease, in spite of the fact that they were actually swearing to the truth. Under the lawyer's questioning, Sanborn's story, in bad French, was developed much as follows: Upon hearing of the negro's mishap, he had descended at once, had found him still unconscious, and had carried him up to his own apartment, to which he immediately summoned Doctor Jules Legrand; pending the arrival of the said doctor, he had applied such first-aid treatment as he was familiar with, as a result of which the man Ferris had temporarily emerged from his state of coma long enough to be able to whisper that it was the prisoner who had assaluted him for the second time that night; and that the victim immediately lapsed again into unconsciousness, and remained so until Doctor Legrand arrived on the scene.

With a second bow to the judge, Sanborn left the stand and took his seat upon the prosecutor's bench. Doctor Legrand was called next, and testified that the victim was still in too precarious a state to permit with safety a careful examination, but that he suspected concussion at the base of the brain that had caused a partial paralysis, which, if it extended, as it might do, to the respiratory organs, must result fatally; that the victim had never fully recovered consciousness.

This testimony completed the case for the prosecutor, who was surprised that the defense had made no cross-examination of his witnesses. But Cartier, whom Curley had retained for the defense, had too easy a case to bother with such trifles. As the prosecutor sat down, he arose and addressed the judge.

"Before we proceed with the defense, your honor," he said, in his modulated but impressive tones, "I have to request that you take immediate steps to secure the persons of two of the witnesses for the prosecution before they can escape; Doctor Legrand, upon a charge of perjury, and Alexander Brown, upon a charge of blackmail. I am prepared immediately to present evidence corroborating my accusation."

Monsieur Cartier paused, and, with the judge, looked at the two men he had designated. Doctor Legrand had risen suddenly as if he were about to make a dash for liberty while there was yet a chance; but thought better of it and sat down again, staring about nervously. Sanborn sat very still—white and rigid, to be sure, but outwardly composed, his eyes meeting Cartier's level gaze.

"Guard the doors of the courtroom," ordered the judge, and immediately the attendant officers stepped toward their posts.

"Your evidence, Monsieur Cartier," suggested the judge.

"I shall first call one named Lemaitre, to substantiate my charge of perjury against Doctor Legrand. Monsieur Lemaitre!"

The witness stepped up and was

sworn. He was an oldish man, in the uniform of veteran public messengers, with his simple military badges, well burnished for the occasion, attached to the breast of his coat.

"Monsieur Lemaitre," began Cartier, "did you deliver a telegram to Alexander Brown at the premises known as thirty-one Rue St. Jacques some time yesterday?"

"I did, monsieur," replied the messenger.

"Who accepted and signed for the message?"

"A big negro named Ferris."

"He signed the receipt for it, did he?"

"Yes, monsieur."

"Where was he when he signed your book?"

"At the door of his apartment."

"Describe his appearance at that time," suggested Cartier.

"Very drunk, but otherwise all right, so far as I could see."

"Did he appear to be—paralyzed, or unconscious?"

The witness' reply was lost in a roar of laughter that filled the courtroom, and Cartier signaled that his testimony was sufficient.

"That, your honor," Cartier went on, when quiet was once more restored, "coupled with other facts which I am about to adduce, proving Doctor Legrand a hired and a disreputable witness, should exculpate my client from the charge of murderous assault. But before judgment is passed upon him, I have to request you to consider the case of Alexander Brown, a notorious swindler, who organized and executed against the prisoner a scheme, virtually amounting to blackmail, whereby my client was forced to part with certain of his property at a tiny fraction of its real value."

Here Cartier stopped a moment to whisper a word to Curley, who hurried back to conduct Alicia to the witness chair.

"Monsieur Cartier," came sharp and resolute words from the prisoner's box, "you will not proceed to press that charge. I am here to be tried—not Alexander Brown—and I have a right to demand a hearing."

The judge turned and gazed steadily at Ferguson, who returned his stare with perfect equanimity. Every man in the courtroom held his breath and hung upon the judge's first word; for this was unparalleled impudence and contrary to any precedent in the history of the court.

"Let the prisoner maintain silence," he shouted angrily. "It is I who preside over this court—not he. Monsieur Cartier, proceed."

Impotent to rebel further, Ferguson awaited the issue, devising a thousand kinds of torture for the traitor Curley, and watching for the first appearance of Alicia, hoping against hope that she would spare herself the ignominy that Curley had evidently forced upon her.

Meantime Cartier went on: "You perceive, your honor, that the prisoner is unwilling to press the case against the man Brown. However, there are graver questions at issue, and on behalf of the American embassy I must prove blackmail, and have the sale repudiated. I cannot force him to testify against his will, but we have another witness, one whose testimony is equally convincing—Mademoiselle X."

Cartier stopped again, and looked round for Curley. Over the twisting heads of the spectators, he saw Curley talking excitedly with the doorman; and seconds later Curley turned back, disgruntled, and threaded his way down the aisle toward the bar.

"She's gone," Curley cried, in disgust, before he was halfway to Cartier. "She lost her nerve, and skipped out not a minute before I went after her. Now what are we going to do?"

Cartier stared blankly at Curley until the latter had come up to him; and then engaged him in a whispered conversation.

"Have you any other evidence against the man Brown to substantiate a charge of blackmail?" asked the judge impatiently.

"Not at hand, your honor," admitted Cartier.

"Not even for your embassy can I be expected to hold a man on a charge of blackmail without some evidence. If the prisoner is still unwilling to enter complaint, we will drop this discussion concerning Brown, and proceed to settle the case before us. Have you any other testimony to present in his case?" asked the judge.

For a second time Cartier and Curley held a whispered powwow. And in the midst of it, Sanborn spoke up.

"Your honor," he said, his voice shaking with nervousness, "is there any reason why I should remain here longer?"

"None, unless your further testimony is needed in the case against the prisoner. Doctor Legrand, however, will remain. Monsieur Cartier, will you kindly proceed?"

"Your honor," returned Cartier, "I would ask permission to telephone the American embassy before I proceed. I have been expecting a message every moment—ah, unless I am mistaken, it is here now."

Curley, in his anxiety, met the embassy's messenger halfway up the aisle, seized the envelope he carried, and ripped it open. His broad face broke into a smile as he read it. He caught Cartier's eyes fixed upon him questioningly, and nodded. Having received the signal he awaited, the lawyer turned again to the bench.

"Your honor," he said, "I shall produce one more witness for the prisoner's defense—Monsieur Timothy D. Gough."

And while Curley took the witness chair, his face beaming with amusement at Ferguson's bewilderment, Charles Augustus Sanborn, fairly gasping for air, groped his way from the courtroom unhindered.

CHAPTER XIII.

SANBORN RECEIVES SENTENCE.

It took precisely three long, stiff drinks in the nearest café to pull Sanborn together. Never in all his existence—at least since he came to live in Paris—had he had so narrow an escape. And the mystery of the thing frightened him well-nigh as much as the fact itself. He, who had covered his tracks so cautiously, had been betrayed; but by whom? Who was that mysterious witness who could have sent him to jail for thirty years, and who, at the last moment, had lost her nerve? And what evidence did she have?

As he sipped his consommation, he ran over the list of men he had employed in this deal: Leonard, Fighting Phil, Doctor Legrand, the porter of his Rue St. Jacques apartment—over the heads of all of them he held a sword which they knew, separately and collectively, would drop at the least sign of betrayal. If Doctor Legrand tried to incriminate him in that perjury charge, there would be one more doctor convicted of criminal malpractice before the month was gone. And the others—but why catalogue crimes!

Peret—he was an unknown quantity; a trifle nasty, perhaps, but trustworthy enough in this scheme because he had—or so Sanborn thought—no definite knowledge of the plant that had been put up on Ferguson; or, granting that he guessed it, he must incriminate himself as well as Sanborn. And as for women—he had never made use of them in his little affairs; they were too emotional, too generally untrustworthy. If only that woman had come forward, so that he might have seen who she

was; and given her testimony, so that he might at least know what he had to fear: then, certainly, he would not be so profoundly agitated. But an unknown enemy, with an unknown weapon: that, indeed, for a man of Sanborn's superstitious nature, was a hard combination to face.

But in any case, he was safe so far; and if a kind providence would only hasten a favorable decision by the German government, so that it came while he was still at liberty, Paris would know him no more forever. His hand still trembling, he caught out his watch. Barely ten o'clock! Two hours yet to wait before he was expected at the German embassy. And Alicia, what of her? What must she be thinking? Would she be ill—worried into a state of nervous prostration with his prolonged and unexplained absence? Could he possibly scrape up courage enough to go and see her that afternoon if the German embassy reported "no news yet"; or—and his big frame actually shuddered at the thought—an answer finally negative. True, there was still the American government's offer always to be depended upon, but that might be six months coming.

Sanborn walked thoughtfully down to the Rue St. Jacques. It was plain enough now what that mysterious telegram had been sent him for; and it was plain why Pierre had been decoyed away, and Fighting Phil left alone there. A little deft questioning of Luke Leonard and Pierre might give him a clew to the mystery of the woman.

"Ain't here, neither one of 'em," Fighting Phil replied to the first question on Sanborn's lips, as he opened the door to his apartment. Phil was sulky and morose, not alone as a result of his dalliance with the wine cup throughout the day before, but as well because he was beginning to chafe against his enforced imprisonment.

"When did they go?" inquired Sanborn.

"This mornin'—not fifteen minutes after you left. Say, Sandy, when——"

"Why did they go out? Where did they go?" Sanborn interrupted impatiently.

"Don't ask me. All I know is that guy wha' d'you call him—that snob marquis you're stringin'—come in here an' had a word with Luke, an' away they hiked together, 'thout so much as sayin' good-by. An' Pierre pulled out a couple o' minutes later. I couldn't tell you anything more if you was to cut off my booze for a week."

"Oh, all right," grumbled Sanborn. "I'm not blaming you any. But it seems almighty queer, all the same."

"When am I goin' to get a breath of air, Sandy?" asked Phil petulantly. "My pins is all of a tremble now; at this rate, I never will get back into shape again."

"You get back into shape!" growled Sanborn. "Get out of here just as soon as you want to, and stay away just as long as you like. And I give you fair warning right now, Phil, that you needn't bank on me any more. I'm going out of business: I've put over my last deal. You and the bunch will have to shift for yourselves from now on."

Phil drew back a pace, and stared at Sanborn with surprise and alarm. "Gord a'mighty!" he burst out, at last. "What's the matter, Sandy?"

"Nothing. I'm going to quit this game—that's all." Sanborn, who had been pacing the length and breadth of his smoking room, paused before a cellaret and poured himself a bountiful drink.

"What's goin' to become o' me?" demanded Ferris, in utter dismay.

"I don't know; that's up to you. Enlist in the war, maybe; they'll need you, from all accounts. You can stay here till I sell out—and that'll be this week.

I won't see you starve, at any rate." Sanborn dropped upon a padded window seat and looked out upon the court below, though his eyes saw nothing of it.

Phil Ferris, seeing that Sanborn was plunged deep into reverie and did not wish to be disturbed, slipped back quietly and put on his street clothes. And when he passed the smoking room again on his way to the street, Sanborn sat in the selfsame pose.

The truth is, Sanborn was just beginning to realize what a wrench it was going to be to pull out this last stake that held him to his old life, a life that he had loved—this pitting his wits not alone against the wits of his victims, but against the wits of those intellectual giants who had made the laws; this having in his hand the actuating strings of a group of human manikins, over whom he was virtually dictator, with, in most cases, power of life and death. This little apartment, in which he sat for perhaps the last time, had been his empire; here he was king unto himself, and received the homage of his lieutenants; how many times had he sat in that same seat, nurturing with exquisite care the germs of a plot, and later on seeing it develop slowly to its perfect fruition. Could he ever forget, or accustom himself to the lack of those thrills of suspense, when success depended upon a mere word; and the thrills of triumph that came when that word was spoken.

Ever since Alicia had arrived at an age when she began to evince signs of her real character, he had known that this moment must arrive; during those years he had looked forward with a sort of yearning for this time, when he had put by money enough to live well on, and could abandon his double life and live straight. But now that the time had actually arrived, he hated it, and began to dally with the temptation to hang on a little longer, and put over a deal now and then—not as a regular business, but just to keep his hand in. He could not, when faced with the necessity of making a decision, bear to give up his little empire, to scatter to the four winds his faithful little army, to abdicate his little throne and relinquish his empire. "Only a little flyer now and then," he actually whispered to himself. "Only upon occasions so rare that Alicia can never suspect; not for profit, but for the mere fun of the thing. There'd be no zest in life without it. By George, I'm hanged if I'll give it up!" he concluded resolutely, crossing the room to the cellaret for another drink.

Fortified alike by his resolution and by several more drinks, he fared forth finally to the German embassy for his answer.

"Yes, the reply has come," the ambassador informed him impassively, touching a call bell, and speaking in German to the clerk who responded to the summons.

And a minute later the ambassador was reading the decoded message to Sanborn:

> The imperial government thanks you for your dispatch of the twenty-fourth, having reference to the acquisition of an oil port in the South American state of Colombia, and has to inform you that it will receive the government's most careful consideration. An investigation will be set on foot at once to determine its value, both as a strategic and as a commercial proposition, and you will be kept in close touch as developments appear.
>
> IMPERIAL CHANCELLOR.

Sanborn saw the powerful, grizzled head of the ambassador as through a cloud; the objects in the room, the walls themselves, danced weirdly about him; with a crushing force his strong white fingers gripped the extended arms of his chair to steady himself. And through the chaos came the calm—how could any one be calm at that moment, Sanborn wondered—the calm and collected voice of the ambassador.

"It appears to be quite favorable, Mr. Sanborn," he said, folding up the dispatch and handing it back to the clerk.

"You think so?" Sanborn choked out, in a trembling voice.

"Certainly," replied the ambassador decisively. "In the first place, the government would scarcely commit itself to an investigation—commit itself publicly, I mean—unless it meant business; and there is nothing in the message to prevent me from telling you about it. And in the second place, the government is not in the habit of thanking its ambassadors except for services which it considers out of the ordinary. You may rest quite assured, Mr. Sanborn, that my government is impressed, to say the least, with the proposition."

"Thanks," murmured Sanborn rising, and keeping fast hold upon the back of his chair to counteract his dizziness. "You will, of course, want to see my title to the property."

"There is no hurry," returned the ambassador. "If my government desires to buy the property, it can find the lawful owner without difficulty."

Sanborn caught his breath and stared hard at the ambassador. "Why do you say that?" he asked, with a sinking heart.

The ambassador, in turn, looked with surprise at Sanborn. "Merely because I wanted to show you that we are in no hurry to examine your title. The government is more concerned just now with what the property is than with who owns it. I thought you would understand that."

"Of course, naturally," Sanborn remarked, with an uneasy laugh. "I'm—well, just a little upset with such a stroke of fortune, and you can't blame me."

The ambassador looked unconvinced, and still rather curious as to why his simple speech had affected Sanborn so obviously. Sanborn went on hastily:

"Would you be good enough to let me know at thirty-one Rue St. Jacques when you have any further news for me?"

"Your suspense is ours, Mr. Sanborn," rejoined the ambassador, rising, and holding forth his hand. "If my government decides to acquire the property, we shall surely lose no time in getting in touch with its owner. Good morning, Mr. Sanborn."

And thus was Sanborn vindicated in his opinions of international intrigue and strategy; thus was he enriched beyond the farthest limits his vivid imagination and sanguine hopes had ever been able to contemplate; thus was his confidence restored to him, his poise regained, his imperturbability—yes, his ability to lie and get away with it—rendered incapable of assault. Now the law, and the mysterious woman witness, had no more terrors for him; now he could face Alicia with equanimity, pass unscathed through the fire of her scorn born of suspicion, and insure her love and respect forever. As if he were walking in the clouds, seeing nothing of the worldly, teeming life of the streets, through which he passed, he hurried at an eager pace to the Boulevard Haussman.

Very quietly, and with a smile of anticipation lighting his handsome face, he let himself in with the latchkey, and tiptoed down the hall to find and surprise Alicia. He met her maid in the hall, put his finger to his lips with a fatuous sort of smile, and demanded, in an excited whisper, where her mistress was.

"In her room, monsieur," replied the maid, eying him with bewilderment.

Sanborn went on, rapped lightly, and was rewarded with an *"entrez."* He found Alicia sitting in a chair by the window, her elbow on the sill, her chin cupped in her hands, staring out. She still had on her somber-colored tailor suit, and her unobtrusive hat, about

which her thick black veil had been rolled up in disorder. As she turned to see who the intruder was, Sanborn stopped short, and the smile died; one look at her face was enough to make him wish he were still in Rambouillet —or in any place but here, Siberian prisons or the worst of all devised infernos not excepted. But—he was here!

"So, you are here at last," she said finally, in a voice that made him shudder inwardly.

But Sanborn was not so easily put to rout, especially after the incident at the German embassy. Within a second he had summoned all his sang-froid, and advanced to meet her confidently.

"Yes, delicious," he cried heartily, "I am back, and glad to be back. I'm most mortally sorry that I had to run down to Rambouillet without a word to you, but I knew you'd excuse me when you heard how important it was." He started to lean over and kiss her forehead, but something made it impossible, something forced him against his will to back up a step and scrutinize her.

"I suppose your journey was very important," were her next words.

"Very! You see, Monsieur Dufour, the chairman of the board of——"

"When did you get back?" she interrupted.

"Just now, on the eleven-something. I came straight home, naturally."

"What were you doing at half past nine this morning?" she inquired.

"At half past nine?" Sanborn repeated, with a queer laugh. "Really, I couldn't say what, at that precise moment. Breakfasting, probably."

Alicia jumped from her chair and faced him, her eyes flashing. "Oh, I can't stand this another minute," she cried, in desperation. "At half past nine this morning you should have been convicted of blackmail, if I hadn't been weak—oh, such a wretched weakling!" She dropped into her chair, covered her face with her hands, and began to sob hysterically.

"You," gasped Sanborn, in a voice that was barely audible.

"Yes, I—a coward, a weakling, only to save you," she sobbed.

Sanborn gazed at her. Intensely emotional by nature, a great wave of pity swamped his powers of reasoning. Actually, he could not comprehend what it was all about. That the strange woman who could have convicted him of blackmail was Alicia was a contingency so remote as to be, in his mind, impossible; a state of affairs preposterous upon the face of it. There was something else that had upset her, something of which he had no knowledge, but must know to comfort her; all her story about blackmail was a hysterical and entirely fortuitous grouping of words that could mean nothing to her. He felt utterly miserable at the sight of her, but it was a misery of compassion, and not of guilt. He had nothing to fear for himself; it would all be straightened out shortly. Pity prompted him to cross to her side, and throw a strong but gentle arm about her shaking shoulders.

"Alicia, pet," he murmured tenderly.

She shook his arm off, jumped away from his embrace, and threw herself upon a sofa, burying her face in the cushions. "Don't touch me," she cried out. "I detest you, I despise you!"

Sanborn straightened up and stared at her in bewilderment. "Alicia," he said reproachfully, "you're hysterical; you don't know what you are saying. Tell me about it; what has happened?"

"I mean it—every word. Don't keep up this sham. You're worse than I thought you were. Oh, if only I hadn't run away."

A glimmer of understanding, of conviction, began to light up Sanborn's bemused ideas of the situation. There was something in what she said, in spite

of its total absurdity, as an abstract proposition. And then all power of resistance surged from Sanborn's big frame, and he collapsed into a chair.

"Do you mean to say, Alicia," he began, in a panicky voice, "that you were —that you were—Alicia, where have you been this morning?" he concluded, determined to get at the facts.

"Still shamming; still lying," she exclaimed bitterly, though her hysteria was spent, and her voice was calmer.

"I don't mean to be. It's the truth I'm after."

"Where were you? Tell me that, and then I'll know whether you're going to be honest with me."

"In the police court of the St. Lazare precinct," Sanborn told her, with a firmness he had not thought possible, "doing precisely what I had a right to do—what it was my duty to do: bringing to justice a fire eater who committed a deliberate assault upon a—a friend of mine."

"A friend of yours, eh!" she repeated, with scorn. "A friend of yours —a dishonest prize fighter who took it upon himself to insult me, and force his company upon me when I had no way of defending myself. That is your friend. And the man you were bringing to justice, as you put it—the man you caused to be imprisoned in order that you might blackmail him out of a fortune—he is the one who came along and sent that colossal brute about his business."

"Ferguson was—it was for you——" stammered Sanborn.

"Precisely. It's somewhat to your credit that you didn't know, and only for that am I even enduring you about me, though it doesn't abate a mite from your crime. A man who would do as you have done couldn't reasonably be expected to come to halt even in the face of such a situation."

"And—so you were in that court this morning."

"Yes, and you can imagine how I felt. One of Mr. Ferguson's friends came to me and told me that a man named Brown had engineered the plot against him, and asked me to appear in his defense. I was only too glad, too, though you can imagine how hard it was to tell that I was alone, in the Rue St. Jacques, looking for my father, at one o'clock in the morning. I expected to be confronted there with a scoundrel, and, when you got up, you can imagine how I felt."

Sanborn shuddered. "Then you didn't know," he said timidly, "that it was I who had done it, when you appeared to testify?"

"No, but I should have testified even had I known it."

"Good Lord!" groaned Sanborn, in utter misery. "How horrible it must have been for you!"

"A shock, but not so horrible as what came after. I could have shown you up for a scoundrel, but when it came to sending you to prison, oh, papa, I simply couldn't do it. I acted on impulse; I turned coward and ran."

"You regret it now, I suppose," Sanborn commented, after a space.

"Yes, I do. How can I do otherwise? I see now what a weakling I was—and, besides, what can Mr. Ferguson think of me? Imagine that, if you can—what must Mr. Ferguson think of me now? And you deserved it! Oh, how you deserved it!" she concluded, with bitter emphasis.

Sanborn writhed inwardly, but said nothing; there was nothing, in fact, for him to say.

Presently Alicia sat up, felt for her hatpins, and took off her hat. "I feel better now, at any rate," she said, with a sigh of relief, as she laid her hat aside. "I didn't mean to let this thing upset me so; but now it's over with. And now we've got to face the facts as they are and find a way out. Whatever happens, Mr. Ferguson, of course, can

never have any respect for me, but I can't think about that. We've got to put matters right. I suppose you've—swindled him already."

"I have paid him what he thought was a good price for his property," rejoined Sanborn, relieved in turn at Alicia's composure after the storm. "I have no doubt but that he thought he was swindling me when he sold it to me."

"Are you utterly—rotten? If so, we may as well stop here, and I shall go my own way."

"Don't talk that way, Alicia," begged Sanborn.

"I'm not excited now, and I mean precisely every word I say," she told him quietly. "You are at the turning point. You've two roads to choose between—one with me and the other alone. But if you decide that you prefer me, you will drop from this very moment any underhandedness, or self-defense, or dishonesty. You swindled Mr. Ferguson, and you know it. When you say you didn't, you are merely lying to me and to yourself, and you make it impossible for me even to consider you. Before we go any farther toward a reconciliation, and planning for a future together, I want your word that you will be square with me, at any rate."

"I promise gladly, so far as I am able," said Sanborn, in a low tone, after a moment's pause.

"I suppose you must make a certain reserve on account of your past habits," admitted Alicia. "And on my part I'll try to be forbearing and help you to break your habits. I say it was merely impulse that kept me from testifying against you this morning; that is true. But now that I think it over, I see that it was the best thing I could do. Mr. Ferguson could have gained nothing by your being arrested that he cannot as well gain by your being free, and, in addition, you have a chance to make good, which would have been denied you had I testified. Of course, I am utterly ruined in Mr. Ferguson's esteem, but that is my affair. I understand you bought some property from him while he was in jail, at a mere fraction of its value. Is that true?"

"Yes," Sanborn nodded.

"Then you will give it back to him at once. If he cares to return to you the money you paid him, well and good; but you will not insist."

"But, my dearest girl," protested Sanborn, aghast, "that is—it is impossible. The property is worth a fortune—millions upon millions. I can't give it all back—it's our fortune, yours and mine, that I've worked for all these years. Think what it means to both of us."

"Have you realized upon it yet?" asked Alicia coldly.

"No, not yet, but the arrangements are all made," said Sanborn eagerly. "Really, you can't ask me to——"

"The thing is not to be discussed. If you had any morals at all, you would see that it does not admit of discussion."

"But you don't understand the proposition, Alicia. I admit, when you first asked me to give the property back, that I spoke what was uppermost in my mind; but when you come to reason it out, you can't fail to see that Ferguson owes me a good share of the money, even if I should give it back. I am the man who arranged for the sale; it was my brains that saw a chance to sell it for twenty-four millions instead of a paltry million he would have been glad to accept. That particular sale of the property is due to me and my intelligence and my skill."

He scanned her face wistfully for some signs of her agreement with him, and seeing not even a token of interest in her expression, continued, but less confidently: "I am perfectly willing to do this, Alicia: go to Ferguson, and tell him the whole scheme, making plain

to him all the business I have transacted, and tell him that my services to him amount to so much, and refund to him the difference. What could be fairer than that?"

"Mr. Ferguson might not want to dispose of the property as you have done," objected Alicia decisively. "You have no right to sell another person's property without his advice and consent, and that property, morally speaking, is still his. The only way you can straighten out this tangle is to give it back to him, without any whining and without any reserve whatsoever."

Sanborn thought a moment. "You simply can't mean it, Alicia. Think what a fortune of millions means to you—think what it would buy for you, think what——"

"And think what it would have cost me," she interrupted vehemently. "Think, if you can, what it has cost me already and will always cost me. Oh, there is no use arguing with you; there is no use trying to help you. You are bad—rotten to the very core, absolutely past saving. What wouldn't I give to be able to live this morning over again?" Here she rose and began to pace the floor, her eyes carefully averted from him. "Do you think I would be a coward this time?"

Sanborn watched her; his struggle was evident in his haggard face. Millions upon millions, rightfully his, and against them——

"Listen, Alicia," he cried, "I want to be straight, I will be straight, but you ask me to do more than common sense dictates. It's all nonsense; it's robbing Ferguson——"

"I ask you to do nothing," she interrupted, stopping before him. "I give you your choice—the one road or the other, and I have described to you the road that I shall take. Don't think I am trying to influence your choice—choose for yourself, and within an hour. And now please go. When you have made up your mind, come and tell me. I want to be left alone now."

Sanborn obeyed without a word.

CHAPTER XIV.

FERGUSON FINDS LEONARD.

In spite of the fact that he owed his release to the efforts and to the testimony of this mysterious Timothy D. Gough, otherwise Curley, of Syracuse, Ferguson, as he left the courtroom, was in no mind to temper his wrath against the jovial little man. Not only had Curley forfeited all right to consideration by his unexplained masquerade, but he had been guilty of a dastardly and unforgivable trick in forcing Alicia Sanborn to give her testimony after Ferguson had expressly forbidden it. Hurrying out, therefore, to find the man and take him to account before he could get away, Ferguson found him waiting by the door; for Curley, it must be said, was as anxious to explain as Ferguson was to hear the explanation. And his testimony, as given in court, had revealed nothing more than Ferguson already knew.

Curley, upon catching sight of Ferguson, raised his right hand, as a sign of peace. "Let me tell you something, Ferguson," he began.

"Let me tell you something first," Ferguson interrupted him hotly. "Of all the prize butters-in on other people's business, you certainly do take the grand special. Say, what excuse have you got for dragging Miss Sanborn into this when I expressly told you not to?"

"Poor work, Ferguson, poor work," laughed Curley. "When you want to lay a man out good and proper, there's nothing like getting a drink under your belt first. You're only half doing the job now. Come on out and have one on me; you can cuss better afterward."

Ferguson glared at him. "What I want to know is this: Have you got

any excuse at all for this monkey work of yours?"

"Sure; the best in the world. But I want to let you blow off first; you can listen better then. How about that drink?"

"The drink can wait till I find out whom I'm drinking with. Which are you—Jim Curley or Timothy D. Gough? Or are you somebody else? How many more names have you got?"

"I've got a lot more; a regular satchel full. But the satchel's checked now. Gough's my right name. Whatcha going to have?" Curley moved toward the street.

Still Ferguson held back. "Then what's the occasion for the masquerade?" he insisted.

Curley came back to Ferguson's side. "Well," he said, in a low tone, "if you've got to know, I'm a special agent of the treasury department, over here to round up a smooth gang of smugglers. I took the alias to keep dark as long as I could; but now I've got the ringleaders, so I'm Gough again. Satisfied, Ferguson?"

Ferguson met Curley's beaming face with a half-sheepish laugh. "Well, I'm blessed," he exclaimed.

"Exactly, same as I was cussed," laughed Curley. "Now, whatcha goin' to——"

"Oh, all right; come along."

They found a secluded table in a neighboring restaurant, and after the waiter had filled their order and departed, Curley drew from his pocket a long blue, official-looking envelope, sealed with a big red splotch of a private seal. "Know anything about that?" he asked casually, handing it across to Ferguson.

Ferguson saw his own name on it. "The letter," he cried, reaching for it.

"It is. Read it over and see if you know anything about it," bade Curley, and Ferguson read:

DEAR DAN: First salutations to a budding millionaire! Things have turned up right for you at last. I'd lose my job if it ever got out that I was telling you this now, for it's supposed to be an international secret till Washington can act upon it. But I know you'll keep it under your hat, and I want to be the first to break it to you.

Four gushers spouting the finest grade of raw petroleum have been drilled by prospectors on that Coralles concession you own in partnership with Luke Leonard. Do you realize what that means?

And the commercial value isn't all. You know there's a first-class harbor there, and in these days of oil-burning cruisers an oil port is as good as a coaling station any day. Washington got wind of it right away, and, to keep the matter quiet till she could arrange to get control of it through a private company, she forced Bogotá to put a censorship on all messages relating to it, so I had to smuggle this out by a friend on his way to Paris. You'll probably hear direct from Washington about it inside of a month. Of course, if you want to hawk it around the capitals of Europe, you'd get a much better price for it, but I know you're not that sort of a hairpin, and it would get me into trouble if you started offering it around until you hear from Washington.

Under the circumstances, I suppose you'll go straight to the States and stay there until you've got your millions, and in such a case it'll probably be a long time before I see you again, if I ever do. Anyway, drop me a line when you do put it over, and let me know what you cleared out of it. Heartiest congratulations and best wishes. Yours very truly, E. G. S.

Ferguson folded up the letter slowly, put it into the envelope, and handed it back to Curley, who was watching him intently.

"Who," asked Curley, "is E. G. S.?"

"American consular agent at Sabanilla."

"Trustworthy?"

"Absolutely. One of my best friends."

Curley meditated this point. "Then it looks like you are due to lose a few millions, more or less, doesn't it? That is, if you still persist in sacrificing yourself to let that Sanborn girl down easy." Neither this veiled hint, nor Curley's questioning stare, evoked a response

from Ferguson, who was thoughtfully twirling the stem of his glass between a thumb and finger. Curley went on, after a second: "To my mind, she isn't worth it, Ferguson."

"Never mind about the girl, Curley," Ferguson said finally, in hard, even tones. "Your opinion doesn't stack up two-spot high with me on that proposition. Here's something more to the point: How long have you had that letter in your possession?"

Curley knew well enough whither this query was tending, but he was unperturbed in spite of it. "Since night before last, when we took that drunk out of the Red Mouse."

"How did you get it?"

"I took it off him—Downy, his name is. Now just one minute, Ferguson. You're usually apt to go off at half cock, and before you start anything, I warn you that I was only doing my duty. Downy is one of that gang of smugglers I've been telling you about. I followed him to the Red Mouse that night, and sat there waiting for Johnson—he's another treasury agent helping me on this case—to come in and nab him. But when Downy went over the table, and Johnson hadn't shown up, I had to do something right away quick, or lose track of Downy again. I didn't like the idea of mixing it with that bunch single-handed; but I sized you up as a pretty fair scrapper, and drew you into it. I was going to tell you about it as soon as we had got him put to bed, but when I found that letter on him, addressed to you, I didn't know but what you might be in cahoots with him, and I was afraid to tell you for fear you'd tip him off. I went back as soon as you'd gone to your room to keep watch of things. I got the letter, and, after I'd read it, I naturally kept it; Downy had no right to it. Johnson got Downy this morning when he left the hotel. That's how I got the letter."

Ferguson had listened intently, but with a countenance too impassive to give Curley any inkling of what he felt. "Then why didn't you tell me something about, or give me, the letter? Why did you want to beat all around the bush, and declare that your information about it was all a hunch, instead of coming out and telling me exactly what I was up against? That's something that'll take considerable explaining, I reckon."

"Look here, Ferguson," Curley replied emphatically. "In a case like this, where international policies are involved, a man can't be too careful about whom he takes into his confidence. I've done enough secret-service work under temporary assignment to the state department to know that. That letter said plainly that Washington didn't want news of the find to leak out to any one, and that meant you. Spite of the fact that the letter was addressed to you, you hadn't any more right to it than Downy. Your friend, E. G. S., in Sabanilla ran a big risk in tipping you off privately, and I wasn't going to be caught in the same trap. I had no right to tell even you the facts in the matter without permission from Washington. I tried my best to keep you from selling till I'd wired my chief in Washington for permission to talk to you about it; and what more could I do? It would have been all right if you had taken my advice; but you didn't, and there you are. The wire from my chief came this morning, while I was in court; otherwise I wouldn't even have testified for you then. A man in my business ain't got any right to have friends, for there's lots of times when he can't treat 'em square.

"And, as a matter of fact, I did put the business up to our ambassador here, and he advised me to do just as I did. It won't take long for you to corroborate that if you want to; I did the best I could for you. You understand, Fer-

guson, that it's a devilish important discovery—if it's true—and we figured we'd better not take any chances. Of course, if we had known how things were going to break, we'd have done differently. But we're not prophets; and it's not too late to mend matters yet."

Ferguson interrupted: "What did your chief say about it?"

"Just a short message. Here; read it for yourself!"

Ferguson took it and read:

Secretary state advises no reason for silence.

"Going to put up a fight for your title?" asked Curley, taking the telegram from Ferguson's fingers.

"Can you see me doing it under the circumstances?" inquired Ferguson grimly.

"You'll never get it any other way," Curley told him.

"Then I'll go without it. I reckon I can scratch along on what I've got." And, after a moment's space, Ferguson went on: "I've got to get a hustle on and pick up a few loose ends I've dropped. Got a little business to fix up before I leave Paris, and I don't want to stay here an hour longer than I have to."

"What is it, Ferguson? That man Leonard you spoke to me about?"

"Yes."

"Then you'd better come along with me," said Curley, rising. "Johnson's got him, up in our suite at the Buckingham. He's another of the smuggling gang. They've been working Brazilian diamonds in through Brussels on consignment. Shrewd game; I'll tell you about it soon as we can find an hour to spare. We've been on to 'em for a year, so they've been lying low for that length of time, and are pretty well broke."

"Where did you get hold of Leonard?" Ferguson asked casually, rising in his turn.

"At the home of that young Frenchman you sold your concession to. In fact, it was Frenchy himself who gave us the clew. I don't want to butt in again, but would you mind telling me what you want of Leonard? Fighting Phil told me you would shoot him at sight. Of course, I laughed him in the face." Yet Curley's direct gaze belied his ease of mind on that proposition; he was never quite sure of Ferguson.

"That was only a bluff, though Luke thought I meant it. I'm sorry you've got him so soon, because that won't leave me much chance to salt down my own trick. The fact is, Luke Leonard robbed Mrs. Fortner, the wife of my partner, in Bolivia, of about twenty thousand dollars by as shrewd a swindle as you ever came across. That was every cent she had, and Fortner got hurt just before I left, so he'll never be likely to do another day's work. That puts the Fortners rather up against it. I got Leonard hauled over the coals down in La Paz, but Luke got to the judge before I did—or at least more impressively—and the court dismissed the case.

"We knew Leonard had come to Paris, and when I came here to get capital for my mine, I promised Fortner I'd force Leonard to cough up. That's what I want to see him for. He's got the money; we're pretty sure of that. And he's a coward into the bargain, so I reckon I could scare him into coming across with what he got out of a straight steal. I wouldn't have bothered with it, except that the Fortners are absolutely down and out; and unless I get capital to develop this mine of ours, it means life itself to them. And, beside that, I promised Fortner, and I don't want to go back without having had a good try at it."

"I don't believe," said Curley, as they stepped into a taxi, "that you've got a ghost of a show to get back a cent.

Leonard's a coward; I'll say that for him. But the gang's stony broke."

"Could you fix it so I could have a try at it?" Ferguson asked.

"Sure thing; come along."

On the way to the Buckingham, Curley explained that he and his right-hand man Johnson had not yet had Leonard actually arrested, because they were trying to persuade him to waive extradition—extradition being a necessary legal procedure in case they called in the French authorities and arrested him—and to return voluntarily, thereby saving time and expense in getting him back to the States. Under the watchful eye of Johnson—a ponderous, brick-red, slow-but-sure sort of man—Luke was unconcernedly smoking his vile tobacco and playing solitaire while he awaited his legal counsel.

"Hello, Dan!" he said, looking up casually, as Ferguson and Curley entered. "Don't try any sharpshootin', not till I've had a word or two with you. Could you fix it up so we could have a little session alone?"

"How about it, Curley?" asked Ferguson.

"Nothing against it," Curley said cheerfully. "Just step into the next room; we'll stay here. Look out, Leonard, he don't get the drop on you; he's a bad man, Ferguson is." Leonard, his hand already on the handle of the door, did not see Curley's left eyelid drop lazily toward Ferguson.

Leonard had barely heard the door close behind him and Ferguson when he fished out of his inside pocket a small package and began to open it. "I s'pose you've come for that twenty thou of Mrs. Fortner's," he said to Ferguson, removing the wrapper from a sheaf of French bank notes.

"Your suppose is about right, Luke."

"Also," Luke went on, slapping the bundle of notes against the table, "I take it that there ain't room for both of us on this earth so long as I can pay this and don't. So here goes. If you'd struck me for it an hour ago, I couldn't have give you a cent, and then I s'pose you'd have filled me full of lead. I know they've got me dead to rights, but I can turn State's evidence and waive extradition, and they ought to let me off easy. But when I *do* come out, I want to be a free man, and not have you taggin' me around with a gun."

During this whimsical speech, Leonard had been riffling off note after note.

"Where'd you get hold of that wad?" Ferguson asked presently.

"Sold my half of that Coralles property to that Frenchy who bought your half. Got seventy thousand dollars for it; made him mortgage his every last dud——"

"Seventy thousand!" Ferguson exclaimed. "Why, man, that property's worth millions. Didn't you know that oil had been discovered there?"

"Sure, I knew that, all right," admitted Leonard, with a grin that Ferguson found puzzling. "But I knew Tim Gough was hot on my trail, and that French guy used me a lot like Sandy used you—told me if I didn't sell out to him, he'd put Tim Gough on my trail. So I held him up for every possible cent he could scrape together by mortgagin' his very soul, and started to light out. But I wasn't quick enough, and Tim's right bower nabbed me at the station just as I was gettin' on the train for Calais."

"That's one time you've had it put over on you," said Ferguson, though not as gleefully as might have been expected. "Curley, or Tim Gough, as you call him, just told me that it was the marquis who put him on your track."

Leonard straightened up from the notes and stared at Ferguson in incredulous disgust. "Hunh?" he burst out, still staring. And then, after a moment's pause, he went on: "So the dirty skunk double-crossed me, eh? I

might have expected it. Take it from me, Dan, I've seen many a crook in my time, and I'm no last year's model, either, when it comes to puttin' one over; but that marquis guy has got more real brains and more real deviltry between his ears, than all the rest of the crooks in Paris put together. He'll come to a bad end if he don't look out!" Whereupon, to Ferguson's infinite amazement, Luke broke out into a torrent of cackling laughter.

"Some way it don't quite jibe with my ideas of a joke," Ferguson suggested, when he had waited in vain for Luke's mirth to abate.

"O' course not," Leonard gasped, between cackles, "because you don't know the point."

"Then you might put me wise."

"I ain't sayin' nothin', Dan, not till I've seen my lawyer. Take your twenty thousand dollars and get out. Maybe you'll get an eye opener in the course of an hour or so."

"All right; you know your business. I'm in a hurry. Good-by, Luke, and much obliged."

Thus curtly Ferguson took leave of his aforetime partner, told Curley briefly of the success of his mission as he passed through the outer room, and hurried back to his hotel to spruce up a bit before he went to see the Sanborns. Luke was either crazy or up to some trick or other, and Ferguson wasted no time thinking about his unreasonable amusement.

CHAPTER XV.

LUKE'S LITTLE JOKE.

The Marquis de Peret was no sport; he gambled, to be sure, but only upon sure things. In order to make up the purchase price for Luke Leonard's half of the Coralles concession, he had mortgaged what was left of his patrimony, his personal belongings, his very soul, as Leonard had put it, besides stretching his personal credit to the breaking point; but he would never have done this upon the mere chance of putting the deal through. First, he had gone direct to the German ambassador, and at a considerable cost had received from him sufficient assurance to stake his all upon the Coralles property. Now, indeed, he possessed every inch of it; now he was rich beyond dreams of avarice.

Sanborn's voice spelled trouble, as he called the marquis over the telephone, and requested him to come at once to the Boulevard Haussman apartment. Sanborn wanted his share made over to him, of course, and as Peret entered the porter's lodge, he was strongly girt for the struggle to retain it.

Sanborn had prepared to make his self-abasement complete. He would withhold nothing from Alicia, not even the fact that he had inveigled into this crooked game the man she loved—as he thought. He would take all the blame upon his own shoulders, exculpate Peret just as far as he could and as Peret himself permitted, and have Peret make the title over to him to be passed back to Ferguson. Thus only could the tangle be straightened out; thus only could he gain his former place in Alicia's good graces. He met the marquis at the door and drew him into the library. Alicia had said that she preferred to stay aloof.

"Paul," he said, closing the door gently after him and turning to face the debonair young fellow, "I'm not going on with this deal. I want you to make the title over to me, so that I may return the property to Mr. Ferguson—or return it to him yourself, which amounts to the same thing."

A resolute and point-blank refusal to part with the title to any one had been on Peret's lips ever since he started to answer Sanborn's summons; but now it would not come. Here was a surprise. What the very devil could have happened to make Sanborn sacrifice the

millions he had won? He blanched as the most obvious reason popped into his head, gripped a chair for support, and stared wildly at Sanborn. "Don't tell me, mon ami," he gasped, "that—that the property is not——"

Sanborn overlooked the manifest traces of alarm. "There's nothing to tell. I got the property from Ferguson," he said evenly, "by a damned dishonest trick, and now I want to make restitution. That's all there is to it."

"But there's millions in it," exclaimed Peret incredulously.

"I know, but that doesn't matter. The chief thing now is to give him back his property. I've got the blank forms here, Paul. Sit down and sign." He pulled a chair up to the writing table, and motioned to the Frenchman to be seated.

Peret laughed; he could afford to, now that Sanborn's motive was no longer in doubt. "It'll take a good many more millions than you've got to make me sign anything like that," he said, turning away. "The property's in my name now, and it will remain in my name until I get my price."

Sanborn faced about, looked curiously at Peret for a second or two, and finally came close enough to him so that he could talk without being overheard in the neighboring rooms. "You don't understand, Paul," he said. "It's Alicia behind me in this; she'll not let either one of us rest until we've made good to Ferguson."

"That is your affair and not mine," Peret informed him blandly.

"You mean——" began Sanborn dubiously.

"Anything you like, my dear friend; but particularly this: I shall hold my property for my price."

And still Sanborn could not believe the testimony of his own ears. Peret did not understand; that was the sole trouble. For Peret could not be mean enough, low down enough, to attempt to hold back the property on him; and, in any case, he could not legally do so. But for the present Sanborn sought to avoid any harsh procedure; he still hoped that Peret, when he saw how much reparation meant to Sanborn, would be only too glad to change his tune.

"Paul," he began again, his tone friendly and confidential, "I have made a grave mistake. Alicia has——"

Peret interrupted with a gesture of impatience. "Don't make the mistake of thinking that I am blind to what any one may see," he ejaculated. "And don't waste my time with any more explanations. I shall not give the property up."

Then did Sanborn's wrath blaze up, but he smothered it, and tried to speak calmly. "You must understand," he said, "that the property never was legally yours, and that if I choose to take the matter to the courts you would very soon be forced to make the title over to me."

"Why?"

"Because I gave you the money to buy it with, upon the distinct understanding, before competent witness, that it was to be used for the purpose of buying the property *for me.*"

"Who is your witness?" Peret could not repress a gleeful grin; he had got Luke Leonard out of the way not a moment too soon.

"Luke Leonard."

"Your friend Leonard will not be in a position to testify for you, nor for any one, for a good many years to come," he announced. "By to-morrow he'll be safe on his way to—to your own country." Peret chuckled.

"What do you mean?" choked Sanborn.

"I've turned him over to Timothy D. Gough, where he belongs."

"You—you damned scoundrel!"

"It's nothing remarkably scoundrelly, considering the lessons I've had for the

past twenty-four hours," said Peret suavely.

Now the leash slipped from Sanborn's wrath. For a second he glared at Peret with eyes that saw red; then suddenly he caught hold of a chair that stood between them and threw it out of the way. Peret edged around quickly so that the great library table was between them. Sanborn checked himself, turned sharp about, with some inarticulate speech upon his lips, and dug a finger into the bell. "Send mademoiselle here," he commanded the servant who appeared in answer to his ring.

"What's the use of that?" Peret demanded, with dry lips.

"Shut up, and stand where you are! You'll soon see." Sanborn tugged open a drawer in the side of the table, snatched out a little automatic, and dropped it into his coat pocket, slamming the drawer shut again just as Alicia appeared in the doorway.

"It's a shame to drag you into this, my dear," he said in a voice that trembled with suppressed rage, "but we're in a deadlock, and I want your advice before I deal with this rascal as he deserves." Sanborn proceeded with a passionate recital of Peret's share in the matter.

Alicia closed the door behind her, looked once at the marquis without any sign of recognition, and dropped into a chair near the door. She did not interrupt, nor look again at Peret, until her father had finished his denunciation.

"The question is," he concluded, taking a step nearer the table between them and fixing Peret with a baleful eye, "shall we drop the matter here, Alicia, or shall I force him to settle in the only way a man can deal with such creatures?"

"Let me talk with him a minute," said Alicia, her voice clear and even.

With a gesture of resignation, Sanborn subsided, and sat upon the edge of the table, swinging one leg.

"And before you start, mademoiselle," Peret cut in, noting that Sanborn's temper was once more safe, "let me warn you that the only argument that can bend my resolve is francs—milliards upon milliards of francs."

"Then I am to understand that you have no scruples of right and wrong," said Alicia.

"I don't propose to stand here and be catechized upon my morals," said Peret stubbornly. "I have much to do today at the foreign office."

"Then we must give you as much as you expected to make out of it?" Alicia concluded.

"Certainly; but I doubt very much how——"

"How much do you want?"

"Alicia," Sanborn broke in, his voice trembling, "there's no use continuing along that line. I don't possess a thousandth part of——"

"You said, papa, that you would let nothing stand in the way of complete reparation to Mr. Ferguson."

"And I stand by it; but——"

"Then the least we can do is to offer what we have. How much do you expect, Monsieur le Marquis?"

"Say a hundred million francs, at a venture," said Peret, with a smile of sheer amusement.

"A hundred—million francs!" Alicia repeated falteringly. "I didn't realize—I suppose we have nothing like that, papa?"

"I have barely fifty thousand dollars," Sanborn told her, with desperation in his voice.

"Is that the truth?"

"It is. I had twenty thousand dollars working capital, Alicia, which I gave to this rascal to buy the property with. Ferguson's got that now, of course. Besides that, I have a matter of fifty thousand in securities as a reserve fund, and not another cent."

The silence which followed this announcement was eloquent. Sanborn stared steadfastly at the toe of his boot, his strong white fingers clasping and unclasping nervously. Alicia watched him; upon her face were depicted amazement and despair. Peret's quick black eyes ran from one to the other of them, fairly reveling in the situation.

"Fifty thousand dollars is all we can offer you, Monsieur le Marquis," Alicia said, her eyes meeting his squarely.

"As well offer me fifty sous," laughed Peret.

"Then there's nothing else we can do," Alicia said, turning to Sanborn.

Stung to sudden fury by her tone, and by the haunting despair in her eyes as she looked at him, Sanborn jumped to the floor and whipped his gun from his pocket. "Yes, there is a way," he cried passionately. "The only way a man can deal with a scoundrel like this one. I'll give you just thirty seconds to decide to assign your title to me, Peret. Get that! Just thirty seconds!"

"You wouldn't—you wouldn't shoot me!" stammered Peret, clutching for the table.

Sanborn laughed harshly. "Shoot you, as I would a dog, of course!"

With a cry of alarm, Alicia leaped for her father, but was stopped halfway across the room.

"Mr. Ferguson to see mademoiselle," the butler announced from the open door, in which he had been standing no one knew how long.

It was the moment Peret had been waiting for. As Sanborn's attention was drawn to this new development, the young Frenchman vaulted the table, darted past the stately butler, and disappeared before Sanborn could recover himself.

"What on earth shall we do now?" whispered Alicia desperately.

"See him, of course," Sanborn returned, dropping the pistol into his pocket again. "We've got to some time; as well now as ever. Show him in, Jacques."

"I—I can't," faltered Alicia, more than half resolved to flee.

"Stay right here, my dear," Sanborn counseled. "I think I know this man Ferguson. We've done the best we can, at any rate; and he'll give us credit for it."

"He might take the fifty thousand," she suggested, hurrying to Sanborn's side, and turning to face the door.

Ferguson entered, his face lighted with a whimsical smile. "I'm afraid I frightened your friend away, Miss Sanborn," he said. "Maybe I should have telephoned before coming."

"No; you couldn't have come at a better time, Mr. Ferguson."

Sanborn advanced and held out his hand, which Ferguson grasped. "It wasn't you he was afraid of, Mr. Ferguson," said he. "You got here just in time to stop me from making a fool of myself. Sit down. We want a talk with you."

With a questioning glance at Alicia, who gave him no satisfaction, Ferguson dropped into a chair, and Sanborn launched directly upon his apology—not a whining, groveling sort of pleading for mercy, but a straightforward account of the life he had led up to the crisis, and of the life he intended to lead after it, giving to Alicia, in spite of her expostulations, full credit for her share in his reform and for her efforts toward reparation.

"And now, Mr. Ferguson," Sanborn concluded, "it's come to this: that the best I can do is about a thousandth part of what's coming to you. I've got fifty thousand dollars——"

"Did you offer that to Peret?" Ferguson interrupted, with a peculiar sort of a smile.

"Yes; he wouldn't look at it, of course. And we honestly don't expect

you to, but I—well, I can only offer what I've got."

"And Peret refused?" Ferguson went on, his smile growing broader.

"Yes," said Alicia, her eyes opening wide with curiosity at Ferguson's reception of their efforts at reparation.

"Did you know, Mr. Sanborn," Ferguson began, "that Peret got Luke Leonard's half of the property as well as mine?"

"No!" exclaimed Sanborn.

"Well, he did. Sold himself to the devil to get it, too; took every last cent he could scrape up, and more than he'll ever be able to pay back if he lives to be a hundred. He had a chance, by doing the right thing by you, to come out of it even, and he turned it down. And I'm mighty glad he did. You're in the fifty thousand, and Peret is—stung!"

"Stung!" gasped Sanborn.

"Yes, sir, stung! He's given seventy thousand for a piece of rock that's worth about a cent an acre."

"But—but the oil, Mr. Ferguson?" inquired Alicia wonderingly, while Sanborn, quite dazed, could only stare.

"Another one of Luke Leonard's con games, Mr. Sanborn," Ferguson announced. "I saw Leonard half an hour ago, and I thought then he was up to something, but he wouldn't tell me just what it was until he had consulted a lawyer. Now it seems that what Luke wanted to know was whether or not Peret could recover the seventy thousand from him on the ground of fraud; of course, Peret couldn't, for he went into the deal with his eyes wide open, and fairly begged Leonard to sell out to him; and the French law, you know, says 'let the buyer beware.' Peret was stung good and proper. And, though Leonard was half tickled to death over it, he had sense enough to keep his mouth shut till he'd got legal counsel on the point."

"I wish I dared believe it," said Sanborn wistfully, exchanging glances with Alicia.

"There's no doubt whatever about it," asserted Ferguson. "The first inkling I had of it was when I went back to my hotel this morning. I found this telegram there." He handed to Sanborn the following dispatch:

> State department inquiring officially about letter I wrote you re oil discovery in your Coralles property. I never wrote letter, and know nothing about it. Look out for swindle. Writing. GEORGE.

"George," said Ferguson, folding the cablegram, "is the American consular agent at Sabanilla, a first-class good friend of mine, the man whose initials, 'E. G. S.,' were signed to that letter that started this merry little game."

Sanborn shook his head blankly. "I can't understand it at all," he said. "There's some mistake somewhere."

"You aren't trying to make it easier for us, are you, Mr. Ferguson?" Alicia spoke up, with a sudden intuition.

"Nothing like that, Miss Sanborn," smiled Ferguson. "I don't even get that happy chance; I wish I had. It was about as clear as mud to me, too, till I got Luke Leonard on the phone and began asking him some questions. He'd seen his lawyer by that time, and was bubbling over with talk. And he certainly had concocted a pretty shrewd scheme. The man Downy was with Luke in it. Downy forged Stevens' initials to the typewritten letter, after having got the official state department paper from the consulate at La Guayra. He addressed it to me—darned shrewd this—because if it had been addressed to Leonard, and Leonard had been trying to sell his half on the strength of it, it would look phony right away. They figured between them that if anybody got after my own half, they'd try to get Leonard's half, as well, and clean up the whole thing. Downy tried for a week to work the letter off on some one just as he worked it off on

Tim Gough—or Curley—but everybody appeared to be too honest. The secret of the whole game, of course, was to have the letter lost or stolen.

"Leonard was broke, and living on you, Sanborn. He said he was afraid you'd get sore soon and kick him out, and they needed the money badly. So he made up his mind finally to work you for a fall. He figured that if you got my half, you'd try to get his half, too; but he says that you were either too poor or too honest. Leonard was getting desperate until Peret came along and fairly begged for the hook. Then Leonard stuck him for every cent he could get out of him—the twenty thousand that you gave him to buy my half, and every cent he could raise. Leonard says he warned Peret that he couldn't get any information from South America, because of the censorship that had been established, but Peret thought that was only an added proof of the value of the property. There you have it, Sandy, in a nutshell. Luke's the only man who's made a cent out of it. Peret's the worst loser; you're out twenty thousand, and I'm out the most useless piece of land in Colombia, which is nothing."

Sanborn's eyes met Alicia's and rested there a moment. Then slowly a smile began to break over his handsome face, a smile that found a counterpart in Alicia's face. "Well, I'm blowed!" he got out at last. "I'm out of it cheap at twenty thousand."

"Cheap! I should say so!" echoed Alicia. "The lesson you have learned is worth ten times that—if you only won't forget it."

This sobered Sanborn, and brought him face to face with a realization of the changes his new life entailed. To come down from living at the rate of thirty thousand a year to the income of fifty thousand dollars—how was it going to be possible? What could he turn his hand to, to increase it? Was there any employment open to a man of his reputation?

"I suppose," said Ferguson presently, more to make conversation than anything else, for the silence had become rather awkward, "that you'll be staying on in Paris indefinitely?"

"No," Alicia spoke up resolutely. "We're leaving Paris as soon as we can get away."

"Leaving Paris?" queried Sanborn in astonishment. "Where are we going?"

"To South America. You haven't found capital yet for your tin mine, have you, Mr. Ferguson?"

"No; why?"

"Because we've got just the amount you need," she went on, her cheeks flushed and her eyes flaming. "And we can't stay in Paris; and papa ought to have something to do to keep him out of mischief. As for me, I'd die if I had to stay another week here; the associations are too dreadful."

Sanborn looked at her in amazement; it was the first he had heard of the tin mine.

"I simply couldn't think of it, Miss Sanborn," Ferguson spoke up quickly. "It's no place for a woman down there—rough and disagreeable, and more than two-thirds savage. You couldn't endure it."

"I could endure anything—with the greatest of pleasure—after this life I've had in Paris," she asserted, with emphasis.

"I'd like to know what all this is about?" Sanborn wanted to know.

Alicia plunged into an enthusiastic account of Ferguson's venture, repeating with a vividness of detail all that Ferguson had told her of it. Once or twice he ventured to object, to laugh it off, to expostulate with her; for it was the first time he had thought of the possibility of such an arrangement. But as she proceeded, she awakened in him a hope that would not be smoth-

ered; awakened an ardent desire that vanquished his common sense; made him think of the proposition as altogether the very best stroke of good fortune that could ever befall a man.

It was not so much that he had found the capital; that he could find in time, anyway, or get along without. But the prospect of having Alicia Sanborn down there in that loneliest, dreariest of spots on the face of the earth, where a man might go six months without laying eyes upon a white woman; and Alicia Sanborn, to him at that moment the most lovable of women. It was too good to be thought of.

"How about it, Ferguson?" he heard Sanborn asking, and realized that Alicia had finished.

"Couldn't possibly be thought of, Sanborn," Ferguson said resolutely. "I've got to have a partner who'll go down there with me, and look after the business end of it for me—on the spot. And I tell you it's no place for a white woman. I couldn't think of allowing you to take your daughter there." He arose suddenly to go, lest he should first change his mind.

Sanborn's face fell. Here was just the chance he had been looking for: a good investment for his small capital, something to keep him occupied, something to keep him away from civilization and temptation until he had gained control of himself again.

"Of course," Sanborn said in a low tone, tinged with shame, "if you wanted a man for the business end of it—a trustworthy man, I mean—I'm afraid my reputation—I'm afraid I'd ——" He stammered, and came to a full stop; it was hard to mention these facts before Alicia.

"That hadn't occurred to me," said Ferguson.

"Don't stand in our way now, please, Mr. Ferguson!" pleaded Alicia anxiously. "I had thought it all over, and it seemed the best possible thing we could do. It will get papa away from here, and keep him busy; it will be the salvation of him. And now that he's started right again, I'm sure—you must help him—we must all help him. And as for his honesty—I'll—I'll watch him, and I can guarantee that he'll be straight."

Ferguson was relenting; after all, it would be the best thing possible for Sanborn, and Alicia might be able to stand it a year for the sake of pulling Sanborn together. He himself could keep a close watch upon Sanborn, and at the end of the year he might manage it so they could get away again. But what a heavenly year it would be for him! "With a guarantee like that," he said at last, with a laugh, "I'd take a risk on any man. I'll look at it this way, Sanborn—that is, if you're still willing to invest after you've been down there and looked my proposition over—I'll look at it this way: that it's your daughter who's my partner as much as you, and hold her responsible—morally responsible for you."

"I hope you mean only business partner," said Sanborn, with a suspicion of a twinkle in his eye; for he was not too blind to see whither affairs might tend.

"Of course, papa! What a foolish question!" Nevertheless, Alicia blushed and avoided Ferguson's eyes.

And Ferguson, to relieve the situation, called vigorously for pen and paper to draw up the articles of agreement.

Karl Truman's Vacation

By Ralph D. Paine

Author of "The Twisted Skein," "The Wall Between," Etc.

You have met Karl Truman before. His college days were the theme of one of the best novels Paine ever wrote, and there have been many requests for more stories of this extraordinary Yale man whose only vices were playing the flute and chess. Here is Karl again, not as a varsity crew man, working his way through college, but as a tutor, with about as "ornery" a type of pupil as you can imagine. This is the first of a series about Karl Truman and his friend Jerry Altemus. The others will follow in due order.

THE fond parents of young Lawrence Burney were determined that he should go to college. It was the thing for a gentleman's son to do, whether he learned anything or not. A certain amount of mental preparation was required, however, and college seemed to be the only place a fellow couldn't buy his way into. In order to fit him to pass the barrier of these entrance requirements, Lawrence had been sent to a famous school in New England. Before the year was out he had to write home, with proper indignation, that "the poor boob of a head master had canned him for low marks." He thereupon cranked his high-powered, bucket-seated roadster and departed from the school in a cloud of dust, removing a gold-tipped cigarette from his cheerful features to shout a farewell to his friends.

Instead of grasping him firmly by the back of the neck and shoving him into a job of some kind, his father, Mr. Singleton Burney, persisted in the opinion that without the college hall mark the boy would lose the social caste to which the family wealth entitled him. He must be tutored at home through the summer, and, if he applied himself, he might be able to enter Yale in the autumn. The crux of the problem was to find the right tutor, a person of tact and firmness together with an agreeable personality. Lawrence was difficult to manage, sighed his mother, and she feared he had been rather spoiled.

At a club in New York, Mr. Singleton Burney happened to meet Jerry Altemus, a junior in Yale, who was enjoying one of those week-end flights from the campus which he considered essential to the cosmopolitan outlook on life. The Burney and the Altemus summer estates were near each other on the north shore of Massachusetts, and the families had been friends for years. The father of young Lawrence confided his troubles to the sapient Jerry, who observed:

"So you want to hire a lad to take charge of the kid and shoot him full of information, Mr. Burney?"

"Precisely. Laurie is bright enough, but he is flighty, confound him!—very easily diverted," was the anxious reply. "Now, if I could find the right chap,

somewhere near his own age, who could chum around with him and steady him for——"

"Seek no farther," declared Jerry. "Do nothing without consulting me, Mr. Burney. Karl Truman, in my class at Yale, is the man. His only vices are playing the flute and chess, but his many virtues atone. A varsity crew man—earning his way through college—a bully sort. If you want him I shall name the wages. He is too modest to hold up his own end."

"There will be no trouble on that score," was the smiling assurance. "He sounds promising, Jerry. You know him and you know my boy. I shall stop off at New Haven and see Mr. Karl Truman to-morrow."

It was in this manner that the immediate destiny of young Lawrence was decided for him. Shortly after the Yale-Harvard boat race at New London, Karl packed the flute and chessboard in his trunk and set out for his summer destination of "Greenacres," as the Burney estate was called. Bronzed, blue-eyed, broad-shouldered, in the finest condition after months of hard training, he seemed ready to cope with any emergency. He felt a sense of trepidation, however, and wondered what his task would be like. The amiable Jerry Altemus had confided, at parting:

"Don't thank me yet, old man. I have succeeded in pulling down good money for you, and as the astute little business manager I am all to the mustard. But you haven't met that Lawrence kid! He is some proposition!"

Jerry had refused to disclose more, adding by way of consolation:

"I shall be down there in a couple of weeks, right next door, where I can hear your cries for help. Be firm, my boy. Be strong. If all else fails, beat him up and resign the job. I'll collect a full season's salary for you."

Uncertain whether he had been engaged as a tutor or a keeper, Karl arrived at the journey's end. As he left the train there stepped up to him a pleasant-faced boy in white flannels. His smile was shy, the soft voice well modulated, his manner winsomely courteous as he offered his hand and said:

"This is Mr. Truman, of course. I've seen your picture a lot with the Yale crew. And I was at the race the other day. Great work! I'm Lawrence Burney."

Karl stared, and failed to hide his surprise. Jerry Altemus had been an alarmist and a false prophet of evil. There could be nothing very wrong with this nice, wholesome lad. A touring car was waiting beside the platform, and a chauffeur in dark-green livery touched his cap and opened the door for them.

"I didn't drive my own car over to meet you," explained young Burney, "because I thought this would give us a better chance to get acquainted and talk about my studies."

The clean-shaven features of the chauffeur had a distinctly Irish cast, shrewd and humorous. As he climbed into his seat he managed to catch Karl Truman's attention, and one eyelid fluttered in a wink, cautious, amused.

"Drive home, Jimmie," commanded young Burney, "and no speeding on the boulevard. It sets a bad example, you know."

Karl expressed approval of this virtuous precept. His pupil was making an excellent impression. They motored through a landscape wonderfully well kept, woodland and stone walls, smooth lawns and rolling fields with large, rambling houses set far back from the road, and here and there bright glimpses of the surf and the sea. Lawrence told of his keen disappointment at leaving school.

"I had the measles during the winter term," said he, "and that put me way behind with my work. It's an awfully strict place. If you don't keep up, you're fired, bing! But we can

make it all up this summer, Mr. Truman. I need English, mathematics, and Latin to get into college this year. Shall we begin this afternoon?"

This eagerness for learning was almost touching, but Karl answered:

"Why not let me look around a bit, and get settled? I suppose you find a lot of fun here, plenty to do?"

"Oh, I motor and golf and so on, Mr. Truman, and the young people dance, but I'm game to let it slide and go to the book stuff as hard as you like."

Jimmie, the chauffeur, had turned to glance over his shoulder at a plunging horse, and again Karl detected the semblance of a wink, faint yet significant. It was to be inferred, perhaps, that the demure young Burney might be worth watching. When they came to a great stone house which seemed to be filled with servants, Karl was conducted to a room that overlooked the shore, his pupil playing the charming host, and anxious that he should be comfortable and feel at home. At dinner Karl met the parents and their daughter, Miss Gertrude Burney. She was as handsome as her brother, but with greater strength of character and somber moods, a girl restlessly desiring a career. At this time she was ardently interested in suffrage and eugenics.

Mr. Singleton Burney had inherited much of his wealth, a ruddy, gray-haired man, who busied himself as a gentleman farmer and sportsman. He had married into one of the ancient and sacred Boston families in which the money of former generations had accumulated. And yet, to simple-minded, observant Karl Truman it seemed that care and discord were in the atmosphere of this elaborate dinner table. The mother was white and fragile, disturbed by trifling annoyances, eternally tired and out of sorts with the world. Lawrence had disgraced his name by being expelled from school, said she, and now he insisted on going to Yale instead of Harvard, which was the Alma Mater of all the Burneys and Peabodys. Of course, some estimable young men went to Yale, and she graciously included Mr. Truman and Jerry Altemus, and it was becoming the fashion of excellent families in New York to prefer New Haven for their sons.

"But, mother, Lawrence must prove that he has brains enough to get into any kind of a college," spoke up Miss Gertrude.

"Please give the poor boy a rest," sharply exclaimed the father. "He is bullyragged from morning till night. It's a wonder he doesn't turn sulky."

"Go as far as you like," blandly remarked the boy. "Mr. Truman and I intend to show you some great old teamwork."

True to his word, Lawrence buckled down to his studies next morning, showing no symptoms whatever of the spoiled child. He was no dullard, and Karl Truman was a rarely capable teacher. As a varsity athlete, the youngster stood slightly in awe of him, and their relations could have been no more satisfactory. In the afternoon they went at it again, for three straight hours, although a launch rocked at its moorings in the cove, the motors waited in the garage, and there was dancing at the country club. The model pupil spent the evening at home, playing billiards with his father, while Karl strolled on the beach with Miss Gertrude, and was grateful for the darkness that hid his blushes, for he had not been in the habit of discussing with young women the problems that are frankly and daringly up to date.

A week passed in this same uneventful fashion, and the behavior of Lawrence Burney was without a flaw. Karl had almost ceased to wonder why the chauffeur winked at him. So gratifying was the progress, so brilliantly successful the tutorial régime of Mr. Tru-

man that the mother of Lawrence decided that her husband must take her abroad for a needed rest. The trip had been postponed twice, but there was now no reason why they should delay. Lawrence was doing beautifully, and Mr. Truman was *so* very competent, and exerted such a fine influence, and Gertrude was capable of taking charge of the house.

They sailed, two days later, from Boston, with a maid and a valet and eleven trunks. That night Karl gave himself the pleasure of a solitary ramble by moonlight, swinging along mile after mile with a fine zest for walking as a pastime. His flute was under his arm in its leather case, and he found an unfrequented bit of coast where he could tootle to his heart's desire. This in itself was enough to make him well pleased with the world, and his mood was uncommonly blithesome as he strode back in the direction of Greenacres. He had reason to flatter himself that he had scored a signal success as a companion and teacher of young Burney. The lad had been mishandled by his parents and schoolmasters. The laugh was on Jerry Altemus, who had feared the worst.

Turning off from the shore into a road that led through the wooded part of the estate, Karl strolled at a leisurely pace. In a sequestered spot he discerned the shadowy outline of a small rustic building, a summerhouse of some sort which he had not seen before. A grass-grown path led toward it from the road, and he idly sauntered nearer. Presently the sound of voices awakened his curiosity, and a light flickered in a window. There was a boyish laugh, so much like that of Lawrence Burney that Karl, standing among the trees, concluded to investigate. It was an odd place in which to find the lad at this hour of the evening, for he had said something about driving his sister over to call on friends near by. Karl had no intention of playing the rôle of a spy, but there was a suggestion of secrecy about this performance which made him vaguely uneasy.

He was about to look for the door, and casually walk in, when his ear caught the accents of another voice than Burney's, and he recognized it as belonging to one "Fatty" Snell, a Harvard freshman, who dwelt not far from Greenacres. He was a flashy young prodigal, and Karl Truman had disliked him on sight, an antipathy which Lawrence Burney had professed to share. In fact, the latter had given Fatty the cold shoulder when he had presumed to breeze in and interrupt the study hours.

The episode of the little rustic house in the woods appeared odder than ever, and Truman halted where he was able to gaze into an open window. The brace of youngsters sat upon benches with a slab table between them. They were smoking cigars, very large and black, and two bottles of beer flanked the candle. Thus they managed to be truly devilish.

Vanished was the shy, demure manner of Lawrence Burney. His straw hat was clapped on the back of his curly head, and his eyes were bright with mischief. The rather porcine Fatty Snell was regarding him with admiration, as one man of the world for another of superior audacity.

"Smooth, oh, mighty smooth stuff!" exclaimed the slightly husky voice of Fatty. "Say, Laurie, old top, you ought to go on the stage. You are certainly some actor. Nat Goodwin couldn't touch it. You mean to say you've fooled this Karl Truman party all the way?"

"Right from the start," was the complacent answer. "I didn't lose a minute. He was the easiest thing you ever saw, Fatty. You see, my game was to string him along until my folks sailed for Europe. Mother had been all fussed up about me, and dad was borrowing

trouble, and they needed a change of air. And it was a cinch to leave me in charge of Truman, the honest watch-dog. He has always been one of those hard-working guys that had no chance to get wise to life."

"Sure, you can hand them any kind of a gold brick," knowingly observed Fatty Snell. "I can always tell a rube. It was hard to keep from laughing when you gave me the frozen face a couple of times. Can we show him a lively summer, now that the coast is clear?"

"I need a vacation. Truman has worked me so hard that my head aches, honest. It's a crime to be a slave in the good old summertime. The trouble begins to-morrow, Fatty. This has been a busy little evening session, what?"

"Our program sounds good to me, old man. This big Truman lobster will never suspect you, will he?"

"I have him charmed, positively charmed," declared Lawrence. "There is nothing to it. Just watch me astonish the tutor who toots on the flute."

To be referred to as a big lobster by these perfidious youths was not calculated to please Karl Truman, who earnestly yearned to bang their heads together, which he was quite capable of doing. He was more chagrined than angry, and greatly disappointed. He had become fond of young Burney, confident that the boy had good stuff in him. It would only make matters worse to confront the conspirators and thereby confess that he had been eavesdropping. They were about to adjourn their meeting without disclosing to him what particular kind of trouble was planned for the morrow. Forewarned was forearmed, however, and he would have to match his wits against theirs. Anxious to avoid discovery, he hastened back to the road and returned to Greenacres with no more delay.

Miss Gertrude Burney was reading in the library, and as Karl entered the hall she went out to meet him, asking with a trace of anxiety:

"Did Lawrence go with you, Mr. Truman? He disappeared while I was waiting for him to take me over to the Pearsons'."

"No. I went rambling off by myself," answered Karl, feeling guilty of evasion and yet reluctant to tell what he knew. He was responsible for the behavior of Lawrence, as he regarded it, and it was his duty to grapple with the problem before permitting the sister to share the burden.

"Perhaps one of his friends dropped in, and they went off together, forgetting all about me," said she. "I don't care, now that he has broken off his intimacy with that horrid Fatty Snell, who is about everything that a boy ought not to be."

Her dark eyes softened with a certain tenderness, and the fine features lost the shadow of restless unhappiness as she continued, with unwonted feeling:

"Laurie is the only brother I ever had, you know. I am several years older, and he was the baby when I was a little girl. I have had to worry about him, oh, so much! A boy in his position, in his social class, as you may call it, is terribly handicapped. I wish he could have known more men of your kind, but where was he to meet them? He has been so different since you came to live with us, such a comfort to us all. And you don't seem to bully or scold him into doing things. I am—we are—very grateful to you, Mr. Karl Truman."

He blushed, and looked acutely distressed, and she set it down to his natural modesty. Her praise of him, her new-found joy in the scapegrace brother, was all a mistake so tragic that he felt profoundly sorry for her. It was no longer a question of earning money as a tutor to help himself through his senior year in Yale. This

had become a negligible factor. The big issue of this summer vacation was young Lawrence Burney, to make him over into the man his parents and his sister believed him to be. And Karl Truman, as dogged and indomitable as when he had pulled his heart out at number seven in the Yale varsity boat, made up his mind to win.

"He is a bully good lad, and he has been doing splendidly with me," was Karl's honest assurance. "It would do him a lot of good if he had to work his way through college, if he really had to work at anything for a while."

"You are teaching him how to work," she brightly replied, "and I am not a bit anxious about him, really. My mother has not seemed so happy in years as when she went abroad the other day. Do you feel too tired after your long walk to give me another chess lesson, Mr. Truman?"

He was delighted, of course. Miss Burney had displayed a gratifying interest in the study of this scientific pastime, nor did it occur to him that she might also be attracted by the personality of her instructor.

Dutifully Karl played chess with her, admiring her keen mentality and conscious that her presence was pleasing to the eye, but his pulse beat no faster when their fingers chanced to touch in moving the chessmen, and in his honest head there was never a ghost of a sentimental aspiration.

"The summer will soon be gone," she murmured absently, "and you will be going back to Yale."

"You bet I will!" he cried, with an enthusiasm which somehow jarred her. "It's the greatest place in the world. In the summer vacations I feel as if I were just marking time until I can head for the campus again."

"Lawrence will be there, too," she replied, a trifle dreamily. "I shall want to visit New Haven quite often, with a freshman brother there. I hope he will be nice, and show me the college, and take me to teas and football games. You will be awfully busy I'm sure, Mr. Truman, but perhaps I may get a glimpse of you."

"Sure thing, Miss Burney! I don't have much time to bother with girls, as a rule, but I'll be mighty glad to look you up. Jerry Altemus and I are going to room together, and he'll see that you don't miss anything. He never has much to do."

Miss Burney bit her lip and gazed at the chessboard. This candid young man was unpromising material for a harmless flirtation. They were still at the table, Karl bravely fighting down symptoms of drowsiness, when Lawrence came into the house and was about to go to his room, when his sister called out:

"I haven't gone to bed. Please make your apologies, and say good night."

The youngster sauntered in, graceful and self-possessed, as he smilingly replied:

"You weren't really keen on going to see the Pearsons, sis? Own up! I've heard you call 'em bounders. They're afraid of their butler. I happened to want some stuff I left in the camp in the woods, and I got busy rummaging about and tinkering, and forgot to look at my watch."

"I should think you would rather go there in the daytime," said Gertrude; "but I suppose it is more romantic to prowl by moonlight."

"Now, how could I break away? Mr. Truman gives me no chance. We work nonunion hours in our little tutoring shop."

"And another busy day to-morrow?" suggested Karl, wondering what the answer would be.

"Nothing but books!" exclaimed Lawrence. "Learning is my hobby. Lead me to it."

Guileless was his demeanor, frank the gaze as Karl Truman looked him

straight in the eye. His sister forgave him for neglecting her, and they went upstairs together. Karl lingered to cogitate. Some sort of explosion was timed to occur on the morrow, and it behooved him to be vigilant. The ethical code of youth saw nothing wrong in hoaxing a tutor or any other kind of a schoolmaster. They were considered fair game. Karl could comprehend that young Burney thought himself uncommonly clever in "putting one over on him." He liked the boy so much, however, that he was inclined to view the objectionable Fatty Snell as the chief culprit.

Not to be caught napping, Karl was up earlier than usual, after a somewhat wakeful night. It was shortly after six o'clock when he casually walked out among the shrubs and flowers, to pass the time until breakfast. Across a lawn he saw the doors of the garage slide open. A moment later, Lawrence Burney's gray car rolled out, with that crafty young person at the steering wheel. He appeared acutely surprised at beholding Truman, halted, and then sent the car ahead. Swiftly gathering speed, it went humming past the house and fled toward the highway. Karl shouted a question, but Burney only grinned and waved a hand in farewell. It was a cheerfully derisive species of adieu, and Truman had a painful suspicion that the trouble had begun.

He was not a young man to remain hung on a dead center when the situation demanded action, and he delayed no more than a moment to gaze after the vanishing chariot of the truant. He observed that a small leather trunk was fastened on behind, and that the machine seemed laden with more spare tires than usual. Karl ran to the garage in quest of a clew, and found Jimmie Walsh, the chauffeur, just descending the stairs from his room overhead.

"A busy mornin' for early birds, Mr. Truman!" said he. "Here's another one of you."

"The bird I want has just flown the coop," replied Karl. "Do you know where he was heading for?"

"Do you mind that I winked my eye, twice, when I drove you over from the station?" was the query of the intelligent Mr. Walsh. "'Twas a message. A shame it would be, said I to meself, if a fine young man like yourself was deluded."

"The deluded young man of this place is Lawrence Burney," Karl rapped out. "Where do you stand, Jimmie? Will you help me teach him a lesson that may do him more good than all the textbooks ever printed?"

"Sure I will, Mr. Truman. I like the lad, and I want to see you make good on the job. Well, he came into the garage last evenin', him and young Snell, and fussed about a bit, understand? 'Twas after I'd gone to bed, but I heard them talkin' to one another. Mr. Lawrence filled his gasoline tank, and they disputed about routes, with a road book between 'em, and I heard mention of the White Mountains, but some of the time they whispered cautiouslike. This mornin', Mr. Lawrence must have unlocked the door and stole in quiet as a cat, for I was poundin' me ear, when his engine woke me up, and I hopped into me clothes in two jumps. 'Tis your opinion he has broke loose, Mr. Truman, or you would not be interviewin' me about it?"

"He has mutinied, Jimmie. It was all figured out last night. The game is to pick up Fatty Snell, and the two young rascals will make a runaway tour."

The chauffeur let his glance wander to a new six-cylinder touring car, all shining and speckless, and wistful was his sigh as he observed:

"I used to be a road tester for the factory that turns out that make of

machine, Mr. Truman. And one season I drove with the Duplex racin' team. Get me?"

"That's easy," laughed Karl. "You could make a pretty fair stern chase of it if you had a chance to burn up the road this morning. That suits me, Jimmi; but, of course, I can't order the big car out unless Miss Burney gives permission, and——"

"And we are using up good time in swappin' words about it," was the swift interruption. "Will you go ask her, Mr. Truman, while I get the machine ready to hit the pike?"

Karl returned to the house at top speed, but found himself in a perplexed state of mind. The problem of breaking the news to the sister of Lawrence presented obvious difficulties. It was too early to expect her downstairs, and he must send a message to her room by one of the maids, or rashly take matters into his own hands, and run off with Jimmie Walsh and the big car. And he was extremely reluctant to disclose the fact that the reformation of Lawrence had suffered disaster.

While Karl hesitated on one of the piazzas and miserably pictured to himself the pair of scapegraces putting Greenacres behind them at the rate of forty miles an hour, Miss Gertrude surprised him by coming out of the house. Her manner was smilingly vivacious as she exclaimed:

"I happened to see you in the gardens, and it seemed so sensible of you to be enjoying this glorious morning that I refused to be a sluggard."

"An—an unexpected pleasure, Miss Burney," stammered Karl, his confusion so apparent that possibly she mistook the nature of it. "Your brother liked this fine morning, too. A sort of coincidence all round. Did you see him?"

"Oh, yes," she easily answered. "He is off for a spin before he settles down for the day's grind with you, I fancy. Quite nice of him, isn't it, to let nothing interfere with his studies?"

"I am afraid he intends to neglect his studies," replied the unhappy Karl, glancing in the direction of the garage, where the motor was humming, and Jimmie Walsh was making frantic gestures from the doorway. "The fact is, Miss Burney, Lawrence has jumped the traces, and it is up to me to read him the riot act. He and Fatty Snell are hitting the high places on the through road to the White Mountains, and they may be going farther."

"How do you know?" she demanded excitedly. "I can't believe it! They are playing a joke on you."

"The joke will be on them," doggedly exclaimed Truman. "May I take the new car and go after them, Miss Burney? I simply can't let Lawrence get away with it. And you can't afford to stand for it. His business is to play the game on the level, and I am here on the job to see that he does it."

She looked at the ruddy, masterful young man and became aware that, in her father's absence, he was the ruler of the household.

"But if Lawrence refuses to obey you?" she said pleadingly. "You can't bring him back by force, you know that——"

"I can make a husky try at it," he retorted.

"Would you, really? Yes, I suppose you would. But I could persuade him, perhaps. He is fond of me. I am afraid you will be too harsh with him. Can't I go with you? Oh, I must go! It is a crisis for Lawrence. Nobody has ever made him do things before."

"Come along, then," cried Karl, waving an arm to Jimmie to fetch the car. "We can't discuss it any longer, Miss Burney."

"Let me get a coat and some sandwiches, and we'll breakfast on the wing," she called back, as she ran indoors. Jimmie Walsh was elated as he

jumped the car away from the garage and halted to pick up his passengers.

"The lads think they have fooled us entirely, Mr. Truman," said he, "and maybe they won't guess we are after 'em."

"What route are they likely to take?"

"Up the coast to Portsmouth, and then the State road to the mountains. They must go through one Notch and out the other, understand? We can track them easy enough."

The unconventional Miss Burney joined them a few minutes later, and the car shot for the highway. Karl Truman was poor company during the first dozen miles. This was no holiday excursion for him. But it was fun just to be alive on a bright morning like this, with the cool wind rushing past, and the excitement of the chase to make one's blood tingle. Jimmie drove daringly, but with the cunning skill that skirts peril by a safe margin. He found acquaintances in every garage at which they stopped to make inquiries. A gray roadster with two youngsters, one slim and handsome, the other notably fat, had passed through in a hurry, and was heading northward.

At the third halting place, Jimmie became engaged in earnest dialogue with a sagacious-looking person in oil-stained overalls. They withdrew into a side street for more confidential discussion. Miss Burney showed impatience, and asked Karl to investigate the delay.

"You're in on this, Mr. Truman," said Jimmie. "Meet me friend George Deering. We worked in the same shop together in Detroit. George has been puttin' me wise. Them lads of ours run their car into the garage yonder to replace a broken bolt, understand? Mr. Lawrence must have had an uneasy hunch that you might pick up his trail. He has remarkable respect for your intilligence, Mr. Truman. He was confabbin' and palaverin' with the boss of the place, says George to me. And they framed it up for the boss to phone ahead and warn 'em. He took the number of our car. There was money passed between 'em, says George to me. Mr. Lawrence can get the tip fifty or a hundred miles beyond here, and shift his route or lay by overnight."

"He is surely a bright boy, no doubt of that!" grimly observed Karl. "And so he has arranged a signal system that will let him know where we are!"

"Likewise if we ask questions enough and be careful not to overrun him, we'll not go far wrong on where he is," was the wise conclusion of Jimmie Walsh.

A hasty halt for lunch at a village tavern, and the pursuers sped on into the rural regions of New Hampshire. Miss Burney had not foreseen that the adventure would carry her so far from home. Even a young woman of her independent mind perceived something irregular in careering across the landscape, possibly until night, in the company of an attractive young man. As a driver Jimmie Walsh was beyond criticism, but as a chaperon he somehow failed to qualify. She displayed the thoroughbred strain, however, and was determined to be in at the finish. To Karl's suggestion that she return to Greenacres by an afternoon train, she replied, with spirit:

"I have a few things to say to my brother when we find him, and it is my duty to help bring him home."

Their progress was hampered by a feeling of uncertainty. If the runaways were clever enough to keep themselves posted by means of the long-distance telephone, they were capable of using strategy in swinging away from the main route through the mountains. Impatient because of the eternal stopping to describe the gray roadster somewhere ahead, Jimmie Walsh increased his speed as the afternoon waned, and was less careful to respect various signboards, near the towns, which warned the motorist to go slow. Swing-

ing round a curve among the green hills, there confronted him a two-horse farm wagon turned squarely across the road as a barrier which he could not pass without risking the ditch.

Jamming on the brakes, he felt the heavy car slide in the swirling dust, and emphatic were the compliments he hurled at the obstructing wagon and the grinning old man who held the horses' heads. Out from the side of the road marched a robust son of the toil, somewhat younger, who thumbed his waistcoat to display the badge of a constable.

"Ketched you neat, didn't we?" he sang out. "Roarin' along at thirty-five miles an hour within the town limits of Twin Brooks, New Hampshire. You was timed from the top of Spruce Hill, where my deputy waved a flag, and I ticked it to a second with my watch."

Jimmie had stripped off his duster, and was about to carry the barrier by force of arms, but Miss Burney ordered him to subside.

"May I ask what the penalty is, Mr. Constable?" said she, with admirable composure.

"Squire Basnett'll hold court as soon as I get you into the village, miss. Twenty-five dollars and costs is the usual thing, but the squire gave it out yesterday that he proposed to make an example of the next case. And you're a terrible flagrant outfit. I was warned about you from down the road, and sent out special to ketch you."

"I am the responsible party," was the chivalrous declaration of Karl Truman. "The chauffeur was driving under orders from me. And the young lady is innocent, of course."

"That's good of you," said Miss Burney, "but let me intercede with Squire Basnett, please."

"I want to keep you out of it," protested Karl.

"Perhaps I am just as anxious to save you from disgrace," said she.

The constable spoiled this pretty passage by climbing in beside the belligerent Jimmie and nudging him with a very large pistol. At a perfectly lawful pace, the car proceeded into the more thickly settled part of Twin Brooks village.

A considerable number of the population appeared to be waiting in front of a square brick building, which the constable pointed out as the town hall. Some expected sensation had caused them to assemble. As the captive car drew near this crowd, the indignant passengers became puzzled instead of indignant. To their ears came remarks which explained the local excitement.

"I should call them a real good-looking couple. It seems a shame to come between them and their happiness."

"Well, you can't blame Constable Ed Trimmer. He was promised a big reward, a hundred dollars, to stop them and hold them here till her folks could come after her."

"Huh! She's old enough to know her own mind, I should say. He looks like the younger of the two. Just look at him blush! My, he is embarrassed!"

"And mighty disappointed and upset. Supposing you had coaxed an heiress into elopin' with you, and you were streakin' it for Canada, when all of a sudden it was knocked into a cocked hat!"

"He must be a designing, artful young man. Appearances are deceitful. He looks so simple and honest, don't he?"

"How did the constable get wind of it? Have you heard?"

"No, but he was shrewd. He set a speed trap to catch them. Now the squire can hold them till her folks arrive. I wouldn't be in that young man's shoes when her angry father collars him."

Karl Truman's emotions were beyond words. He dared not even glance at Gertrude Burney, who seemed the less

agitated of the two. Lawrence would never instigate such a scandalous proceeding as this, even to save his own skin. It was probably the private work of Fatty Snell, who had managed to enlist the greedy constable.

With a grand air of importance, Constable Trimmer escorted the trio into the town hall, and the populace promptly filled the benches. Squire Basnett, elderly and spectacled, frowned sternly at the culprits, who were too dazed for ready speech. The constable held a whispered conference with him, and the frown of justice became even more portentous.

"It's a bully good chance for you to deliver a speech on votes for women!" Karl murmured to Miss Burney. "What do you say to demanding a jury of your peers?"

"Eloping with me is no joking matter," she returned.

"May I beat the face off the jay cop?" Jimmie Walsh edged over to implore. "I'll be delighted to pay me own fine."

Having suppressed him, Karl turned to survey the audience, and felt relieved that there seemed to be no summer hotel or cottage people who might recognize Miss Burney. Possibly the squire could be convinced of the truth, and the episode closed without notoriety. Karl was about to face the tribunal when there sauntered into the rear of the room a slender young man extremely well dressed and of a sallow, slightly saturnine, countenance. His manner was deliberate, almost languid, as though life were a bore, and a chap had to make the best of it.

No sooner, however, had he caught sight of the culprits than he gasped, threw up his hands, and then displayed all the symptoms of a young man having a fit. He appeared to be struggling with amazement and incredulity. Tottering to the vacant end of a bench, he collapsed, and held his head between his hands.

So utterly lacking in sympathy was his extraordinary behavior that poor Karl Truman was provoked to righteous wrath. Shaking his fist at the ribald young man, he shouted:

"Darn you, Jerry Altemus! I don't know where you dropped from, but that's a fine way to treat friends in trouble!"

"Silence, there!" thundered Squire Basnett. "Keep this prisoner in order, Constable Ed Trimmer, or I'll fine him for contempt of court."

Feebly Jeremiah Altemus, junior, advanced. He was now in the throes of wicked, unfeeling mirth. Bowing low to Miss Burney, he tried to be decorous as he said: "So unexpected! I was tipped off about this intercepted elopement, and ambled over in search of a sensation. But I never dreamed—well, of all—and with my steady-gaited college pal! I certainly did play the deuce when I recommended him for the job!"

"You know better, you crazy idiot!" savagely exclaimed Karl Truman. "You're the man to straighten out this confounded game that was put up on us. Do these people know who you are? Can't you explain us to the squire?"

"Explain what?" drawlingly demanded Jerry. "I'll help you to conceal your real name, for the sake of the young lady's family. But, good Lord, man, what is there to say for you? I find you two beating it for the border so fast that you get pinched as lawbreakers. Naturally I assume the report of an elopement to be correct. How much of a start did you get on the old man? It's thoroughly sporty. Far be it from me to butt in and tell all I know about you! It would prejudice your case, no doubt of it."

Unforgiving, implacable was Miss Burney's face. She refused to look at the detestable Jerry, a friend and neighbor who could be as base as this!

Squire Basnett broke into the scene by pettishly exclaiming:

"Tut, tut! What kind of a conversation party do you folks think this is? I know who you are, Mr. Altemus, the Yale college fellow that's visitin' his uncle at the Glen Mountain House. You mean to say these two prisoners are friends of yours?"

"Well, squire, I'll have to admit it," was the reluctant reply. "It was very painful—but—but—let the law take its course. You will feel mercifully inclined toward the young lady, I'm sure."

"See here, Jerry, you brute," came from Truman, "this is carrying it entirely too far. It's all right to have fun with me, but do show some regard for a woman."

"There is such a thing as retribution," was the oracular dictum of Jerry. "I promise she shall not go to jail. God bless you, my children! The course of true love is subject to punctures and blow-outs."

With an amiable apology to the court, young Mr. Altemus strolled to the nearest bench and became an interested spectator. His conduct perplexed Karl Truman beyond measure. It was a heartless betrayal of friendship. Jerry's sense of humor was confoundedly misplaced. He seemed to be wholly indifferent to the painful predicament of Miss Burney. The squire gazed severely at Karl and Jimmie Walsh, and announced:

"You are guilty of bustin' the speed limit to flinders and endangerin' life and property on the public highway. There's no telling what you might have smashed into if you hadn't been stopped outside the village. Constable Ed Trimmer duly informs me that you were on the point of bodily assaultin' him if he hadn't restrained you with his weapon. This nice-appearin' young woman ought to be in better company. She is hereby discharged from custody. As for you two lawbreakers, the one eggin' the other on, I have no doubt, I'm dumned if I deal with you like ordinary offenders. I'll just commit you for trial at the next term of county court, and you are hereby held in five hundred dollars bail, each one of you."

Karl Truman turned an anguished countenance in the direction of Jerry Altemus. That depraved young gentleman grinned, and showed no indication of rushing to the rescue. Miss Gertrude Burney fought down her pride, and turned to say something to him in a low voice. Jerry bowed most courteously, and they walked out of the courtroom together. Halting to face him under the trees by the roadside, she indignantly exclaimed: "Have you just escaped from an institution for the feeble-minded, Jerry Altemus?"

"Hardly that, Gertrude. They haven't caught me yet," he pleasantly replied. "On the level, is it an elopement? I am naturally anxious to know, having proposed to you three times in the last year. And three times you snubbed me unmercifully. I am human."

"You are positively inhuman. I want you to have Mr. Truman and my chauffeur released at once."

"So that you can hit the trail again? It's all wrong, Gertrude. Take it from me, it won't do at all. You may have dazzled poor Truman with your riches, and put a spell on him, but he is really in love with another girl. I know all about it. He met her while he was rowing on the Yale crew. Janet Ingram is her name. You can't have him."

"I don't want him!" she cried furiously. "And I hate you, Jerry Altemus. Can't you be serious?"

"Never more so. I will cheerfully persuade my uncle at the hotel to go bail for your misguided companions; and you are to spend the night with my aunt. One condition, Gertrude, I shall hurl my fourth proposal at you, and I expect gentle treatment."

She glanced at him with a flash of

quizzical, amused interest. He held the upper hand, and was audacious enough to press the advantage.

"Perhaps I was horrid to you," she admitted. "Do help me out of this scrape, Jerry, and I'll take your case under consideration."

He asked her to wait outside, and rushed into the courtroom, where he drew Squire Basnett aside and speedily convinced him that the prisoners could be safely paroled overnight. Karl Truman had been nursing his wrath against the perfidious Altemus, and lost no time in telling him:

"You blithering ass, why didn't you step up and fix it for us in the first place? I've lost all this precious time, while you were laughing your silly head off! I ought to punch it for you!"

"What's your hurry? Miss Burney has thrown you over, chucked you into the discard. The elopement is a fliver."

"Listen, Jerry! Cut out the comedy," implored Karl. "Young Lawrence ran away from me this morning, and I set out to catch him. His sister came along. I suppose she was afraid I'd break the kid's neck if I got my hands on him."

"So he stung you! Well, you can't run after dark. Do nothing without consulting me, Karl. Remember that I am the wise old man who looks on. We'll all go up to the Glen Mountain House in your car."

Dismal was Karl's sigh as he said:

"There is nothing else to do to-night. That takes care of Miss Burney. But it has turned out to be a wild-goose chase for me, Jerry. And it makes me feel rotten. I have fallen down on my job. My summer is a failure. Young Burney has made a monkey of me, and what shall I say to his father and mother, who left me in charge of him?"

"You should worry!" observed the philosophic Mr. Altemus. "A good dinner will make you buck up."

The low-spirited Jimmie Walsh drove them up the winding road, several miles beyond the village of Twin Brooks, until they reached the great hotel which overlooked the billowing ranges of the White Mountains. Cordial was the welcome of Jerry's aunt and uncle, but he tarried only to leave Miss Burney with them, insisting that Karl accompanying him upstairs at once. Passing through a long corridor, Jerry halted in front of a bedroom door, put a finger to his lips, beamed joyously, and whispered:

"I flatter myself that I worked up to this climax rather neatly. Quiet, now, Karl, and hear them talk. The transom is open."

To their ears came the pleasantly modulated voice of Lawrence Burney and the slightly husky accents of Fatty Snell. The dialogue was as follows:

"I say we make a sneak to-night. Gee, but I wish I had stayed home!"

"It looked good to me, Laurie, but we ran into hard luck. This Jerry Altemus is no friend of ours. I don't trust him. Bumping into him here is just about our finish."

"I'd a lot rather run into him than Karl Truman, believe me, Fatty. When that guy in the garage phoned that a big, fair-haired lad with a square jaw had passed through in our new car, I couldn't see any more fun in the game."

"We've foxed him so far, old top. Never say die!"

The eavesdroppers in the corridor moved softly away. Jerry Altemus forestalled Karl's volley of questions by explaining, with a complacent air:

"Am I a true friend? I bagged them for you. Their machine broke down a mile from the hotel and had to be towed in for repairs, a job of several hours. Lawrence was all fussed up when he saw me, and he sure did look guilty. So I backed him into a corner and gave him the third degree. He let out enough to make me suspect he had jumped the reservation. Then I got Greenacres on

the long-distance phone, and the housekeeper told me that you and Gertrude had dusted out for parts unknown at an ungodly hour this morning. In pursuit, said I to myself, instantly hopping down to the village on the chance of intercepting you."

"Bully for you, Jerry! But why, oh, why did you play horse with us in court? You knew better."

"That was a private grudge, my boy. I've known Gertrude Burney ever since we went to kindergarten together. And this is the first time I have ever been able to put one over on her. Forget it. The kid proposition is now up to you."

"And I think I can handle it without any more help," quoth Karl. "Meet me downstairs, Jerry."

Back to the runaways' room marched Truman, and strode in without knocking. Young Burney leaped to his feet, with a scared ejaculation, and Fatty Snell fell off his chair. Instead of scolding them, their captor deliberately took a chair, tilted back with his hands in his pockets, and addressed himself to the panicky Lawrence, as one man to another:

"Your sister is downstairs. You will have dinner with her. But there is a matter to be attended to first. It is your duty as a gentleman. You will agree with me, I'm sure. She was arrested this afternoon and exposed to the scandalous gossip of a village. A constable had been bribed to do the job, in order to detain our car while you lads were trying to keep ahead of us."

"The dickens you say!" hotly exclaimed Lawrence, scowling at his companion in crime. "What do you know about that, Fatty? You were out buzzing around in Twin Brooks while I was buying gasoline."

"Wait a moment," put in Karl, his face very grave. "It would have been more or less harmless to have a speed trap set for us, but to concoct the story that Miss Burney was eloping—well, only a cad could think of such a trick. What is your opinion, Lawrence?"

"Beastly, I call it!" cried the youth, his cheek flushed. "Tell me the truth, Fatty: Are you responsible for this?"

"It was clever work, you poor simp," sulkily answered young Snell. "I had to pay out good money to get the constable and the squire lined up. They promised to make a bluff at holding the car overnight, understand? I couldn't see anything wrong with it. I told them that the hostile parents would cough up a juicy reward when they came breezing along."

"And supposing some of the people from this hotel had been in the village?" wrathfully spoke Lawrence. "And they had recognized my sister, and the newspapers had got hold of it! What then?"

"But they didn't. What's the sense in slopping over?" grumbled Snell.

"Jerry Altemus was there," said Karl.

"Oh, Gertrude wouldn't mind him," replied Lawrence. "They are always joshing each other. But it was a low-down, mucker trick, Fatty Snell, and you'll apologize to my sister right now."

"What if I say that you talk foolishness?"

Lawrence turned to Karl Truman, his voice trembling as he politely inquired:

"Do you mind if I lick him? Will you butt in?"

"Not I! I'm glad to hear you declare yourself. Go to it!"

Before young Snell could clumsily defend himself his chubby cheek was slapped, and the battle was on. He snorted with rage and surprise, lowered his head, and dashed forward like a human battering-ram, but his nimble opponent had side-stepped, and the luckless Snell crashed into a bureau. On the rebound he collided with a pair of fists which banged him in the eye, and made his nose bleed. He managed to

clinch, and his weight dragged the other lad to the floor, but Lawrence squirmed on top, and proceeded to inflict further damage upon the Snell lineaments.

"Lemme up! Give me a chance!" gurgled Fatty.

"Will you apologize to my sister?" demanded Lawrence. "Shall I black your other eye?"

"I g-guess so," grunted the defeated one.

"You win, Lawrence," said Karl Truman, prying him off. "It was the only manly thing for you to do, under the circumstances."

"I'm going to get a room by myself," mumbled young Mr. Snell, as he made for the door, "and you thugs can go to thunder!"

No farewells followed him. Lawrence appeared no longer crestfallen and guilty. He held his head up, and he was not afraid to meet Truman's eye. It was the right moment to drive home the truth, to impart the lesson that should endure. Karl offered the boy his hand, and said:

"You resented an affront to your sister. That was quite proper. Snell had played a shabby, mean game, and you saw it as soon as it was explained to you. Now, you have been playing another kind of a game that was even meaner and shabbier and more unmanly. It seemed all a joke to you, just as Fatty thought he was putting over a clever joke this afternoon. You have been deceiving and making sport of your sister, and your mother and father. Snell couldn't see where he was wrong because he has a mucker streak, and you had to pound it into him. But what you have been doing at home is much worse, more blackguardedly. Shall I have to pound it into *you* before you can see it for yourself?"

The boy was silent for a little space, his thoughts all at sea. Then his frown vanished, and he said, with his shy, winsome smile:

"I made an easy mark of you, too, but you don't seem sore on me for that."

"Oh, I was only the tutor, working for wages. I didn't count. I was supposed to outguess you. If I didn't, it was my own fault."

"It looks as if you had outguessed me from start to finish, Mr. Truman. And so I have been a rotten mucker!"

"Think it over, Lawrence, and see if you can find any flaws in my logic."

This sort of thinking was a novel process for the lad who had hitherto been a law unto himself. He had the intelligence to perceive that it was not for him to find flaws in Karl Truman's position. Somehow there seemed to be no room left for argument. He had been checkmated in one move. As though announcing an interesting discovery, he looked up to say:

"Jerry Altemus picked a winner when he recommended you for this summer job, Mr. Truman. I should call him a pretty wise gink."

"It isn't what you and I study in textbooks that really counts, Lawrence. I am backing *you* to win something bigger and better. Don't you think that this session puts it squarely up to you?"

"There is no dodging it," impulsively cried young Burney. "Now I understand why you told me to sail in and lick Fatty Snell. Smooth stuff, Mr. Truman!"

"What next, Lawrence? It is for you to say."

"You've said it. Now, let's go downstairs and find my sister before dinner. I want to apologize to her."

"A bully good day's work, after all," happily exclaimed Karl Truman, as they passed out of the room arm in arm.

The next story in this series will appear, two weeks hence, in the POPULAR, on sale April 7th.

The Shadow of Granite Ridge

BEING THE ACCOUNT OF A WOLF DOG, AND A VICTIM OF THE GREAT WHITE PERIL WHO WAS BANISHED TO THE WILDERNESS

By Vingie E. Roe

II.—WHITE EARS ON GUARD

IT was early summer in the Unsurveyed. June lurked in the still glades, sunned herself on the bare rock shoulders of the great mountains.

Pale trilliums starred the soft earth under the pines, bleeding hearts dripped in their crimson glory in every little dell. It was a wonder country, there high above the world, a country of vast height and depth where the sky and the ridges met and dropped asunder, of a silence so profound that the ear ached with listening.

To Lola Lambert, living alone in the tiny cabin by the laughing spring, it was, since that awful night when White Ears came back, a paradise.

She no longer opened her door in the mornings and peered out along the walls with fear-filled eyes, no longer crept about the slopes with stealthy steps. Now she went briskly about her little work, sang to high heaven in her golden voice, and when she went abroad she walked with a joyous swing, for she had always at her heels unbounded courage—the great gray wolf with the broad white collie collar on his neck.

Where Lola went, there White Ears went, soft-footed as a shadow, alert, stopping to listen, one paw lifted, flattening his sharp ears swiftly at a word from her, questing the wind, always silent but always near.

At first Lola could not rid herself of a nervous fear that clutched at her heart with sound of the soft feet behind, but ever when she turned her eyes that way they met, not the spread pupils of the wild animal, but the calm orbs of the faithful dog. She was forever reaching a hand to pat the shapely head. White Ears lived for her caresses. Nothing in all his life before had so filled him with rapture.

Hours together he lay stretched on the stone at the door looking out toward the laurel and manzanita bushes from whose shelter he had so often watched the cabin and the strange creature who inhabited it.

Now the cabin was his, and the ravishing creature with the luring voice was his, also, to watch and guard.

Nights he slept beside her bed and the door stood always open.

Lola feared no outside prowler now, and she wanted White Ears to feel his freedom.

Sometimes at dawn he slipped away, dropping down through the dim shadows, as dim and shadowy himself, to come loping up along the slopes at noon, and always his lean sides were full, and sometimes there was blood on his gray jaws and the white of his breast.

At such times Lola shuddered to watch him lying on the stone gently cleaning his fur. Something had run a

gallant race on the high ridges, she knew from White Ears' own weariness, to pant and fail and at last come down under those terrible jaws, the sweet breath choked from its throat.

But a wolf must eat, and Lola's bread and beans and bacon, though she shared them generously, were alien to him.

In the golden afternoons they went far adrift from the cabin. Often they sat high on some bare jut of rock, Lola with her knees gathered in her arms, White Ears upright beside her, his great plumy brush curled decorously around his feet. Sometimes he would look at her steadily a long time, and the fear would leap in her heart, and she would take his head, quick, in her hands and fondle it. Always at that White Ears would melt in all his muscles, cringe and quiver with happiness and whine like a puppy.

He would lick her hands softly with his red tongue, her hands and the cloth of her sleeve and her cheek. Love had taken him captive and he was an idolater. And the girl returned the love. She had nothing on earth *to* love but this half-tamed wolf dog of the hills.

So beautiful summer came into the Unsurveyed and found them very happy.

The little pain that had stayed so long under Lola's right shoulder blade seemed to have gone on a vacation, and the weary lassitude had dropped from her like a garment. She could walk five times as far on the difficult slopes as she used to do on the city's pave, and she came home gloriously tired, not weakly exhausted.

And she had something to talk to, a friend, a champion, some one to go with her. So she came to go farther and farther among the giant hills. She did not know the danger of losing herself, which very thing was a safeguard to her, since it left her sane to take directions. She knew her own slope by the noisy rill that tore down its face, by the larger white-water river in the narrow gulch below. Bit by bit she learned a little woodscraft of her own, and applied a little more that she had read.

For instance, it delighted her beyond measure when she found that the moss did actually grow almost wholly on the north side of the trees. Also she noted for herself that in a good many trees the branches were more abundant and heavier on the south side. She discovered pine nuts one day, and how good they were to eat. A tiny pine squirrel —saucy distant cousin of the big gray fellows—had dropped a cone half gutted of its treasure, and Lola picked it up. One of the tiny nuts fell out in her hand and she promptly ate it. After that she hunted the ground under all the sugar pines, but she never found another. She could not know that the little frisker had brought that cone from his winter store in a hollow limb, that this was not the "open season" for pine nuts.

But she found other treasures manifold. The abundance and variety of the wild flowers filled her with delight. Great white hill lilies, little velvet "cat's ears," "lamb tongues," purple camus, "Indian paint," and dozens of nameless beauties grew everywhere. Always when she came home to the cabin her arms were loaded with them.

And once she got so excited that she scarcely ate or slept for a week. That was when she found the "fools' gold" in a cove of the river down below, a great, smooth circle of sand sewn full of shining bits for all the world like gold. It was only mica, and it had fooled wiser heads than hers. She climbed down the rugged mountain day after day and tried to wash it from the sand, only to find her labor lost as the light stuff drifted away with every flirt of her pan—a tin pie pan, by the way.

It was only after heavy work and much wasted patience that she remem-

bered that gold is very heavy, and reluctantly convinced herself that she was mistaken.

But the fools' gold had put the thought of real gold in her head, and her wanderings took to themselves a vague purpose. Several times she had come upon ancient prospect holes, and once she found a pick with a broken handle, a shovel and an old gold pan, rusted and half filled with gravel as if the hands that rocked it had dropped their task half finished. These she took home, proud as Lucifer.

She began to look for gold-bearing rock, but she might as well have looked for rubies, since she was so ignorant. Several times she passed a fair prospect, and once, in a dry wash, she picked up a little white-and-red-streaked stone that carried a splendid trace, but she threw it away because the crusty, metal-like stuff sticking out of it was green and rusty. She was looking for gold, if you please, pretty yellow gold.

But, anyway, she was happy, and White Ears was happy, and summer was with them. She did not know that the whiteness of her skin had given place to a healthy tan, that wide red roses were beginning to flaunt in her cheeks, that her deep breast was getting deeper. These changes came too gradually for her to notice. She was a very beautiful creature.

She had always prized her beauty, but it had never bloomed in her life as it was beginning to bloom now. Her hair was copper-colored, and it shone in the sun with a million lights. Also she was beginning to love the wilderness. She would find one of the high flat stones on the open shoulder of Granite Ridge, and lie for hours stretched out and basking in the sun like any great cat of the jungle, while White Ears lay beside her, head on paws, pale eyes roving over the far-flung panorama of mountain, slope, stream, and sky.

So it was, on one of these long trips to Granite Ridge, that Lola began to know that some one else of importance inhabited the Lonesome Land beside herself and White Ears. This was when she had found The Track.

She was beginning to know tracks—the dainty, sharp-pointed tracks of the deer that were thick in the manzanita coverts, the little, handlike track of the coon that hunted along the river, the print of the skunk who came to her very yard for the scraps of bread she put out for the birds. Him she had seen one moonlight night, trailing his great, fluffy, pussy-cat tail along the ground, his broad white stripes shining down his back.

But all those were play tracks beside this. It lay in a patch of soft loam beside a rock, and it was a perfect print, as if a heavy creature had borne down hard upon the earth to leap upon the rock. It was round and symmetrical, and big as Lola's palm with the thumb shut. The pad was three-ply and full. The toes were short and broad, and at the end of each there was a small, deep hole, as if a sharp, curved claw had stabbed the earth.

She knelt down and examined it closely, a hand on either side, and her face close above it. White Ears leaned on her shoulder and stuck his sharp nose down upon it, sniffing lightly. When Lola looked up the hackles on his back stood up in a ridge from ears to tail.

"H'm!" said Lola, sitting back upon her heels, while an odd prescience of disaster chilled her spine. "H'm! Gray Lad, what is it? Something bad, I know—something very bad. Let's go home."

And she went home, fast as she could, with White Ears trotting swiftly at her heels, stopping every little while to listen back along their trail.

She did not go that way again, directing her trips farther toward the east. She thought about that track a great deal, and always with a thrill of fear.

She kept her rifle always full, and took to carrying a cartridge in the barrel. But as the days passed, and she saw nothing more, her fear gradually left her, as all her fears had a way of doing.

But White Ears was never off guard a minute.

He knew who made that track, and who had screamed on the ridge that eventful night when he came back to sign away his wild liberty for love.

Not for himself was he uneasy. He would have slept in the path of the Yellow Shadow of Granite Ridge, lazily and contemptuously, for who in the Unsurveyed would dispute a trail with him when he lifted his hackles and narrowed his pale eyes?

But he stirred and twitched when he thought of his idol.

The Creeping Fear could wind her a mile, he knew full well.

But Lola could no more have stayed off the ridges now than she could nave flown. She was proud of her ability to come and go straight as a homing pigeon, of her marksmanship with the rifle, of her growing strength and courage.

And so it was that, through her arrogance and ignorance, she led them into the Great Adventure—the adventure that was to rouse her in her bed at nights, until she was an old, old woman, with its terrible memory.

It was a day in late June, perfect, silent, golden, with the sun warm as flame on the high peaks and between the towering pines. With the first opening of her eyes in the morning, she decided that this was the day for her long-intended trip up to the rocky ramparts of Granite Ridge. They had stood high in the blue like a mysterious country of crypts and caves ever since her advent in the hills, and they had always beckoned to her to come and explore them.

So she made a quick breakfast, tidied the cabin, filled the magazine of the rifle and a pocket of her little khaki jacket with cartridges—it was a sincere regret with her that she had not bought a cartridge belt—she would have fancied herself strung up in a bullying belt full of little brass butts!—pulled White Ears affectionately by the thick scruff of his neck, and started. She never forgot that climb. It was as if Diana trod a virgin world.

It was two miles up to the great ridge—up and over her own ridge, down again for a little way, along a pretty glade and up again, to where the huge, flat-faced wall of the rim rock stood grim and forbidding, a hundred feet in height. Lola sat down, winded with the climb, and looked at it in awe, wondering how many thousand years it had taken for the erosion of the elements to wear the surface of the world away from it to the level of the lesser hills below. The eternal silence of the mountains seemed accentuated here. She scanned the mighty wall, with its myriad cracks and caves, all slanting at an angle of about thirty degrees, and wondered what it did with the echoes when it thundered.

She raised the rifle and fired a shot—and sat leaning forward, lost in amaze for full five minutes, while the great face took up the sound and tossed it here and there in its hidden recesses like a shuttlecock, now sending it far away in the ridge behind, now bringing it back startlingly clear and sharp, to drop it lower and lower, it seemed, until at last it came to rest with a last small boom somewhere beneath Lola's feet.

She drew a long breath.

"H'm, Gray Lad," she said aloud, "some orchestration of the Hill Gods, that."

Then she rose and went on her journey of exploration. She went east toward the Place of the Sun, as she liked to call it. Hours passed so swiftly that they seemed like minutes. There was so much to see and investigate that she

was busy every minute—prying off long shafts of the rotten rock that fell with a great ado of splinters and little particles, looking long and enviously at an eagle's nest high on a jut of the stone, peering half fearfully into long, dark caves.

And White Ears, hanging close at her side, was uneasy.

Once and again he licked her hand, and Lola patted him. He ran a way ahead, sniffed the air and came back to her. The pupils of his eyes had spread. He knew they traveled wrong, and every nerve in his body sensed what was to happen. But he had been too short a time reclaimed from the wild to be able to tell his god what threatened.

All the ways of his collie father were yet to be learned by him, though he felt their birth astir within him.

He longed to take her by the garments and pull her back from danger, yet knew not how. He felt the urge to bark a warning, yet found his voice only in a plaintive whine.

Had Lola not been so busy and so serene in her faith in him, she might have seen that he was troubled.

But she did not.

And even when White Ears stopped dead still at a shelving point of outstanding stone and refused to go forward, she did not heed.

Instead, she went on around, her short, khaki skirt whipping against her knee-laced boots, her red tie flaunting, and her bright hair shining under her little felt hat. There she found a cave, a real cave, with a flat floor and a gaping, dusky throat. At her feet a narrow crevasse split the floor.

With an exclamation she bent to peer within, and White Ears came swiftly to her side.

"Why, Lad," she said wonderingly, "there's something in here! As I live, a—a—— It looks like a big kitten! Why——"

But she never finished. At that moment there came a sound from the fringe of low growth that skirted the margin of crumbled rock before the wall, a sound like nothing in all the world beside, and Lola straightened with a jerk. With the quick flirt of her arm the trailing gun butt caught in the crevasse, snapped the weapon from her hand, and sent it dropping down out of sight, so that she stood, helpless and unarmed save for the long knife in her belt at the very door of the cave where the tawny Shadow of Granite Ridge had her young!

And out of the fringe of bush a great shining shape of horror was coming through the air, coming straight for her in a leap of such height and length as seemed well-nigh impossible.

Lola's throat shut tight with an awful sickness, and she was conscious of calling upon God in one soundless cry. She felt her white neck crunch under her head with the closing of that fanged red mouth flying toward her. And then something happened, the most glorious thing that she had ever witnessed in her life. Forever after she would know what Courage and Sacrifice and Love meant. They are empty, idle words to us until some great, tense moment flashes their meaning before our startled eyes.

So now a great moment was upon Lola.

As that long, tawny shape reached the zenith of its leap, something shot up and forward from Lola's side to meet it—a great gray form, huge-boned and muscled, its shoulders ridged in fury, its ears flat to its skull, its tail streaming straight and low in line with its back!

White Ears, quiveringly on guard, had been ready.

As he went up and under, his terrible jaws snapped shut on the pale throat of the panther, and they fell where they met with an awful impact.

Who shall describe what followed?

Lola never could with accuracy. Sometimes she would recall one moment. Again some other would stand out, but never could she recall all of that terrible struggle. It was at first only a wild, rolling smother of tawny fur and gray. There was little sound, only the thrash and thump of heavy bodies, the flying of little stones. It would have been over in the space of time that it takes a strong creature to die with the air gone from its lungs, if White Ears in his furious rage had not miscalculated the fraction of an inch. His grip had closed a trifle low, so that he did not get the whole of the windpipe.

And the Yellow Shadow was a mighty beast. She bunched the iron muscles along her neck and shoulder, striving to beat the grip of White Ears' jaws. And she succeeded partly, so that she had still a little breath. So they began the supreme struggle—White Ears for his idol crouching against the wall; the Shadow for her kitten there in the cave behind, and to each the issue was dearer than life itself.

Over and over they went, thrashing heavily along the shelving width of shale, tearing into the low bush, rolling out again. Once they fought so near that the big cat's tail whipped against Lola's knees with a stroke like a flail. Its wicked claws gleamed in the sun like little knives, and Lola gasped to see them red with blood—White Ears' blood!

They sank into the thick fur of his shoulders, raked forward, flew out for another lightning hold, and repeated the trick. And all the time the panther was doubling and doubling, clawing forward with its hind feet, and always White Ears kicked and flung his body backward. Sometimes he would leap in the air and roll clear over his adversary in this effort.

Strange fighting, Lola remembered thinking dully.

At first she was too stunned to think, too sick with horror. But as the struggle continued she began to come to herself and try to think intelligently.

What would happen? Why, of course White Ears would kill this awful Thing! Her Gray Lad, her wild wolf that she had caught from the hills, her Courage and Strength incarnate! He could not fail. What on earth could stand against him? She had always known he was rabid in battle, a wolf wholly. Now she knew it as she saw him fight this panther.

The very look of his head, long and flat, pointed up under the cat's chin, its ears flat and smooth, its eyes closed, was deadly.

Heavens! How they fought!

There was a sound of whistling now where the labored breath of the panther strained through its narrow channel. Gray fur, bright with blood, flew in little tufts all over the ground. Over and over, here and there, into the bush and back again, now rolling into the very mouth of the cave, now tumbling out—would it never cease? How long it lasted Lola never knew, but the sun was shining from the west and the shadows were growing blue in the gulches when she first noticed that White Ears was no longer gray, but red! Red from the white ring on his neck to the root of his tail!

"Why—why," she thought, with a gasp of horror, "he'll—he'll die! His life will run out of him! Oh, White Ears! White Ears!"

And then she saw, too, for the first time, that he wavered in his hips, those lean, mighty hips that ever and ever flung themselves out from those doubling, crawling hind feet!

The panther was weakening, also. That whistling breath was beginning to tell. But even so, it still crawled and

doubled, trying—— What was it trying so hard to do?

And then, in a flash, Lola knew!

Knew what White Ears had known from the beginning, and so cleverly avoided—knew that those knifelike claws were reaching, searching, for the wolf dog's vitals.

"Oh, Lord!" she screamed. "Oh—my gun! My gun!"

And, falling on her knees at the crevasse, she worked like a maniac to reach the rifle, lodged just beyond her reach.

She saw it was useless. On her knees she looked back with anguished eyes. She saw White Ears' hips sag flat to the earth, and in that one second one of those crawling feet caught in his flank and ripped it into ribbons.

At that warning sight something in Lola crystallized. Something inside her that had been insane with horror stopped shaking. She knew, suddenly, that as White Ears had flung his body at that leaping death for her, so now she must fling hers into the breach to save him—for he was failing.

A wild thought gripped her to grab that whistling throat above his jaws, and add her strength to his. And then, as if fate took a hand, her groping fingers brushed the knife in her belt. With a hysterical laugh she snatched it out and flung herself forward from her knees.

The writhing forms, close upon her again, were still for just a minute, and she searched for a place to strike. But at that instant they squirmed away. She rose and followed, crouched, the knife held high for the vantage of all her strength. Round and round they went, wabbling this way and that upon the ground. White Ears was uppermost, the panther on its back.

And then suddenly the moment came. The clear yellow of the cat's breast came into view.

"Which side?" thought Lola sharply. "Where's the heart? Left!"

She lifted the knife, and then the cunning of the ages stopped her.

"Not a stroke," she thought. "It might hit a rib."

So she dropped on her knee, set the point of the knife swiftly on the panther's side, felt between the ribs, and plunged it in, crawling after as they rolled over once more, pushing that knife in deep—deep.

She shut her eyes and held to the hilt. It was a long time before she could convince herself that the struggle was done, that the great cat lay quiet. So long she crouched so, her hand gripping the knife hilt, that her eyes ached in the tight darkness.

Then she felt White Ears move, and opened them.

The wolf dog unlocked his jaws, stood up, and then with a lurch went down in a wet red heap across her knees.

He was all but done, for he had flung his blood to the four winds.

At sight of him prone upon her skirts all the worth of the girl awakened. He should not die! Not while she could work, not while she could call upon everything she knew to save him! She pushed him from her, tore the khaki skirt from her limbs, cut it in lengths with the knife which she snatched from the dead cat, and wrapped him in it, tight around the body. She ripped the waist from her back and bound his forelegs down to the feet. She lifted his weary head and fanned him with her hat. She took the flask of water from her jacket pocket and poured it down his throat. But White Ears merely laid down in a weakness that refused another effort, and Lola knew he could not move that night.

It was growing blue in the cañons, and she stood up and looked long upon the lonely world. She wavered a bit

upon her feet, for she had passed through awful strain, and the cabin down on that distant slope would have been paradise. She shuddered at sight of the great dead panther, and thought of its mate that might be in these hills.

But White Ears could not move. And she could not leave him.

"We'll have to make a bluff, Gray Lad," she said aloud, and grimly set herself to gathering a pile of dry wood for a fire. She got a forked stick, and fished her rifle from the crevasse.

Tenderly, gently as a mother lifts a babe, she dragged the wolf dog in the cave. The little blind kitten was crawling and whimpering for the mother that would come no more, and Lola's gray eyes filled with tears.

"It's a hard world, baby," she said, "where we must all face death, and either bluff it or go under. But I'm sorry I blundered here to-day, for the great cat was a mother. And I'll make amends."

So the stark, silent, lonesome night of the wilderness saw a strange sight—a bright fire burning in the mouth of a cave, a half-dead wolf dog drowsing in its glow, and a big, beautiful girl, stripped of half her clothes, keeping guard across the flames with a rifle, and a whining panther cub upon her knees.

A month later Lola and White Ears —himself again—once more climbed to the cave in the rocky ramparts of Granite Ridge. Lola carried a little pot of dye that she had made from boiling a hard brown berry in vinegar, and a tiny brush made frankly from a tuft of White Ears' fur tied on a stick.

High as she could reach on the surface of the flat face of the rim rock she drew a square, and painted therein these words:

Here's where White Ears and Lola killed the panther. Our marks.

She wet her own right hand in the dye, and set its print beneath the screed. Then she gravely did the same for White Ears, making him stretch up along the wall high as he could reach, and setting the print of his right pad under hers.

The third story in this series, called "The River Rock," will be published, two weeks hence, in the POPULAR, on sale April 7th.

THE GENEROUS MR. BROWN

HARRY J. BROWN, the chairman of the house committee of the National Press Club in Washington, is always extremely active in seeing that the arrangements are perfect whenever an entertainment is to be given by the club. At one of the latest functions of the organization it became evident early in the evening that there would be present a much larger crowd than anybody had expected.

"By George!" said Brown to Uncle Joe Cannon, who was standing beside him. "I believe there'll be at least four hundred more people here than I expected."

"Yes, Harry," said Uncle Joe, "and that makes a tremendous attack on those waferlike ham sandwiches you serve up here."

"That reminds me," observed Brown. "I'll go and tell the steward to make four hundred more sandwiches."

"Which," said Mr. Cannon smoothly, "may possibly compel you to cut into another ham."

Their Countries' Flags

By Arthur Ransome

How the war affected a butterfly hunter and a complete angler. The terrific battle waged between a loyal German and a loyal Britisher who were the best of friends. Staged in darkest West Africa

THE last tappings of the instrument—before it had ceased working irreparably—informed Brocklebank that war between England and Germany had been declared. In his hut, in the West African forest, well beyond the sphere of solid British influence, Brocklebank tried to realize what that would mean. His mind coursed the oceans of the world, imagining war, and at last, describing narrowing circles, settled itself steadily and not without kindliness on Schnitzler. Fifty miles away, through swamp and forest, was another hut, and on it a German flag, and in it Herr Doctor Schnitzler, holding in the name of his country and himself no less territory than that which was presided over by Brocklebank. Their countries' flags waved over their respective domains, but, beyond those scraps of color, their countries contributed little to the upkeep or embellishment of these inconsiderable possessions, and now, busied in greater affairs, would assuredly leave them alone.

Brocklebank prepared for a journey. He would annex the hut of Herr Doctor Schnitzler, and the many square miles of abominable country in which it stood, in the name of his majesty, King George the Fifth. He called his native boy, gave him a rifle and an old belt by way of uniform, and explained that he was now a soldier, and would get kicked if on his—Brocklebank's—return all was not extremely well. Then he opened a kit bag, took out a small Union Jack, and put it in his pocket; saw to his ammunition and rifle, packed a largish knapsack, and set off, commander in chief, officers, non-commissioned officers, privates, and army-service corps, all in one, of a British expeditionary force.

When he had gone about twenty yards, he hesitated a moment, turned back, took down a folding landing net and a small, five-jointed fishing rod that fitted in loops on his knapsack. He also took a little leather case of flies and tackle. Then, blushing a little, and swearing at the native boy, he set off again. The boy watched till his employer had left the clearing and disappeared among the trees, waited a minute or two lest he should come back for something else, and then, with a broad smile, laid down his rifle, took off his belt, and settled himself for a long period of unusual and uninterrupted repose.

Brocklebank walked on, to capture Herr Doctor Schnitzler, and, by way of first fruits of that capture, to enjoy a little fishing on the river, which, though small, made Herr Doctor Schnitzler's station a desirable possession in spite of the surrounding country. At least, as British officer in command of conquered territory, he would have a right to fish in it. And, as he remembered with annoyance, Herr Doctor Schnitzler's enthusiasm for butterflies had made fishing a game not worth playing

during his previous visits to the house of his only white neighbor. Herr Doctor Schnitzler had always talked of butterflies, shown him specimens till he was sick of the sight of them, and then conceded, with an air of generosity, two hours in which to fish. Two hours in which to fish a magnificent river, thought Brocklebank, and he anathematized the kaiser, and marched on to annex that territory, thinking, with pleasure, of the fact that, as if he had foreseen the war, he had recently respliced his rod, and made up some very killing casts of flies.

Brocklebank liked Herr Doctor Schnitzler. Mature consideration had decided that he was "a harmless beggar, very decent for a German, in spite of his butterflies." And, now and then, when solitude became oppressive, these two representatives of civilization had enjoyed each other's hospitality, stayed in each other's huts, and discoursed upon their several interests. Brocklebank thought of this, and remembered that he had certainly bored Herr Doctor by showing him the beauties of a rod, and the mechanism of an adjustable check reel. He had even tried to teach him fly tying, at which the doctor, accustomed as he was to the delicate work of setting butterflies, ought to have been extremely skillful. And Schnitzler had indeed produced some wonderful flies, imitations of rare West African lepidoptera, in no way calculated to catch fish. "I thought the beggar would have been converted to fishing, with that stream at his elbow," said Brocklebank to himself.

And he marched on to conquer that river, in the interests of King George and an enthusiastic angler, wholly unsuspecting of the fact that at that moment, at the other end of the track, a little German was advancing toward him, martially equipped, with a German Eagle in his breast pocket, a revolver, a rifle, a folding butterfly net, and a collecting box.

The opposing forces met halfway between their respective capitals. It was a little after noon on the second day of Brocklebank's forced march toward the enemy, when he came upon a little pile of military luggage lying in the middle of the track. Rifle, revolver, and ammuntion belt lay beside a neat rucsack, clearly of the best German make. It was an excellent rucsack, far superior to Brocklebank's, which, no doubt, also made in Germany, was of inferior workmanship. It had a little brass name plate on it, "F. Schnitzler, Ph. D." Brocklebank immediately took off his own luggage, and sat down beside it, his rifle lying handy across his knee. He looked about for Herr Doctor Schnitzler, and could see nothing through the trees, and for some time could hear nothing but the cries of birds, the faint wind stirring the big leaves, and the chattering of monkeys. It was uncommonly hot.

Presently, however, there was a noise of some one moving hurriedly through undergrowth, and Brocklebank caught a glimpse of a stout little man with a green butterfly net running spasmodically and apparently at random. There he was again, and again he was hidden by the trees. He progressed like a faun, leaping, running, and now and again stopping to disentangle his legs from clinging plants. He disappeared. Then Brocklebank saw him again, now much nearer, and carefully covered him with his rifle, following his movements as he leaped along on his zigzag career. When he was about thirty yards away, Brocklebank saw that he was chasing a butterfly.

It was a very large butterfly, red and green and gold, glittering in the sunlight. It settled and rose, as if on purpose, just as the butterfly net approached it. Yet it moved as if concerned only with its own pleasure.

Brocklebank speculated idly if it knew it was pursued any more than Herr Doctor Schnitzler, its pursuer, knew he was covered by Brocklebank's rifle. The butterfly fluttered over the path and directly along it, the Herr Doctor closely pursuing it. It settled within reach of Brocklebank, who swiftly placed his hat over it, and a second later was again looking at Schnitzler along the barrel of his rifle. Herr Doctor Schnitzler had been so intent upon his butterfly that Brocklebank had remained, as it were, invisible to him, until, by capturing the insect, he had brought himself vividly into the field covered by the entomologist's mind.

"Vell done, mein friend," said Herr Doctor Schnitzler. "You have got him. A beautiful specimen!"

"Hands up!" said Brocklebank.

"Vot? Dere is no need. You have got him."

"Hands up!"

"Led me see him, Brogglebank."

"Hands up!"

The little German put his hands up.

"Is it der var?" he asked.

"It is," said Brocklebank. "You are my prisoner."

"I vos on der vay to make you prisoner myself," said Schnitzler.

"Too late," said Brocklebank.

"*Gott in himmel!* I have betrayed mein kaiser for ein budderfly! But vot a specimen! Der kaiser vould have done der same, if he see him so close, alvays so close!" He lowered his hands to lift Brocklebank's hat.

"Hands up!" said Brocklebank.

Herr Doctor Schnitzler, his eyes fastened on Brocklebank's hat, put his hands up. Brocklebank smiled.

"What is it you want to do?"

"I have some cyanide of podassium in my pocket. Dot vill calm him, and den I can put him in my collecting box."

"Have you anything else in your pocket?"

"Nein."

"Get out the cyanide and stick the insect in your box," said the British commander.

The German generalissimo took a little lump of cyanide from a pill box, inserted it gingerly under the hat, and waited. Then he cautiously lifted the hat, Brocklebank covering him all the time. The butterfly lay, stupefied but unharmed, a perfect specimen. The German spoke:

"May I take der box?"

"What box?"

"It is by your right foot."

Brocklebank pushed it toward him. In a moment or two the butterfly was secured in the box, the lump of cyanide in a perforated partition at one corner. Herr Doctor Schnitzler had added a gem to his collection.

"Now put the box down and listen to me."

"Mein friend, I dank you."

"You are my prisoner. I am going to annex your station for his majesty, the King of England. You understand?"

"I understand, Brogglebank. It is hard."

"Well, you would have done the same to me. But the point is this: I can't leave you here unarmed, and if I leave you your arms there is nothing to prevent you from going on and annexing my station for your kaiser."

"And de lebidobdera dere are someding vonderful."

"Precisely. Well, they are going to remain in the possession of King George. He takes a particular interest in them. Consequently I have to take you with me. I don't think it would be fair to ask for your parole——"

"I vould not give it. I must retrieve der victory, if I can."

"I shall take jolly good care not to give you a chance. Anyhow, you are

coming along with me now. I shall have to carry all the guns, so you must carry everything else. You see?"

"I see, Brogglebank. Brogglebank!"

"What?"

"You vill not annex my collections? If King George himself is int'rested in de Vest Afrigan lebidobdera, I vould give him some specimens. But not my collections. You vould not annex my collections?"

"I shall respect the property of individuals, other than munitions of war."

"Dank you, Brogglebank."

Above their heads the monkeys chattered in the trees, parrots screamed, and the sun glowed hot. Brocklebank girded himself with Schnitzler's revolver, rifle, and ammunition belt, while Schnitzler experimented in ways of convenient portage for two knapsacks on one back.

"Look here, Schnitzler," said his captor, "don't put my knapsack on for a minute. We'll feed before going on. There are some very fair sandwiches in there—and canned tongue. Can you open cans?"

Herr Schnitzler opened the canned tongue, and the conquering and captive army fed together in the forest track, and discussed the war, and what would happen in it, and many other things, quite as in old days. They had, neither of them, talked to a white man for many months, and both enjoyed themselves amazingly.

They made the journey to Schnitzler's station by easy marches. The only difficulty was the nights. Brocklebank dared not sleep with Schnitzler free, and, as he pointed out, it would be very uncomfortable for Schnitzler to have to sleep with his hands tied to one tree and his feet to another.

"Very uncomfordable, indeed, mein friend, very uncomfordable, indeed."

"You'll simply have to give me your parole during the night, just till eight in the morning."

"I vill give my parole till eight o'clock. You must ask for it each night, for dere vill come one night ven you vill forget."

"Agreed," said Brocklebank, and they shook hands. Brocklebank set his pocket alarm clock for seven-forty-five, and they rolled themselves into comfortable positions, side by side, and slept.

At seven-forty-five the alarm went off, and Brocklebank sat up in a hurry and looked for Schnitzler. The German was nowhere to be seen.

"Well, I'm blest!" said Brocklebank. "He gave me his parole till eight. Don't say the alarm's gone wrong."

He looked hurriedly at the clock. It was thirteen minutes to eight.

"It's a bit thick," said Brocklebank, "but I can't believe the beggar's gone. I'll give him till eight, anyhow."

He prepared breakfast. The minutes went by. At four minutes to eight he heard an unrivaled outburst of monkey chatter not far away in the forest. At two minutes to eight he saw Schnitzler coming toward him, panting and purple.

"I have lost him," said Schnitzler, as he came up. "He settle on mein nose. I vake and see him, a ver' fine specimen. I put oud mein hand. I cannot reach der net. I move, and he go. I leap up like der gazelle. It is too late. I follow him. And den I remember my parole. I look at my vatch. Seven minutes only. I put der command upon my feelings, and I come back. Mein friend, it is too much, but it is var."

"I'm awfully sorry," said Brocklebank. "I'd have given you till a quarter past if I'd known. But how could I tell?"

"It is not your fault, Brogglebank. You could not tell. No one could tell. Such a specimen—on my nose!"

Brocklebank felt remorseful, for he knew what a butterfly meant to the little man. He therefore bravely submitted to an interminable lecture on the

entomology of West Africa, delivered by his prisoner, as they trudged through the forest together.

At Schnitzler's station they found the garrison, the home forces, quiescent, in the shape of a black boy asleep in the shade. Schnitzler kicked him mildly till he awoke.

"We are prisoners," he said in semi-native, semi-German. "This is your master. You must now do what he tells you, not what I tell you. He tells you to make coffee—you do, Broggle-bank?—and make it quick. And if it is no better than the last, it is I, the Herr Doctor, your fellow prisoner, who will make you suffer." In this somewhat ambiguous manner the transfer of authority was explained.

The station consisted of a well-built hut, much like Brocklebank's, and a little clearing, with a tethered cow in it. There was a flagstaff above the hut, and on it waved the German eagle. Brocklebank saw it.

"Look here, Schnitzler," he said. "I have to haul down that flag and hoist mine. You had better go in if you would rather not see."

There were tears in the little German's eyes, as he pressed his captor's hand. Then he saluted the German eagle, and went in, with bowed head. Brocklebank, blushing, almost ashamed, hauled down the flag, set the Union Jack in its place, and hauled up. He saluted, and went in.

Herr Doctor Schnitzler, prisoner of war, was a very different person on the march from what he was in his own home, captured as that had been. He was still a prisoner, but he was also partly an urbane host, partly the enthusiastic curator of a museum. Brocklebank remembered other days, and long afternoons of submission to his host as he opened drawer after drawer of the cabinets that stood about the room. He felt now able to defy the entomologist, and yet had compunction in doing so, especially when Schnitzler removed the butterfly nets that hung in the place of honor, and with humility suggested that the conquering Brocklebank would probably wish to hang his fishing rod there. Brocklebank, of course, refused, but the offer had been made, and, as in old times, the Englishman felt himself constrained to listen to the German on his favorite subject.

In the morning, however, while Brocklebank was examining his rod and preparing a cast of flies, Schnitzler repaid him.

"You vish to fish?" he said.

"Yes," said Brocklebank.

"But you cannot carry der guns mit you ven you fish."

"That is true," said Brocklebank.

"Den vot about me?"

"You must come, too."

"But you vill be mit no guns. You fish. Der fish engage himself in your hook. You are int'rested. I leap upon you from behind. Vere is you? No. Vile you fish I vill give my parole, and chase der budderfly."

This was agreed, and the rival armies, captor and captive, set out amicably together with butterfly net and fishing rod. They separated at the riverside, where a strip of clearing beside a rapid and a pool gave Brocklebank an opportunity, rare in those wooded waters, of casting a fly with comfort. Brocklebank opened his folding landing net, set up his rod, attached his cast, and threw with delicacy between the current and the backwater at the near side of the pool. There was a commotion in the water, but the flies came home. Brocklebank waited some minutes, and then cast again over the same spot. With a sudden rush, the water broke, the rod curved like the rainbow, and the reel shrieked as the line ran out. Whatever the fish was, he was a monster. Brocklebank forgot all else. For some time he had no power over the fish at all. It shot off downstream at

such speed that even while the line ran out from the check reel, the curve of the rod showed that the fish could do with more than he was getting.

Things had just begun to turn for the better; Brocklebank had been able to recover a few of the many yards the fish had taken, when suddenly a shrill cry sounded, about a quarter of a mile away:

"Brogglebank! Brogglebank!"

"Oh, darn the fellow!" muttered the fisherman to himself. "Some wretched butterfly is out of his reach, I suppose."

The cry rose again, and there was terror and urgency in the voice:

"Brogglebank! Brogglebank!"

The fish plunged, and Brocklebank let him have more line.

The voice called again, now high-pitched with despair:

"Brogglebank! Brogglebank!"

"Con-found, blast, and blow!" said Brocklebank. "It's the fish of a life-time!" He laid the rod down, stuck the landing net into the ground between the line and the rod just above the reel, in the faint hope of holding it, and set off, running, the charitable thoughts of the rescuer contending in his heart with scarlet gusts of rage.

"If he wasn't a prisoner of war, I wouldn't bother," he panted to himself, "but I'm responsible for him."

He did the quarter mile in pretty good time, considering the nature of the country, and, bursting through some low trees of the kind that flourish in very swampish ground, came in sight of Herr Doctor Schnitzler. The little German was kneeling on what seemed to be a small floating island of vegetation, and between him and dry land was a widening space of water choked with weeds. What had happened explained itself. Schnitzler, chasing a butterfly, had leaped on the island, and given it sufficient impetus to separate it from the land, and to set it drifting out toward the middle of the morass. Brocklebank was too angry to consider, and leaped in. The muddy weeds and water came to his chest. He struggled on, and found it shallower.

"Get on my shoulders," he said to Schnitzler, and the little German obeyed, when Brocklebank turned with difficulty and began to force his way back. Brocklebank felt his feet sinking in mud under the water, which rose higher and higher. He was a yard or two from land when he realized that with Schnitzler's weight he would infallibly be under water before he reached the edge.

"Get up on my shoulders and jump," he said.

Schnitzler clambered up, with one hand on Brocklebank's head, the other still clutching the butterfly net, endangering Brocklebank's eyes. He balanced himself, jumped, and landed on his knees on the muddy ground. But Brocklebank, who had braced himself to give the German a good chance of jumping, slipped and fell. He went clean under, and came up with his face covered with green slime. He threw himself forward, and caught the handle of the butterfly net, outstretched toward him. In a moment or two he was out, looking like a gigantic green water spirit. Schnitzler was dry except for his knees and feet.

"My preserver," said Schnitzler, "you must have quinine at vonce."

"I've got a fish, you ass!" said Brocklebank; and, spitting and spluttering, started hurriedly to return to the pool.

Schnitzler, who knew better than Brocklebank the danger his rescuer was in, made for the station as fast as he could go. He got some quinine tabloids, and, utterly out of breath, set off for the pool, where he found Brocklebank in a tearing anger, being violently sick.

"You must svallow dese at vonce," said Schnitzler.

"The fish has gone," said Brockle-

bank, "and the taste of that slime has got into my very stomach."

"You must have der quinine," Schnitzler insisted.

"I will not," said Brocklebank, and was too angry to retract, though he knew that Schnitzler was right. He wound in the line, took off the broken cast, and set about putting on another.

"Brogglebank, you have preserved me. Please me by taking der quinine."

"No, thank you," said Brocklebank. "Look out! I'm going to cast."

He cast again over the place where the great fish had been. There was no result. He cast again, and yet again, and went on casting, fishing every inch of the water. Perhaps the big fish had been alone in the pool. Perhaps he had warned the others. Not a fish rose. Schnitzler turned sadly away. Brocklebank fished on like a fanatic, until he was suddenly taken with a violent shivering.

"I've got a chill," he said to himself. "Oh, confound Schnitzler and his quinine!"

He took his rod to pieces with shaking hands, and hurried to the station.

Schnitzler was there, and had prepared his bed, and turned the station into a sort of hospital.

"Mein friend," he greeted Brocklebank, "you shake. You have a chill begotten. Get into bed. You save my life. It vill be my turn now to save yours."

"Oh, rot!" said Brocklebank. He undressed in a kind of frenzy, and got into bed. Schnitzler brought him some tea. He drank it in a gulp, and then stared at his host and prisoner.

"You put quinine in that tea?"

"I did."

Brocklebank turned over, with his face to the wall. Then he turned back.

"You give me your parole until tomorrow at eight?"

"Cerdainly."

And Schnitzler prepared to sit up all night, and to take such measures as should seem advisable for the preservation of his captor. Before morning, Brocklebank was in high fever, and Schnitzler was once more the efficient doctor of Leipsic days, dealing skillfully and kindly with a patient too ill to be other than submissive.

For ten days and nights Brocklebank chased a fish round a deep pool, in the center of which was Death. This way and that, in hurricane pursuit, he rushed, skirting always the monster who, with outstretched hands, was waiting for his life. Sometimes he saw Schnitzler peering down at him through the water. There was a butterfly net that tried to catch his head. And always there was a great fish swimming faster than he.

All this Schnitzler learned from the fragments of wild talk that he heard as he tirelessly nursed his delirious patient. There was no word of war. No, a great fish, and a monster sitting in the pool and clutching with his hands.

On the evening of the tenth day there was the first sign of improvement. Schnitzler watched his patient, who was manifestly past the worst. Brocklebank tossed but little in his sleep. His breathing became regular, and at last he lay still and slept steadily.

"He is better," said Schnitzler to himself; "much better. He vill talk no more nonsense." He busied himself about the hut, made ready the stove for the morning tea, slept for six hours, the longest time he had allowed himself since the beginning of his patient's illness, woke when the alarm clock went off under his pillow, got up, put the rifles out of sight in the side room, which he used for stores, hid Brocklebank's revolver and loaded his own, which he slipped into his pocket. He then went out, hauled down the Union Jack and hoisted the German eagle. He had not been able to think of these matters while his friend Brocklebank

had been so ill. Now he was better, and things must change.

Brocklebank slept late. Schnitzler had the kettle boiling, made a cup of tea for himself, and then sat at a little distance from the bed, watching his patient. The Englishman's face was white, but there was no sweat upon it.

At last Brocklebank stirred. He opened his eyes and saw Schnitzler. His memory came back suddenly.

"We are at war," he said. "We are at war, Herr Doctor. And you are my prisoner."

"Not at all, mein friend; not at all!"

Brocklebank tried to sit up in bed, and fell back weakly.

Schnitzler rose, smoothed his pillow, made him comfortable upon it, and turned to the steaming kettle.

"But you are on parole."

"My parole exbired ten days ago."

"I don't understand."

"I vill exblain. Drink dis tea. Dere is only condensed milk, because der cow he have escaped."

He propped Brocklebank by pushing a knapsack under his pillow, and held the cup to his mouth. Brocklebank drank.

"Have I been ill?"

"You have been so ill I could not chase der cow. So ve have nodings but condensed milk. Der boy, too, he is deserted. You have been ill eleven days. For eight of dem I dought dat you vould die. Dat vould have been misfortunate. You vill now be vell. But, mein friend, you are mein prisoner. I have retrieved der honor of mein kaiser."

"You seem to have saved my life."

"It is nodings."

"You know I must escape as soon as I can, and make you prisoner again."

"You must first get recovered, and den ve vill march to your station and raise der sublime flag of der vaterland."

"Blast Kaiser Bill!"

"Mein friend, if you vos not delirious, I should be compelled to notice your remark in my military capacity."

"I beg your pardon," said Brocklebank, and he lay back on his pillow, and laughed weakly. Then, for he was still very feeble, he fell suddenly asleep.

When he awoke, Schnitzler was out looking for a pigeon for his invalid. Brocklebank lay in bed, and tried to realize his position. He summed up the situation thus:

BRITISH SUCCESSES.

Captured German army.
Annexed German territory.
Saved life of German army.

Against these had to be set a melancholy fact:

British army lost big fish.

Then he turned to consider Germany, and made another mental list:

GERMAN SUCCESSES.

Captured valuable butterfly.
Saved life of British army.
Captured British army.

"And as for territory," Brocklebank reflected, "if the beggar had liked to leave me he could have walked along to my place, catching butterflies all the way, and annexed British territory. Incidentally, I should have died. That would have been British army annihilated by act of God. Not pretty at all. This will never do," he thought. "I can't go on being his prisoner, and yet I can't play him a scurvy turn, when he has not only saved my life, but given up a chance of annexation in doing it."

"Ach, mein friend, Brogglebank, you are much better," said Schnitzler, coming in with a shot pigeon. "I vill continue to instruct you in de elements of Vest African entomology." And he sat down in the doorway to pluck the pigeon, and discoursed until the pigeon was featherless, and he rose and found that his audience was asleep.

"He vill never make an entomologist," he said to himself sadly.

For a week the patient progressed

steadily toward convalescence, and an unwilling knowledge of butterflies. He listened to Schnitzler because he could not help it, and meanwhile thought what he should do, rejecting plan after plan, this as impracticable, that as unfair.

At last there came a day when he felt well enough to execute the design on which he had determined.

He watched Schnitzler go off with a gun to get provisions for the two armies. Yes, he was right. The little German carried one gun only. The other must be somewhere about. Brocklebank got out of bed and tottered weakly across the room. He opened the door into the storeroom. There was his gun. The German had not troubled to hide it, overestimating his patient's feebleness. Ammunition lay beside it.

Brocklebank loaded the gun, and then emptied the cartridges out again.

"No," he said to himself; "if it comes to a fight, I can't be the one to shoot, when I shouldn't be here if he hadn't nursed me."

He took the empty gun, and lay down to rest for a little. Then he dressed, and moved to a chair close to the open door, facing out into the forest. Then he waited, his mind frantically busy with the choice of words.

Presently he saw Schnitzler approaching, looking eagerly from side to side, watching birds and insects, and utterly unsuspecting.

When the little German was about ten yards from the door, Brocklebank swung up his rifle. Perhaps he was not so quick as he should have been. Illness makes sad work of the muscles. Anyhow, the little doctor saw the movement in the doorway, understood it, and was as quick as he. The two men eyed each other along the barrels of their respective rifles.

"You are my prisoner!" said Brocklebank.

"You are my prisoner!" said Schnitzler.

"Put down that gun!" said Brocklebank.

"If you do not point your veapon at der ground, I vill shoot!" said Schnitzler.

"Shoot away!" said Brocklebank, and waited. So far the dialogue had not gone exactly as he had planned. All depended on the next word. If that word were a gunshot, well, it would be finished, anyhow.

"Brogglebank, I cannot," said the little German.

"Neither can I," said Brocklebank, delighted with the success of his diplomacy.

"Now, look here," he went on, "you say you can't shoot me. Well, I know I can't shoot you. Hang it, we've saved each other's lives! This can't go on. Are you my prisoner?"

"Nein, Brogglebank," said the German.

"Think a minute. If you'll admit you're my prisoner—and, after all, I did make you prisoner first—then I'll admit I'm your prisoner."

"I do not understand."

"Confound it, man! Then we can exchange prisoners, and there we are."

"Exchange prisoners?"

"Yes. I restore one German prisoner —you—in exchange for one English prisoner—me. You do the same, only the other way round."

"It is agreed. Dere is ver' liddle condensed milk left, Brogglebank."

"As soon as it's done, and I can walk, you must bring your butterfly nets along to my place, and I'll put you up for a bit."

And thus, in that remote strip of West African forest, the war is already ended, and, turn and turn about in their respective huts, two released prisoners share the oppressive solitude, and learn to tolerate each other's hobbies.

The Polite Horse

By Henry Beach Needham

The plight of an American turf plunger in England who through circumstances beyond his control finds that he has wagered thirty-five thousand dollars, and all he possessed to his name was a hundred pounds above twenty-five thousand American dollars

Oh! Ascot Heath's a pleasant spot
All on a Gold-Cup day;
You'd have your work cut out, I wot,
To find a scene so gay. . . .

You try your fortune in The Ring;
Mostlike you have to pay.
No matter! Still a fling's a fling
On Ascot Gold-Cup day.—TRUTH.

JIMMIE HATTON was desperately homesick. His home, or what had been his home, was in Brooklyn, and in that section of the far-flung borough distinguished as Flatbush. He was domiciled in London. After his bacon and eggs and coffee of a morning, two minutes' walk brought him to the hub of the universe—Piccadilly Circus.

For Brooklyn thoroughfares, therefore, Jimmie Hatton had substituted on his neighborhood map high-sounding streets like Duke, Regent, Jermyn—where he lived—and Piccadilly. But a public highway by a less flossy name—Flatbush Avenue—may sound as sweet, even sweeter. Yes, Jimmie was all-fired homesick.

The distance from Piccadilly to New York is considerably greater than from Flatbush to London. From Jimmie's point of view this distance New York-ward was not linear or nautical, but monetary. In language more forlorn, he was far from home, and he was broke. Not dead broke—worse than that!

Across from his "digs," as he called his rooms, was the headquarters of the organization which found a way for stranded Americans to navigate the Atlantic westward. But what to many an unhappy soul was God's lend-a-hand society, was to Jimmie Hatton nothing less than a scourge. Several times he had vowed to change his abode, all on account of this reminder of home and of King's County.

You see, Jimmie could pay his passage back. That's why his trial balance approximated a state more embittering than bankruptcy. He could go back—come back—but again among his old pals he would be forced to find a job in order, not alone to live as he had become accustomed to live, but, more important, to hold up his end. And the only business he knew had been cut from under him by that—"animated feather duster," as he delineated the governor who had "tied the can to racing in New York State."

Jimmie Hatton followed the horses.

In his carefree youth Jimmie was an exercise boy at Sheepshead Bay. His ambition was to be a jock, but nature defeated this aim. Jimmie ate himself out of the saddle!

Carrying weight for youth, he became a bookmaker's advance agent, otherwise a tout. But a tout he did not forever remain. He participated in several "killings," and reaching man's estate was heralded far and wide in the "pink uns" as Plunger Hatton. This

title he retained against all bookmakers until his forced exile to England.

There were times before his expatriation when he was reported to be flattened out financially; other times when he was classed with the plungers of Wall Street. Never once, as a record of fact, had he been clean busted. Unlike most turf venturers he had salted away a tidy little sum in gilt-edged electric-lighting bonds. These he had purchased 'way below par, thanks to a tip from his pal at city hall, Dan Foss, and the securities were now quoted at double the figure he had paid for the coupon engraving. Every quarter Jimmie received $312.50, or annually $1,250—an amount representing interest at five per cent on the face value of the bonds.

In London, Jimmie Hatton could subsist on this income, if worse overtook worse, and make faces at the wolf. But not in little old America. It took real money, he told himself, to live comfortably at home. Jimmie hadn't it, and Jimmie had no sure thing in sight.

All he required was fifty thousand dollars. A mere bag o' shells, he dubbed it; a sum an office boy in Wall Street might peel off any bull movement. Fifty thousand dollars! Dan Foss had written to say that he could buy Jimmie a cozy freehold on the bright side of Comfort Street, U. S. A., for that trifling amount. Thus wrote Dan:

> Racing may be dead, but we've found a game what leaves it at the post. That's city contracting! You can't lose, and what you make—say, it's shameful. Can grab you off a nice interest in our company for fifty thousand. From Mike Doolan's estate—you've beard poor Mike died in a sanitarium. Couldn't stand prosperity. Let me know bout the interest quick. Sure to be snapped up. Take care of yourself.

It was kind of Dan—oh, very kind! Perhaps some other friend would give him a chance to buy Mr. Rockefeller out. He was always getting good things offered him, was Jimmie.

And he possessed exactly one hundred pounds sterling to his name. Five hundred dollars in God's own currency! Which wasn't much for a "plunger." The bonds?—of course, but Jimmie would as soon have thought of hocking his mother's wedding ring, which he wore on his little finger, as to gamble with his "life insurance against manual labor." Not Jimmie Hatton.

But he did want that interest in the Invincible Contracting Company. And his chances of copping it were equal in any "book" to that of a 100-to-1 shot in a race with an odds-on favorite.

Wearily he turned to the racing page of the *St. James Gazette,* to ascertain what "The Judge" had to offer for explanation why Sunfire had been beaten the day before for the Coronation Cup.

Sunfire had lost Jimmie fifty quid. And he had spent a lot of time and mental effort figuring the horse a safe winner. In Sunfire's first important race of the season—the Newmarket Handicap for three-year-olds and upward—the big chestnut's defeat was excusable. He had got off to a bad start, but even so had come with a splendid rush in the stretch, and Thistleton had beaten him by scarcely half a length.

Sunfire's losing in the Longleat Plate at Salisbury, as Jimmie doped it out, was attributable to ivory-headed riding. Allis, the jock, had waited too long before making his run on Sunfire. At that Thistleton was a lucky winner, having no more than a neck to spare.

Thistleton had given Sunfire two pounds at Newmarket and four pounds in the Longleat Plate, but in the Coronation Cup at Epsom he had to concede ten pounds to his rival. This had decided Jimmie. Thistleton couldn't carry the added weight and beat Sunfire—two hundred and fifty dollars of Jimmie's money said so.

But again Thistleton had won—nosed

out Sunfire. Jimmie could think of no "alibi" for the chestnut three-year-old, unless he was too straight in the shoulder for coming down the hill before Tattenham Corner.

It could hardly be the distance, for Sunfire had run as well at Newmarket for a mile and a quarter as at Salisbury for the straight mile, proving himself a good sticker. The Coronation Cup was but two furlongs farther—over the Derby course of a mile and a half. Jimmie was stumped. Could The Judge evolve an excuse, he wondered, and read:

> Sunfire put up a good fight for the Coronation Cup, but couldn't quite do it against the redoubtable Thistleton. Three times these three-year-olds have met this season, and though each race has been fought gamely to the finish, thrice Thistleton has been the victor.
>
> For the Gold Cup at Ascot, Thistleton will surely start favorite, with Sunfire next in demand. If Thistleton for any reason were scratched—he has been worked hard, by the bye—Sunfire should rule favorite. With his rival a nonstarter, Sunfire would represent no end of a good sporting chance. In that event my tip would be to back the chestnut three-year-old.

Thoughtfully Jimmie read over the outgiving of The Judge:

> If Thistleton . . . were scratched . . . Sunfire would represent no end of a good sporting chance.

"I wonder," whispered Jimmie to his own judgment, carefully folding up the paper for future reference.

In his mind's vision he recalled Sunfire as he had looked him over in the paddock at Epsom the day before. A magnificent chestnut, every inch a racing machine! Jimmie had liked his head, he had liked his hocks, he had liked his eye. Above all he had liked Sunfire's high-bred air—something more, even, than manners and conformation. A courtly, an estimable, and withal "a deferential horse," Jimmie had thought.

A deferential horse!

II.

Jimmie Hatton strolled into the Somerset next afternoon, and after "looking 'em over" as the summery procession of swell dames in filmy attire floated in to tea, visited the comfortable bar overlooking the Embankment. Immediately he was hailed by a group of American business men—London "entertainers" for their companies—and Americans not actively engaged in business.

There was Wilson Bayne, who had succeeded in giving a "bad" Yankee trust a good name in London town. Bayne had tons of personality and carloads of tact, everybody said so.

Seated next to him was H. Portner Cabot, formerly of Boston, who looked out for the shoe-machinery trust. Five years in London had made him quite human.

Colonel Rogers was there. The colonel was a perpetual promoter who never landed, yet who was never without expense money in some new promotion.

Of course Bobbie Marsh was present. Bobbie, according to Lanson, of the *Sun,* represented the American spending habit abroad.

To a man they liked Jimmie Hatton—liked him because they believed him thoroughly honest. "Squarest plunger in New York or London," any one of the group would have said.

"Hel-lo, Jimmie!" sang out Bayne. "Come join the ancient order of high-binders. Gentlemen, allow me—James Hatton, who is slowly but surely eliminating the British bookie from the scheme of things. Aren't you, Jimmie?"

"Slowly—yes," agreed Hatton. "There are a few left."

"You talk like a disappointed backer of Sunfire," Colonel Rogers observed. Jimmie smiled, but said nothing.

"Beefy, take Mr. Hatton's order!" directed H. Portner Cabot.

"What will you have, sir?" asked Beefy, the wise waiter of the Somerset bar.

"Cigar, thank you—small, but strong."

The cigar fetched, lighted, and Jimmie Hatton smoking contentedly—his contribution to the general conviviality—Wilson Bayne made an announcement. Before making it he laid great stress on its importance.

"We've hit on a new name for Sunfire," he said.

"What's the matter with his moniker in Ruff's Guide?" asked Jimmie innocently.

"He was overlooked in the birthday honors," put in Cabot. "We must supply the deficiency."

"Y' see," explained Bayne, "for the third time this season Sunfire has dumped our coin in the stretch, when the race was as good as won by the sorrel devil."

"Chestnut," corrected Jimmie, who was becoming interested.

"Yellow—that's his real color," growled Colonel Rogers.

"Go on, Wilson," urged Bobbie Marsh.

"Henceforth and in the hereafter," Bayne resumed, "Sunfire is to be—The Polite Horse!"

"Lay you a quid you don't get it," said Colonel Rogers.

"I don't—you win, colonel," answered Jimmie cheerfully.

"Sunfire always finishes second to Thistleton, doesn't he?" asked Bayne.

"So far," agreed Jimmie.

"Why?" asked Bobbie Marsh, acting the interlocutor.

"Because he's too *polite* to beat the other horse," explained Bayne.

"Says to Thistleton—'After you, my dear Alphonse!'" the colonel interpreted.

"Wherefore—The Polite Horse," concluded Cabot.

"I s-e-e," said Jimmie.

Then as quickly as he could, without appearing to do so, Jimmie Hatton changed the conversation.

III.

On the Saturday before Ascot, Thistleton, the popular favorite for the Gold Cup, broke down. His trainer sent him over the full course, and while the three-year-old showed no actual lameness at the finish, he pulled up very leg weary. The afternoon papers announced that Thistleton had been scratched by his owner, Lord Hardwicke. And without exception every racing authority, including The Judge, picked Sunfire to win the big race. So generally was the chestnut preferred that it was reasonably certain he would rule an even-money favorite. In three big events Sunfire had run second—twice a very close second—to Thistleton. What horse was there to beat the chestnut three-year-old? Not an expert would hazard a tip on any other thoroughbred to outrun Sunfire.

Jimmie Hatton experienced a most trying Sunday. He figured and he doped—he shut his eyes and called loudly upon his common sense.

Was he to back Sunfire and rely upon The Polite Horse to recoup his season's losses?

Jimmie didn't know—couldn't determine. Tired out, head weary, he went to bed, more homesick than ever for Brooklyn.

Monday morning brought no relief. In truth, his condition of mind became one of more acute desperation. There was a week-end cable from Dan Foss, who urged Jimmie most emphatically to buy the Doolan interest in the contracting company. The urgency of an immediate decision was underscored—"in four days." That meant, Jimmie supposed, until Thursday—the day of the Gold Cup. Then the chance would be gone. "Only fifty thousand to be

comfortable all your life among your pals," concluded Dan.

Only fifty thousand!

"Ha!" Jimmie, homesick enough to cry, viewed it as a bitter joke.

He endeavored to dismiss it from his thoughts, but couldn't. It simply wouldn't be dismissed! The opportunity Dan Foss presented joined hands, so to say, with Jimmie's hunch on the Gold Cup—not his dope, but his hunch. Remember that.

Vainly James Hatton sought an avenue of escape. He tried logic with himself. Failed. He tried persuasion. Failed again. Then he asserted his authority—authority of sense over sentiment, of mind over disaster. Failed dismally. Upon which Jimmie called himself every variety of fool he could think of, and then coupled with "fool" an assortment of derogatory and shameful modifying epithets from his rich vocabulary. All to no purpose. He gave it up.

But he fought every step of the way to the safety-deposit vaults, where, dominated by Opportunity and Hunch, he removed from safe-keeping the electric-lighting bonds—his insurance against manual labor—and with the precious securities in his pocket, visited the office of Wilson Bayne. Jimmie had done no bank borrowing in London, and required help.

Bayne knew the bonds well, and said offhand that he could arrange a loan in a couple of hours' time.

"How much do you want to raise?" he asked.

"The limit!—all the securities will stand," replied Jimmie hurriedly. Then cursed himself to himself once more.

"Believe I can get you the equivalent for twenty-five thousand dollars."

"Fine!" Jimmie said it without enthusiasm, as he might have said "Fudge!"

"How do you want the money?"

"In five and ten-pound notes."

Wilson Bayne glanced curiously from the bonds to the countenance of James Hatton, then said:

"Right-o, Jimmie. Meet me at the Somerset bar, two o'clock, and I'll have your money."

"Two o'clock, Somerset," repeated Jimmie, and arose to go.

"Say—none of my business," confessed Bayne—"but if it's no secret, what's your game, Jimmie?"

"No secret, simply this: As a backer of horses I've been losing pretty regular this season. So I'm going to turn bookmaker."

"Bookmaker?" questioned Bayne incredulously. "You are? For good?"

"That depends—how I make out. See you at the Somerset. Thanks for your trouble. So long."

It was never the rôle of wisdom, Jimmie believed, to appear too eager. Restraint was a top-weight virtue. Therefore he sauntered into the Somerset bar fifteen minutes after two. Wilson Bayne, who had arrived before time, was at the large round table, about which Beefy was moving quietly, taking orders.

"Sorry to be late," apologized Jimmie, "but——"

"Aw right, Jimmie," broke in Bayne. "Here's your money." Bayne handed him a small bundle of snow-white Bank of England notes, which are never reissued, therefore always clean and non-germ-bearing. "Better count it."

Jimmie counted the notes—indifferently, it appeared to the little group; rolled them up, slipped a rubber band about the roll, and stuffed it into the pocket of his trousers. Then he took a cigar from Beefy, pierced the end with a cutter he had in his pocket, calmly lighted the dark panetela, and began to smoke in silence. Everybody at the table had been looking at him the while, but apparently Jimmie hadn't realized it—or been moved by it.

H. Portner Cabot, formely of Boston, was the first to speak.

"We understand from Bayne——"

"You said it wasn't any secret," interrupted Bayne.

"Course," agreed Jimmie.

"——that you are intending to make a 'book' hereafter," finished Cabot.

Jimmie nodded. Then added, with a pleasing smile: "At your service, gentlemen."

"Reckon you wouldn't want us for clients on the Gold Cup," said Colonel Rogers.

"Why not?" asked Jimmie. "Your money's as good as anybody's—better, I'd say."

"But we're all plunging on the same horse—on the horse you probably fancy," explained Bobbie Marsh. "We're out to get even."

"So?" murmured Jimmie. "Before you name the horse I'll say now I'll cover your money."

"On Sunfire—will you?" asked Bayne eagerly.

"Sure!" Jimmie spoke lightly. "On Sunfire—or any horse in the Gold Cup."

"What odds?" inquired Colonel Rogers.

"What's your notion of odds?" countered Jimmie.

"Y' ought to give us seven to five at least, I reckon," responded the colonel.

"Not James Hatton. Even money," announced Jimmie decidedly.

"Even money on a horse that hasn't won this year?" whined the colonel.

"Even money on the horse that's run second in three of the big events this season—second to Thistleton, the winner in all three races, who's scratched!" Jimmie gave a positive jerk to his head which bore conviction.

"That's fair enough, commented Wilson Bayne. "Go you five hundred quid Sunfire wins."

"You're on!—five hundred quid," said Jimmie, making a memorandum in his pocket notebook.

"Go you the same," said H. Portner Cabot.

"Five hundred quid," said Jimmie, writing the bet down.

"Me, too—the same," piped Bobbie Marsh.

Jimmie agreed. "Five hundred quid," he wrote in his book.

"I'm game," insisted Colonel Rogers. "I'll bet you five hundred quid, even money, Sunfire wins the Gold Cup."

"You're on, colonel!—five hundred quid Sunfire wins the Gold Cup." Jimmie wrote; then, closing his notebook, suggested:

"Suppose we meet here Friday—say at one o'clock—and make settlements?"

"Suits me. Right-o! Friday at one. Day after the race," came tumbling the answers of Sunfire's four backers.

"Beefy!"

"Yes, sir," responded the wise waiter of the Somerset bar.

"Another round," ordered Jimmie Hatton.

"Very good, sir," replied Beefy.

If The Polite Horse won the Gold Cup, Jimmie Hatton already stood to lose approximately ten thousand dollars.

So much the American invaders in the Somerset bar understood. And when Jimmie had departed, they lamented his headlong plunge to ruin. For they liked him—he was square, always on the level, and never a sponger.

"Good sort—Jimmie Hatton," began Bobbie Marsh. "Too bad to trim him."

"Reckon it's his own fault," said Colonel Rogers. "He offered to bet before we named the horse."

"Know he did," admitted Marsh, "but, all the samey, we're backing a certain winner."

"Nothing certain in a horse race," cautioned Wilson Bayne.

"Usually not," conceded H. Portner Cabot. "But when a horse has Sun-

fire's record—three seconds to the same winner, and that winner scratched—why, it's as sure a thing as one will ever get in a gamble."

"Right you are," agreed Bayne.

"What's got into Jimmie, d'you suppose?" asked Marsh.

James Hatton, turned bookmaker, was inconspicuously but properly dressed for the notable occasion. He wore dark steel-gray trousers, dull black morning coat and waistcoat, rich but quiet necktie with plain snow-white linen, and a well-ironed silk hat. And he wasn't accoutered with field glasses. Naturally good looking and modest, he might have been mistaken for a gentleman—using the misused term in its English significance—and not likely spotted as a bookie.

"No turf plunger lived who didn't come a cropper sooner or later," argued the colonel. "Jimmie Hatton's tumble is long past due."

"He's lasted better than any of them," Bayne reminded the others.

"Nevertheless, I hate to be one to kick him into the 'broke' class," insisted Marsh.

"Course you do—*you* have a pipe line to a trust treasury," growled Colonel Rogers. "Some of us have to rustle to keep out of that broke class. I'm one, I don't mind saying."

IV.

Ascot Heath, you should know, is the royal race course, situate but a few miles from Windsor Castle.

Derby Day at Epsom Downs represents one end of the social ladder, Gold Cup Day at Ascot the other. At the Derby all England unbends, everybody fraternizes. Ascot is much more starchy. The royal procession makes of Gold Cup Day *the* outdoor event on the social calendar. With it there's nothing anywhere to compare, unless it be the Sunday of the Grand Prix at Longchamps. One for England, the other for France constitute the summer "opening" for society. Thenceforth fashion is a copy cat.

As on Gold Cup Day appearances count for much, it is high time to describe the figure cut by Jimmie Hatton. He didn't display, as critics of racing might have expected, white spats, checked trousers, speaking waistcoat, wide braid on his morning coat, a diamond or two, or a pearl-gray top hat with a black band, to which odd headgear the king had extended royal sanction.

Jimmie steered clear of "the ring," otherwise Tattersall's, until after the first race. Thus he was a quiescent onlooker at the arrival of the king and queen. Every one English was on tiptoe of circumspect excitement as the hour drew near for the royal entry. All loyal eyes were turned in the direction of the Windsor Road to the Heath, when, out of the heat mist, the cavalcade burst into view—outriders, postilions, high-stepping horses, the royal equipage, and then the carriages bearing the favored guests of their majesties.

The semistate procession approached the assemblage of waiting racegoers at a rattling gait, the powerful bays attached to the carriages—four to the royal conveyance—all of a lather. Reaching the stands the pace slowed down almost to a walk, and the cortège moved majestically along the course.

In the royal equipage was a bearded man of commonplace visage and demeanor, and a self-conscious woman of more commanding mien. The attendant carriages were filled with royalty or titled personages of less degree, none of them below the rank of earl and countess, however. They seemed to feel the weight of their hereditary responsibility, socially speaking, for, one and all, their countenances were very austere. When the royal inclosure was

reached, the king and queen alighted and proceeded to the pavilion, followed by their haughty guests.

With the outriders and postilions in gorgeous liveries, heavily ornamented in gold, with the pagoda-shaped parasols of queens—the consort of the ex-king of the republic of Portugal, humorously called *Queen* Augusta, was in the party—with the art sunshades of duchesses and of countesses, the royal procession was spectacular, if not really impressive. But Jimmie Hatton was unmoved.

"Like a circus, but not near so classy as the grand entry at Barnum & Bailey's," he mumbled to himself.

Jimmie left the "gayly dressed throng" for the bustle and jostle of the ring. It was business now—riches or ruin.

In the betting ring Jimmie Hatton began craftily to take bets on Sunfire. If backers asked what price he would lay against any other horse entered for the Gold Cup, he would invariably reply:

"I've laid my book against him, sir; I can't offer you a fair price." He was out to wager a small fortune that The Polite Horse wouldn't win. Nothing else doing.

As soon as he had bet an amount equal to fifteen thousand dollars, which, with the ten thousand wagered at the Somerset, amounted to twenty-five thousand dollars—all the money he had in the world, or could raise on security—he started to leave the ring. But at that moment Wilson Bayne brought up Lord Witherby, introduced Jimmie to him, and said that his lordship wanted to back Sunfire. Somewhat awed by the hearty handclasp of a real lord, and anxious to oblige, before he realized it Jimmie had accepted a wager of four hundred quid—two thousand dollars.

Then there was an unaccountable rush to his book. Those who favored Sunfire seemed afraid lest they might not get their money on. Jimmie was carried off his feet by the onslaught. When he could fight his way out of the betting ring, and in a corner of the lawn consult his betting book, he found, to his horror, that he had wagered fully ten thousand dollars more than he had!

If Sunfire won he would be obligated to pay *thirty-five thousand dollars,* and all he possessed to his name was a hundred quid above twenty-five thousand American dollars. Incidentally—what a word to use!—he would lose his electric-lighting bonds, his insurance against manual labor. Realization of his dire predicament gave him the same unhappy feeling at the pit of his stomach that one gets when an express elevator drops ten stories without notice to passengers.

He didn't permit himself to think that possibly he might have thirty-five thousand clear after redeeming his precious bonds. Not for one fleeting second. Although never before a quitter, James Hatton was in a dark-blue funk. It was partly because he faced ruin. It was even more because he was so acutely homesick, and home appeared to be receding all too rapidly. If a good fairy, at the moment, had offered to transport him to Brooklyn, and set him down in Flatbush, free of debt and with one hundred dollars in his pocket, Jimmie Hatton, plunger, would have transferred his bets in a moment. Yes, he was ready to quit.

The race for the Gold Cup, two miles and four furlongs, starts at the cup post above the grand stand, and the course is once around to the winning post, which is at the boundary between the royal inclosure and the paddock. Therefore, in the running of the classic event, the horses twice pass in front of the lawn, Tattersall's, and the royal inclosure. The time is under four minutes and a half; so Jimmie prepared for four and a half hours of misery!

His intention was to try to find stand-

ing room in the grand stand. But nearing the entrance to the elevated structure something queer happened to his legs. They seemed to cave under him, and he sank down on the steps of the stand—not the lower step, for he contrived to totter to a place which gave him a circumscribed view over the heads of the conclave on the lawn.

There was a tedious, nerve-lashing delay at the cup post, caused by two or three vicious brutes which insisted on making trouble for over thirty well-behaved starters. At last a shout announced that they were off!

As they flashed by the grand stand Jimmie furtively took a look. In the lead was Destiny, an outsider, bent on running her legs off. Next came Amner, twenty-five-to-one shot, and then Lie-abed, second choice in the betting. Sunfire was fourth, excellently positioned and running easily. Jolly Miller, another outsider, was fifth, and close behind ran his majesty's horse, Longspear.

"The favorite goes well," remarked a swell who stood near the steps within range of Jimmie's hearing.

"What pretty colors!" exclaimed the doll-faced creature with the swell; "violet jacket, light-green cap. Wish I'd backed those colors—Sunfire will win!"

Jimmie groaned and covered his face with his hands. Over four hours more of agony!

"Not four hours—four minutes," whispered Common Sense.

"Will drag like four hours," urged Cruel Fate.

"Four minutes and you will know whether you have won," said Common Sense.

"Four hours on the grid, and you'll see you're ruined," insisted Cruel Fate.

"For God's sake, have it over!" moaned Jimmie.

The scourging suspense was frightful. Yet he felt in his heart there was no hope.

A faint murmur, like the droning of idling insects, was wafted down the course and hummed in Jimmie's ear. Gradually this murmur, the common voice of the crowd, increased, grew in volume, until it developed into a medley of sound, incoherent but expressive of vital significance—proclaiming the finish of a most important race. The fascination of this sound no one could deny. The phlegmatic English were roused by it to the pitch of downright enthusiasm. It was astonishing how such a vast concourse of people could be whipped into near madness by the struggle of less than half a dozen thoroughbreds—for to this number the contest for the Gold Cup was now reduced after two miles and more of grueling pace.

A terrific roar disclosed that the favorite was well to the front, running shoulder to shoulder with Jolly Miller, a rank outsider certain to wither in the finish. Already Lie-abed was beaten, slipping back at every stride.

"Sunfire! Sunfire!" was the cry of victory from the lungs of thousands, backers of the chestnut three-year-old.

All was over, thought Jimmie, and glad he was for the relief. It's uncertainty that kills.

As the pick of England's thoroughbreds, fighting for the Gold Cup, nostrils distended and showing red, every ounce of stamina put forth in the final effort, boomed down the stretch toward the winning post, the shout of "Sunfire! Sunfire!" continued. But suddenly a new cry went up.

A jockey wearing the purple, gold and scarlet colors dear to all loyal Britons, made a rush on a powerful black thoroughbred. As Jolly Miller tired, Longspear challenged Sunfire for the lead. Instantly the cry:

"The king wins! The king wins!"

Jimmie couldn't believe it—wouldn't believe it. From other race meetings he understood full well that always

there was a conspicuous following for his majesty's entry. Always a contingent too ready to acclaim the king a winner. Many a time—doubtless this time—the cry of victory for the royal stables proved to be premature. So Jimmie goaded himself to remember. His hopes shouldn't rise, to sink again into despair.

Neck and neck the chestnut and the black, shaking off pursuers, raced for the winning post. On and on they fought, Sunfire and Longspear. It was a gallant struggle, and for a brief second promised a dead heat. Valiantly his majesty's horse endeavored to respond to the royal jockey's whip and command. But he couldn't forge ahead. Loyal subjects realized that their choice of winner was hardly to be justified. There was an appreciable diminution in the cry "The king wins!" Jimmie was among the first to sense it, and once more his heart sank, express elevator-like.

Sunfire was running beautifully. The grand chestnut to all appearances possessed sure reserve power. With a last burst of speed the favorite would now win the Gold Cup. Scarcely one in a thousand thought otherwise. Again the shout:

"Sunfire! Sunfire wins!"

Then, to the amazement of everybody, to the consternation of his legion of backers, Sunfire, the favorite, after glancing at the black thoroughbred racing at his side, faltered! Or was it rather a voluntary slowing down on the part of The Polite Horse—true deference of a loyal animal, born and bred in England, to his majesty?

However it was, Jimmie Hatton, who had lacked the nerve to raise his eyes to the winning post as the victor's number was hoisted into view, found himself thrilled by the air played by the band.

Off came the hats of the male multitude to the strains of "God Save the King." Off came Jimmie's hat, and he stood bareheaded with tears of joy coursing down his cheek. It was the sweetest tune he'd ever heard. To Jimmie's ear—"America."

From Waterloo James Hatton, reformed bookmaker and man of large affairs, went directly to the cable office, and sent this message to his pal, Dan Foss:

Cinch me Doolan interest your company. Cabling five thousand deposit. Sailing Saturday, *Lauretania*. Meet me Sandy Hook with tug and brass band. Sure am coming back. JIMMIE.

V.

Not to appear anxious at all, Jimmie Hatton was half an hour late at the Somerset bar next day. The backers of Sunfire were all there, with the exception of Colonel Rogers. After Bayne, Cabot, and Marsh had paid up, Bayne delivered a message to the bookmaker pro-tem.

"Here's two hundred and fifty quid from the colonel. He sends word he'll pay you the other two-fifty soon as he possibly can. Poor old codger is flat broke, I guess. You'll have to give him a little time, Jimmie, or else his friends must chip in and settle for him."

For a moment Jimmie said nothing, then inquired:

"Who hit on the moniker for Sunfire?"

"What—The Polite Horse?" asked Bobbie Marsh.

Jimmie nodded.

"The colonel," answered Bayne.

"Then I owe him a fat commission," said Jimmie. "I think two-fifty quid would be about right. It was the colonel gave me my tip."

"What tip?"—in unison.

"The Polite Horse—that he would *not* win," said Jimmie.

"What *do* you mean?"—chorus.

"'After you, my dear Alphonse!'" Jimmie smiled.

"We may be dull—guess we are," said Bayne, "and I guess you're bright, Jimmie—the way you cleaned up on the Gold Cup. Admitting all this, please explain."

"All right," agreed Jimmie. "The start's in Brooklyn—h-o-m-e." He rolled the word on his tongue; it was sweet, indeed. "There was a piebald nag used to haul a milk wagon through my street—Flatbush Avenue. Knew ev'ry customer, he did. Would stop at the right door, and the moment the driver showed his mug would move off toward the next customer's. Had the route down cold."

H. Portner Cabot shot Jimmie a look, which was as to say: "How very irrelevant this nonsense." But, Jimmie, unheeding, continued his story:

"One day—great day in Brooklyn—all the Knight Templars in the United States paraded—marched through Flatbush. A lot of the sachems, or whatever you call 'em, had to ride. Gee, but there was a scramble for mounts! Every horse that didn't have to pos-i-*tive*-ly do his regular work was drafted. Among 'em the milk-wagon horse! He'd finished his route in time for the parade.

"Well, when the procession turned into Flatbush Avenue near my house, one plumed knight found himself stalled—standing still right in front of my door! The milk horse stopped just where he was accustomed to stop. He had the habit!"

"What's this to do with yesterday's race?" asked Bobbie Marsh peevishly.

"You think it's got nothing to do with the Gold Cup. I think it's got everything to do with it. Listen:

"When you fellows told me in this here bar that you were going to call Sunfire The Polite Horse, you took it as a joke. *That's where you lost.* I took it seriously. *That's where I won.*"

"I may be dense," interposed Wilson Bayne—regarded as the cleverest American business man in London—"but I don't see yet."

"You may be," chuckled Jimmie, "but you will see. Wait!

"I thought and thought about your little joke.—The Polite Horse," Jimmie went on. "Thought how Sunfire in ev'ry race this season had run second—been beaten by Thistleton. And ev'ry time I thought about it, the remark of Colonel Rogers popped into my head—'After you, my dear Alphonse!'"

"Come to the point, come to the point," urged Cabot.

"Presently," said Jimmie. "But let me tell you that deliberation ain't a bad thing. It won me all of thirty-five thousand dollars, deliberation did!

"You see," resumed Jimmie, "it wasn't altogether that Sunfire ran second—didn't win. It was that *he didn't want to win.* The Polite Horse—'After you, my dear Alphonse!' That's what my hunch told me. Sunfire was used to running second—letting the other horse beat him. Didn't know no better. It was habit, habit—like turning into my door was habit with the nag on the milk wagon.

"I says to myself, says I: 'Makes no difference what horse is at his withers in the stretch, Sunfire wouldn't win. He always finished right behind another horse—he always will! Just like the wheel horse on a coach. He wouldn't think of being leader. So The Polite Horse wouldn't think of passing the winning post first. Otherwise you fellows would never have called the beast The Polite Horse.

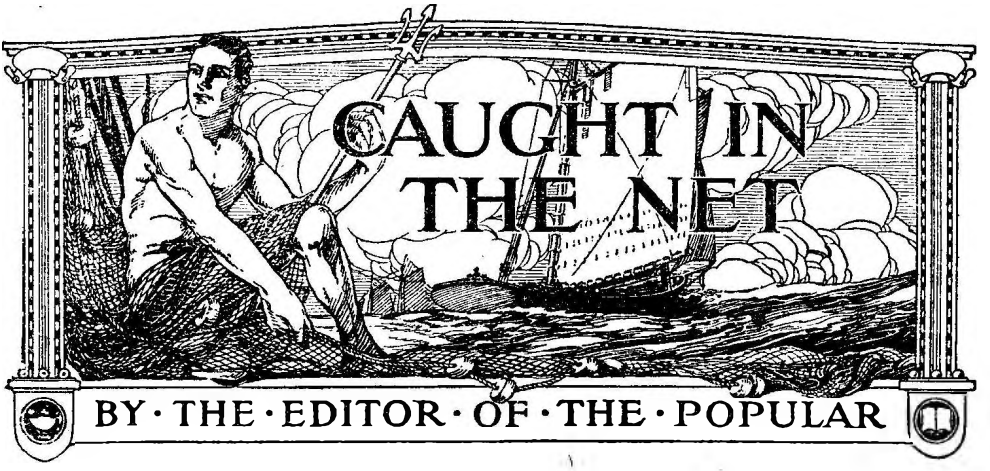
"That's all," concluded Jimmie Hatton.

"You're some guesser," admitted Bobbie Marsh.

"Jimmie's a mind reader from Boston," observed Wilson Bayne.

"No—a psychologist from Cambridge," corrected H. Portner Cabot.

"Just a dopester *of* Flatbush." Jimmie grinned, and beckoned to Beefy.



INVENTING AS A BUSINESS

THE days of the old-time inventor and of accidental discoveries is past. The successful inventor of to-day is one trained in his profession.

The business of inventing is now divided into two classes. One is made up of the independent inventors, of whom Thomas A. Edison is the best example. The other is composed of men who are in the employ of great corporations. Both work along much the same general lines. The principal question that has to be answered satisfactorily before the inventor begins a new work is: "Will it pay?" If it will, no amount of painstaking effort is spared.

Inventing on a large scale is expensive. It requires no end of costly apparatus and material, and a number of assistants to do the routine work. A large share of its great rewards must be spent in prosecuting new researches, in laboratory equipment, in the securing and protecting of patents, and so on. Yet few, if any, professions pay better.

To get experience and capital, many individual inventors enter the employ of big industrial enterprises. More and more such concerns are hiring the best brains they can find in order to work out their mechanical problems. There are perhaps a hundred manufacturing corporations in the United States that maintain their "inventions departments," some at an expense of hundreds of thousands a year. They find that it pays. Prizes are offered to shop employees for suggestions—new ideas. These are usually crude in form, but if they seem to have practical value they are well paid for, and are turned over to the inventors to work out. In one of these places a score of men have been seeking the solution of one problem for ten years. They will continue until they find it, no matter how much the cost. The head of at least one of these "inventions departments"—in the electrical industry—is said to receive a much larger salary than the President of the United States.

Modern invention is more a matter of evolution than of original creation. In machinery, for instance, the transmission and transformation of power so that the mechanism will do the work depends on only a few basic principles, and these are very old. Look carefully at any simple machine and these will

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become at once apparent. The inventor's cleverness shows itself in varying and adapting them to new uses and in so arranging hundreds of bits of steel so that each will work at the appointed fraction of a section and in just the right way.

Machinery is only one of the fields for invention. Chemistry and electricity are among the others. The great inventor must study endlessly, like the great doctor or the great lawyer. But the man who has only a little talent, yet who is patient, diligent, and interested in his work, can go far. There is plenty of room in this uncrowded field, and the rewards—even for those who succeed moderately—are large.

THE TRAIL TO EMPIRE

CITIZENS of half a score of States have been setting up monuments to mark the course of the historic highways over which moved the commerce of the great West before the transcontinental railroads were built. Though it is not much more than fifty years since the last of the caravans toiled through their gray dust, time has all but obliterated them. Farms and cities have covered them, and they have become a fading tradition. Now their routes are being marked, and some of the stirring scenes in their crowded histories are being commemorated in enduring stone.

This is as it should be. These were the paths that led to empire. One was the Oregon Trail to the Pacific. It was the road of exploration. Because of it the vast territory in the Northwest was settled. De la Verendrye, in 1742, and Lewis and Clark, in 1807, were its pioneers. Another was the imperial road that ran southwestward to Santa Fe, and thence across the Rio Grande to Chihuahua and the City of Mexico. This was the path of commerce. The third was the route of the Franciscan fathers—El Camino Real, the King's Highway, that led from mission to mission in fruitful California. This was the road of romance.

Both the Oregon and the Santa Fe Trails began at Independence, Missouri, which in its day was one of the most famous commercial cities in the United States. Both followed the same route for forty-one miles. Where the road forked was a signpost which said: "The Road to Oregon"—a brief direction for so long a journey. The distance from Independence, on the Missouri, to Fort Vancouver, on Puget Sound, was 2,020 miles; it was 2,134 to the mouth of the Columbia. One could go twice around the world to-day in the same time that it took the wagon trains to reach the Pacific.

Independence Rock, at the entrance of the Sweetwater Valley, was a place of registry for many of the thousands that filled the old trail with fierce life. Explorers, hunters, trappers, fur traders, gold seekers, and pioneers carved their names and messages on this huge spire of stone that rises abruptly from the plain. Some of these inscriptions are still legible.

Unused for more than half a century, the Oregon Trail has merged again with the earth. Its exact route in many places has been the subject of much dispute. In 1906 Ezra Meeker, then nearly eighty years of age, began the movement for permanently marking the famous trail which he had first traversed in 1852. Eight years ago he spent a full twelvemonth in retracing his steps and in urging the people along the road to erect monuments and markers so that all

trace of the once imperial highway should not be lost. He made two such trips in his prairie schooner, drawn by oxen, from Puyallup, Washington, to the national capital. To-day the work that he started is almost finished, and the old trail is permanently marked from end to end.

The Santa Fe Trail was discovered by Lieutenant Zebulon Pike, whose explorations revealed to Americans the opportunities for trade with Mexico. The first to use this highway as a trade route was William Bicknell, in 1821, fifteen years after Pike had traversed it. For more than thirty years its annual commerce approached nearly a million dollars in value. Up to 1870, when the Indians were placed on reservations, it took day by day the heaviest toll of human life of any of the great trails. It has been said there was a grave for every rod of the long road.

The Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe Railway—which follows the old route closely—States, and bodies of citizens have already set up many commemorative monuments along this historic path, and more are being erected.

El Camino Real was seven hundred miles long, from San Diego to Sonoma, California. It was traversed for centuries by the Franciscan fathers, who brought European civilization to the Pacific coast. Its enduring monuments are the missions that they built along this royal road. Some of these have been restored, others will be left in their picturesque ruin. The highway as a whole has been marked by putting up, at intervals, eighty mission bells. They are inscribed with the name of the mission in whose ancient territory they are located, and are exact counterparts of those long vanished that the approaching padres used to ring to give notice of their coming.

OUR NEW RIVAL

THE science of economics deals chiefly with the development of material resources. Economic specialists are the astrologers of industry. They concern themselves somewhat with the past, not at all with the present, and very much with the future. They study the earth instead of the heavens. Their stars and constellations are deposits of coal and iron and other forms of mineral wealth. The problems that they seek to solve are mathematically as intricate as some of those dealing with astronomy. But usually the conclusions that they reach seem astonishingly simple and logical. The latest is that China is going to be the greatest industrial and commercial rival of the United States.

Large deposits of coal and iron, especially when near each other, are considered far more important than mines of gold in calculating the future wealth of nations, and in forecasting their industrial future. Coal and iron are the loadstones that attract manufacturing of all kinds. They can be transmuted into everything.

The high-grade coal reserves of the United States have been estimated recently, after many years of research, at nearly two thousand billion tons—a figure that is hard to grasp. China's coal reserves are about one thousand billion tons, and Germany's about two-fifths as much. The United States and China possess more than two-thirds of the world's coal supply. Iron also is proportionately abundant. China's wealth in coal and iron has been little developed, but its exploitation has begun, and the economists say that it will not be many years

before China passes Germany as a manufacturing nation and presses hard on America's heels.

China has another advantage—her river highways. These are being improved. Railways are being built, and with their extension a new industrial era will come. As manufacturing increases, the cheapness of labor in China will pass away, as it has in other countries under similar conditions.

Therefore, if these industrial prophets are to be believed, the China of to-morrow will be one vast factory, the home of some of the most stupendous manufacturing enterprises that the world has ever known. It will transmute its coal and iron into modern civilization among other things. Lofty cities, where the machinery and conveniences of life will be carried to their highest perfection, will be built. But to any one who has visited the interior of the China of to-day all this appears as impossible as wireless telegraphy might have seemed half a century ago.

MAKING DICTIONARIES

THE making of dictionaries has come to be as highly systematized as any other great modern industry. Before a new edition of a big dictionary appears, it is likely that work on the next edition, that will be put forth five or ten years later, has begun.

The first dictionaries, like the original works of Doctor Johnson, Worcester, or Webster, were purely academic productions, which took almost a lifetime of labor for each of these individual lexicographers to produce. Modern dictionary making is a great commercial enterprise which employs hundreds of persons year after year. Some are experts—specialists in their line—while others, the larger proportion of the small army of verbal toilers, are kept constantly employed in typing, classifying, and arranging the thousands on thousands of words, definitions, and illustrative quotations that go into the huge volume. Even with such a large staff, each new edition requires the continuous toil of many persons over a considerable period.

There are several reasons for new dictionaries. One is that the sale of an edition diminishes in proportion to the time that has elapsed since it was issued. Each new edition finds a fresh army of purchasers. Another reason is altogether academic. Each new invention brings forth a vocabulary of its own. The telegraph, telephone, automobile, aëronautics, and so on have originated hundreds of new words, and have given new meanings to many old ones. Probably the great war in Europe will also leave its mark on the dictionaries of this era.

In dictionary making as a whole, however, one of the "main tricks" is finding new uses of words—that is, discovering sentences in the works of well-known authors, or in publications of a certain standard, in which words are employed in an unusual way or given a different shade of meaning. It is the custom of dictionary makers to pay five cents each for such quotations, or for new or better definitions of words. Not a few persons outside the dictionary "shop" make quite a bit of money at this. Any one who is competent can engage in it. Of course, only such quotations or definitions as are approved by the staff of dictionary makers are paid for, but this little-known field of work makes reading profitable in a new way.

The Brown Flare

By Howard Fielding

Author of "Bill Harris—His Line," "A Bit of Inside Work," Etc.

We hinted in the previous issue that we had a story of peculiar excellence for you. Here is the story. Fielding puts his ear to the pavement of Wall Street and hears the underground workings of the Mexican maelstrom. What has been happening on the surface we have all been fairly familiar with. Fielding digs deeper and gives us a glimpse of certain men who have been driven out of that republic and are "hanging round New York looking for a chance to break into the game again through one branch of conspirators or another; they don't care which, so long as they smell money in it." A novel that has much to do with Mexico and Big Business, with the scenes laid in New York. A mystery story with a slain man, the only clew to whose murder is the flare of an eye caught by a reflected beam projected upon a peephole in the door. We freely confess that we have never read anything better by Fielding.

(A Two-Part Story—Part One)

"WHAT do you *really* think has happened to Joe?" Marian asked, after we had discussed the subject, off and on, for nearly two hours. "Why don't we hear from him? And why don't you tell me all you know about it?"

I was grieved by this imputation. Marian had known me ever since I was nine years old, and she just born.

"Cheerful lying is not among my faults, Marian," I protested. "I have told you all——"

Just then I happened to remember something that I hadn't told her, not important, and confidential in a way, yet I decided to tell it. I paused a moment because Marian's stepfather, pacing back and forth on the walk leading from his residence to the gate, had come near to us where we sat on the steps of the veranda. He had very sharp ears for a man of fifty-five, and I waited till he moved away leaving a swirl of choice cigar smoke behind him as an added fragrance in the June evening.

"Well," said Marian, "what's the rest of it? Did you hear it from Joe himself?"

Joe, I should explain, was my half brother, four years younger than I. He was a mining engineer who had got control of a gold mine in the state of Sonora, Mexico, in the fall of 1912, when he was only twenty-three. The June of which I am speaking was that of 1914. In the preceding March my brother had been at home for about a week, and it was then that his engagement with Marian Odell had received the formal sanction of her aforementioned stepfather, Horatio Cushing, president of the Colonial Bank of Bridgeport.

"This is it," said I: "When Joe left

Bridgeport on the third of April he didn't go straight to the mine."

"I know that," she responded. "He was in Texas for a few days."

"No," said I; "he went through to Torreon, the Mexican city that the rebels captured on the second of that month. Joe must have had business with Pancho Villa, I suppose, though he didn't write anything about it. When Villa came north to Juarez for a spat with Carranza, Joe was in the party. He told me that in a letter, but he asked me to keep still about it—not let Mr. Cushing know, though he didn't give a reason. But that's why he didn't write the same thing to you, of course. It's of no consequence to you and me. Joe wrote to both of us, a few days later, from Nogales, on his way to the mine, so we know that he got out of Juarez all right."

"But we've had no word since then," said she. "You haven't? Honest, Jack?"

"Not one syllable, directly or indirectly," I declared; and it was the truth.

"Well," said Marian, with decision, "father has."

From early childhood she had called Mr. Cushing father, without any prefix, and had returned his very strong affection, though he was a hard man to love at close range.

"Why, Jack," she went on, "as I've told you it's become almost impossible to ask father about Joe, in the last few days. He denies that he's had any news, but if he hasn't, why does he avoid the subject, and get red in the face and irritated whenever I speak of it?"

"It's too deep for me," I admitted. "I won't pretend that I haven't noticed something of the sort, but he's told me flatly that he knows nothing. If he'd heard of the Torreon trip, he'd surely have asked me about it. But as I've been telling you, all this evening and several others, the whole affair gives no real ground for anxiety. It's nothing, in these troublous times, that an American in Mexico should vanish for eight weeks."

"No; but it's father's behavior that worries me," she said. "He's been to New York very often, you know; and I think he's inquired of Mexicans there—of men who might tell him how to communicate with Joe. It's evident they didn't say anything he dared repeat to me."

"He hasn't told you who any of them were, I suppose?"

"No," she said; "and really I'm only guessing, yet I know he's done it. And I want him to go to Washington and ask the state department to investigate. I want you to suggest it to him right now. I'm going to say good night, though it's rather early, so that you can talk to him before he's through with his cigar."

She acted upon this idea immediately, to my sorrow, and I walked down to where Cushing stood by the iron gate with its squat stone pillars. Banality always came naturally from me when I talked with Cushing; an ill-tempered man upsets my intellect.

"Marian is worrying about Joe," I began.

"Well, that's news," said he. "And I'll match it with this: so am I. Joe is very considerably on my mind. I'm going to Washington to-morrow."

That relieved me of my errand.

"I'm very glad," said I. "You'll make inquiries at the state department, of course?"

"I shall do whatever is advisable," he responded. "Good night." And he marched away up the walk, emitting smoke like a house afire.

On my way home I evolved the theory that Cushing had already communicated with Washington by mail, perhaps several times, and that the responses had disappointed and angered him. He was a local pillar of finance, a

power in the politics of the State, a strong administration man, and a vociferous supporter of the recent Mexican policy. Naturally he had expected action from the state department, and the chances were that he hadn't got it. That might account for all the irritation that Marian had noticed. And then again it might not. To me as well as to his stepdaughter Mr. Cushing's behavior in this matter was a puzzle. It was possible that he was really worrying about the financial situation, as affecting his bank, and that he was "taking it out" on us, the innocent bystanders, which was a habit of his.

He was a man of violent and secret animosities, and of unsparing revenges. He had driven adversaries into exile, prison, and the grave; yet except in the excitement of campaigns he was almost invariably well spoken of, and he had always enjoyed the esteem of good men. My father in his will had made Cushing trustee till the date of Joe's majority, and no man could have managed the estate more ably or with more honest exactitude.

A part of that estate was the house of my present habitation; built by my grandfather, but enlarged and modernized in my father's time. It belonged jointly to my brother and me, all that survived of the family which, like so many others in New England, had rapidly dwindled toward extinction. The veranda with its eight fluted columns was a relic of old days, a really beautiful structure. If you should walk in that street, you might see my modest shingle on one of those columns, lettered "John Hollis, M. D., Oculist." My brother's profession I have already mentioned, together with his hope of fortune in the distracted land beyond our Southern border. Of that country Joe was a native. Our father lived there, from '87 to '89, and made a second marriage of which my brother, christened José, was the only fruit. His mother, like my own, had died in passing to her son the torch of life.

Whether Joe, being a native of Mexico, had a better or worse chance of surviving its perils than if he had been altogether an American, is a large question. I put more faith in the fact that he was a bold, clever fellow, quick with mind or hand, and well able to take care of himself anywhere; and I had not begun to be anxious about him till this evening, when Marian had managed to communicate to me a part of her forebodings.

I hoped that Cushing would be able to accomplish something in Washington, and I waited for his return with considerable impatience. He came back on the second day, in a mood which seemed to me worse and more inscrutable than that in which he had departed. Superficially he was reassuring, or tried to be so, with a kind of grin on his countenance when he spoke of his mission. Everything would be all right, he said. Conditions in Mexico were very satisfactory; the policy of the administration was justifying itself and confounding its critics. The country would soon be "peacified"—his word for pacified—and American interests would be well taken care of. The state department would keep an eye out for Joe.

I formed the opinion that Cushing's journey had been wholly fruitless; Marian believed that it had confirmed the worst of his previous suspicions, whatever they may have been, and that I could learn the same facts, if I should go to Washington. Accordingly I went there secretly, because Cushing would have taken offense at my attempting to succeed where he had seemed to fail.

I did not succeed. I came back with the vague impression that my brother had ceased to be an American citizen, and that he had no legitimate business in Mexico. All I got was the name of the American consul in Hermosillo, and

—from a private source—the name and address of a man said to be a secret agent of the state department in Sonora. Arnulfo Blanco he was called.

The consul replied promptly to my inquiries. He seemed an intelligent, well-informed, and very obliging gentleman; but he had no news of Joe. He promised, however, to use his best efforts in the matter. My letter to the secret agent, Blanco, was answered after a considerable delay. The writer seemed to be very willing to exert himself in Joe's behalf, but I could not make out whether he had any information or definite plan for getting it. He asked me to forward copies of such documents as I might have relating to the mine, but what he meant to accomplish by means of them was beyond my comprehension; and, besides, I had no access to any papers of the sort. I knew virtually nothing about the business organization of the company. My reply to Blanco could not have helped him much.

Naturally I called daily during this period to offer encouragement to Marian who was doubly in need of it, for her stepfather was almost constantly in a humor bad even for Horatio Cushing, so that merely living in the same house with him was enough to put a wire edge on anybody's nerves. I became positively afraid to encounter him lest some quarrel should arise out of nothing. His manner toward me was the more disquieting because he plainly falsified it with a crude affectation of politeness. When I was with Marian I would sometimes be aware of Cushing glaring at me from a doorway; or he would come into the room, and without speaking a word would make us both uncomfortable by behaving like an ill-tempered, overgrown boy nursing a grudge.

One evening, in July, I met him on the flagged path leading to his door. The gate lamps shone upon his rugged face which was sweaty and mottled. He was bareheaded, and the little curled wisps of gray hair stood up on his pate like interrogation points, while his greenish eyes behind the gold-rimmed spectacles were malevolent as a demon's.

I think his first intent was to return my greeting and have no more words, but suddenly his temper got the better of him.

"Hold on there!" he said. "You're not going in. You'll keep away from my house in future."

"What for?" said I, startled into momentary childishness.

"Because you're a crook," he returned, thrusting out his bulldog jaw at me. "I'm on to you. When the time comes I'm going to show you up."

"Unless this is mere lunacy," said I, "it must have something to do with my account at the Colonial. If anything irregular has come through, it's a forgery, and I'm entitled to a full view of it."

"Tommyrot!" he barked. "Are you trying to teach me the banking business? Forget the bank. You know what you've done. Go home and think it over."

He spoke angrily, yet something in his manner informed me that he had begun already to regret his outburst, and to foresee consequences not to his liking. For this reason I curbed my own wrath, and tried to get an explanation. In vain; not a relevant word could I draw out of him. His years protected him from assault and battery, his mutton-headed obstinacy from all argument. In the end I retired across his frontier ignominiously defeated.

At midnight, while I was writing to Joe—with no idea as to where I should send the letter—a small stone came in through the open window; the first shot, and a second-story window, so you will understand that Marian was a remarkable girl. I looked out and saw her

standing in the moonlight which was so bright that her hair shone yellow as by day. Her upturned face, her raised arm, and her white dress were like pure marble; and it seemed to me that all Bridgeport must be observing her, though the place where she stood was at the rear of my house.

"You crazy youngster," I whispered, "this will raise the Old Harry!"

"Well, father's asleep, anyhow," she responded. "It won't raise *him*. Come down. I'll go round to the front veranda."

I found her sitting on the veranda rail, reading a letter by moonlight.

"Is that your letter to Joe?" I asked, and she nodded. "I've been writing one," I added.

"What are you going to tell him?" she inquired, a little anxiously.

"I've described the row; that's all I *could* do. I couldn't explain it. I've asked him what he thinks about it."

"Oh, Jack, I wouldn't do that," she said earnestly. "Don't be judicial; don't try to show both sides, or make excuses for father. Joe won't understand. He'll fly into a rage, and he'll think it very strange if you don't feel the same way. You'll have to tell him what father said, but make him believe that you're angry and insulted. That's what I've done, and it's mostly a lie. I'm angry enough, but I can't feel hurt, for your sake or my own. It's too absurd."

There seemed to be some confusion here; I had a difficulty in following her line of thought.

"Are you speaking of the accusation?" said I.

"Certainly," she said, taking both my hands and looking me in the face. This seemed to express intimate confidence and affection, tinged with a conscious boldness in a delicate situation. Her exquisite charm thrilled my soul with music infinitely sad and beautiful; but mentally I was not especially flattered that she should take such elaborate means to show me that she did not believe me to be a thief. To my further bewilderment, she proceeded to say:

"Why, Jack, if you were really my born brother, I couldn't feel a more perfect right to all the love you can give me. And we must drive it into Joe that you and I are furious about this, and that we count upon him to be just as mad as we are. Put him on our side. Don't ask him what he thinks about it. Joe'll die for his friends and slay his enemies. That's his temperament."

"You have been deceived by a false account of this quarrel," said I. "Mr. Cushing made a criminal charge against me. I suppose he was afraid to repeat it to you, because that would have been libel. What he really charged me with was fraud, some kind of theft."

"Theft?" she cried. "Well, I suppose you could call it that. He said you were trying to steal *me*. Let's speak plainly, Jack. This is no shame to us. He said you were trying to make love to me in Joe's absence. You wouldn't believe how many little innocent acts of ours he has spied upon and remembered. To hear our real life all twisted and made shameful was like a dreadful dream. It haunted me; I knew it would haunt you; and I came to drive it out of your mind. If it had been twenty miles I'd have come."

"Very kind and sweet of you, little sister," said I, "and never to be forgotten. But the fact is that Mr. Cushing accused me of pecuniary dishonesty and nothing else. Joe's name wasn't mentioned, and there was never a hint of sentimental treachery. Mr. Cushing really believes that I've committed a fraud, and he's trying to get proof of it. In a flash of temper he betrayed himself to-night, and the next minute he realized that he wasn't ready. He doesn't want me to force his hand, and he knows I'll have to do it, if this thing becomes public."

"You mean that all he told me was all——"

"Politics," said I hastily. "He knew you'd come to me, and that you'd believe my version. But that doesn't do us any good, except internally. The point is that he has served notice on you and me as to what color he will put on this affair, if we make a fuss. He'll set his word against mine, to you or anybody; and then the pleasant program before me will be to convince my fellow citizens that the most influential man in town called me only a thief, nothing worse. No; it won't do. We can't fight such a battle in Joe's absence, and our adversary is well aware of that."

"If I knew where Joe was," she said, "I'd go straight there. Oh, Jack, I can't go home after this; it's too mean and wicked. Let me stay here with you till Joe comes back. It's the only thing to do that isn't cowardly."

This was merely an outburst of righteous indignation, but I was very glad to hear the words. They showed that she did not know what it had long been the business of my life to conceal and to conquer. It was needless to argue against this proposal; her mind had not made it. She knew Joe too well to risk any serious violation of the conventions. Joe is partly a Latin American, and very fond of etiquette. I had no great difficulty in persuading Marian to take my view that we must keep this quarrel from the gossips, for Joe's sake if not for our own. She suggested several other places of temporary residence besides my house, but finally permitted me to take her home.

Then I walked Heaven knows how far or where, and came to my own door in the gray dawn with my burden readjusted so that once more I might reasonably hope to carry it all the way to my grave without whining. My worst fear was that Cushing s lie to Marian might have sprung from some suspicion of the truth. He had ripped the sorrow of my life, my broken heart out of my breast, and had struck me in the face with it. If this were not a mere cruelty of chance, he might eventually betray to Marian the secret I had hidden from her ever since she came out of girlhood and began to see my brother through a magic mist and me in plain daylight. But I could think of no precaution except to avoid such conduct as might embitter the quarrel.

Next day Cushing informed Marian that she was not to write anything about this affair to Joe. Her letters would be subjected to a censorship in future, both those that went and those that came. Into the honesty of woman no man should inquire, but I venture to guess that this order put Marian to the inconvenience of writing extra letters for her stepfather to read, and of posting the others with unusual privacy. He undertook the mailing of those which she submitted to him, and doubtless he suppressed them, which was immaterial, for they would have gone astray in any case. And from Joe there came not a line.

The situation remained substantially unchanged from early July when the breach between Cushing and myself occurred, up to the third week of August, when a very odd incident revived my perplexities and alarms. In my brother's absence I had the house to myself save for two old servants and a maid who was present in the daytime to bungle the entrances and exits of my patients and to misunderstand and forget their messages when they called at the wrong hours. She was an apple-faced girl of limitless stupidity, but so willing and so much in need of her wages that I could never harden my heart to discharge her. She was named Ella.

By the date in question the world had been disgraced by a vast outbreak of war, and even more by a vaster out-

break of lying. The nations of Europe bawled lies as they butchered one another, so that the voice of the United States, lying about conditions in Mexico, was inaudible except to ears especially inclined in that direction. Journalistic and personal veracity were in a very bad way; and to cap an anticlimax my poor, foolish little maid in peaceful Bridgeport caught the world-wide malady and came to me with a lie. In falsehood Ella was the least capable of her sex, and I had supposed that this unnatural deficiency was one of the few things she knew, for she had rarely tried to tell anything except the truth.

But now she unfolded a weird tale about a sick aunt in Danbury, whom she must take care of, by her mother's command. "So I'll have to leave you, Doctor Hollis. You've been awful good to me. You've put up with a lot o' mistakes——" and at this point she burst into tears.

"Tell me the real reason why you're going," said I. "Is it because I scolded you this morning?"

She looked up at me through her tears with genuine surprise. Plainly she had forgotten all about the scolding, and, indeed, I had never known reproof to distress her. The sugar coating of my professional manner had seemed to make such experiences a positive pleasure to this girl whose mother was a termagant.

"Well," said I, "what's the truth about it?"

But she was afraid to tell me. Cross-questioning and persuasion, even bribery, were futile; and at last she took her week's wages with pitiful contrition, and departed leaving me much perplexed.

On the following day a young woman applied for the job which Ella had relinquished. She was neat, quiet, self-possessed, and unmistakably intelligent. In fact, she seemed almost absurdly superior to the position which offered no prospect of advancement. When this point was touched upon, she said:

"There's no advancement for a girl anywhere, unless she has business sense and the knack of getting ahead. I haven't. All I hope for is respectable work that'll give me a living."

Then she referred me to a doctor in New York who had employed her, and to a Bridgeport firm in the dry-goods line. She had been a saleswoman for only a few weeks, without success or satisfaction, so she told me, and had resigned in discouragement.

It was all very simply and well said, but not well enough to make me believe that this young woman had been a failure in the competition of life. She had shrewd gray eyes, and a facial outline indicative of unusual resourcefulness and courage. The conviction that she was giving me "war news" took strong hold of my mind, yet she was playing the part so artistically that I wondered at myself for seeing through her. Having done so, it was inevitable that I should connect this girl's advent with Ella's strange desertion, and believe them to be pieces of some puzzling design whose object was beyond my ken. Upon the basis of this fancy I engaged Miss Scott—that was the name she gave—in order to see what would come of it.

That afternoon I called at the store where she had been employed. The manager referred me to the head of the firm, Mr. Benjamin Fuller, who had been a patient of mine as I remembered when I saw his glasses. Mr. Fuller received me with distinguished cordiality, and spoke very highly of Miss Scott. She had been especially praised, he said, by the head of the department in which she worked.

"We were sorry to see her go," said he, "but the place didn't suit her. She wants something more genteel, I guess.

A very ladylike girl, very; so far as I observed."

This was right enough, except for the fact that the man had been waiting for me, and had known what I had come to talk about before I opened my mouth. It was easy to perceive this, but the manager who ushered me in had said nothing as to my errand, and when I asked Mr. Fuller whether Miss Scott had communicated with him on the subject he answered no, very decidedly. In short this smooth purveyor of dry goods was under the influence of the *zeitgeist;* he was humbly following the example of England, France, Russia, Germany, Austria, Servia, Italy, Turkey, Japan, the United States, and fifty-seven varieties of government in Mexico. He was lying.

I took a long walk to think about this, and in the course of my meditations I remembered that a cashier and two clerks in that store had been arrested, a few days ago, for a long series of thefts from the firm. The local newspaper had contained the story. With this in mind I hunted up a subeditor of the paper who owed me ten dollars for professional services, and asked him how the dishonesty at Fuller & Gray's had been discovered. He replied that a detective from New York had worked up the case.

"A man?" I inquired.

"No; a woman, I understand," he said. "Don't know who she was. Her name wasn't given out."

I pondered upon this, and then asked him if he knew in what local bank the dry-goods firm carried its principal account; where it had its chief line of credit. He lacked the information, but obtained it for me privately from the business office of the paper, and telephoned me in the evening naming the Colonial Bank. This was what I had expected to hear.

Ella and Miss Scott and Fuller, the dry-goods man, were singing one chorus of harmonious falsehood, and Cushing was the author of the piece.

Cushing's absurd accusation against me had never been repeated, nor had it ever been withdrawn. We had met several times on the street, and once in the bank, and his aspect had been as inviting as an open grave, wherefore I had always stepped aside. His influence would amply account for Fuller's smooth duplicity about Miss Scott. August, 1914, was no time for a business man to be squeamish, if his best banker desired a service of this kind.

The evidence was sufficient to convince me that Miss Scott was a detective under Cushing's orders, and that Ella had been bribed to resign because she was too stupid to be hired for any spying. Miss Scott was probably on the staff of a New York agency, and had been chosen for this work because her last assignment had supplied her with a Bridgeport reference. The New York physician to whom she had referred me was a mere "blind"; he had died just after the May issue of the telephone directory went to press. But it is needless to say that the young woman was secure in her job: my chief fear was that she would leave before I could find out why she had come.

Of course, I had long since tried to solve the Cushing mystery by processes of reason. He had accused me of swindling, and it would seem that he must have some important transaction in mind. There was only one deal in my pecuniary history which was big enough to justify so much rancor, and every detail of it was as well known to Cushing as to myself. I had borrowed eight thousand dollars from the Colonial Bank, in March, on my note indorsed by my brother. There was no collateral, but our credit doubtless depended on our ownership of the house and the extensive grounds which the growth of the city had made valuable.

I had invested the eight thousand dol-

lars in Joe's mine, apparently with Cushing's approval, for he had known all about it, and had made no criticism. He had verbally agreed to carry the note for a year or even longer; it had been renewed on June 12th, and would fall due again in September. I had a small balance in the Colonial Bank, and some stocks which were virtually unsalable in the conditions created by the European war. If Cushing should refuse to accept on September 12th the note which Joe and I had prepared against this renewal date, he would force me to a preposterous loss on my stock, or to borrow on my real-estate equity, a difficult, perhaps an impossible, proceeding in my brother's absence and in the disturbed state of the money market.

For more than six weeks, since the outburst of Cushing's wrath, I had procrastinated in the matter of the note. Up to the end of July I had not felt much anxiety; I had told myself that Cushing would discover his error, and would be the more ready to keep his promise. If he should go back on it, I could raise the money in one way or another. Joe might come home, or the state department's agent might find him, and open means of communication for me. The true menace of the situation did not disclose itself to my inexpert observation till my investigation of Miss Scott convinced me that she was a detective in Cushing's pay.

As to the note, there seemed to be no use in trying to get another verbal promise from Cushing; it would be no better than the one already given. His written word, however, might possess a value, so I sent him a brief letter on the subject, and got this in return:

JOHN HOLLIS, M. D.

DEAR SIR: Unexpected conditions which have arisen make it impossible for me to advise you to expect the renewal of your note in whole or in part. Yours truly,

HORATIO CUSHING.

This was typed by his secretary. Under it was written with a heavy stub pen:

You've got a fine crust to be asking a favor of me.

Here was a plain notice to raise eight thousand dollars by the twelfth of September, and an intimation that Cushing was satisfied with the trouble and loss it would cause me, otherwise he would have held out a delusive hope. Alarmed, I made discouraging visits to a number of friends who were rich. I did not tell them the whole story, but I foolishly circulated the information that Cushing held my note, that I was afraid of him, and that I stood to lose more than I could afford. None of these men had any money to lend.

I needed advice, but Cushing's powerful influence worked through so many secret channels that I dreaded to lay my case fully before any one in Bridgeport. There was a New York lawyer named Arthur Macdonald who was a friend of my brother's, and had sometimes advised him. My own acquaintance with Macdonald amounted to nothing, and I did not know how far Joe really trusted him—a question often difficult to settle, for Joe's method of reposing confidence in a fellow creature is not the same as mine. However, I was slowly persuading myself to consult Macdonald when, on a Thursday forenoon, he called me up by telephone.

"I have an important message for you," he said. "It's extremely confidential. Is there any chance of a leak on this wire?"

There probably wasn't, but I wouldn't risk it. I asked him if the message would wait till I could come in; if so he might expect me about three o'clock.

"Yes," said he; "that's the best plan. I'll be here."

Accordingly I took the one-ten train and almost immediately discovered among my fellow passengers an underfed, despondent young man whose job

it was to shadow me. He must have been a novice, for he looked at me unnecessarily, an error carefully avoided by experts in this line; and I am supersensitive with respect to eyes. It would be impossible under ordinary circumstances, I believe, for any one to watch me without drawing my attention. Our animal ancestors learned to fear and to detect the glitter of eyes, on pain of being eaten if they didn't, and thus an instinct was implanted in us, so keen as to have led to the absurd belief that we can *feel* a stare on the back of our head. In reality, of course, we see it over our shoulder, unconscious of the act of vision, and the furry founder of our family, who ran on four feet and now crouches in our bosom, stirs with the old alarm excited by two shining points. My own particular tenant is phenomenally alert.

I gave my shadow no trouble till we reached Wall Street, where without much difficulty I eluded him, a precaution for which I was warmly commended by Macdonald when he had heard my story.

"We can't go too carefully in this business," he said. "There seems to be something doing all the way from Connecticut to Mexico, and we don't know what it is."

He had already laid before me a long telegraphic night letter which he had received from Joe that morning, the confidential message previously mentioned. It had been sent from a station in Missouri, by my brother on his way home, and it ran as follows:

Please meet me your office ten a. m. Tuesday. Utmost importance. Trust you will let nothing interfere. If you know any facts relative to conspiracy against me, please wire me guardedly but fully to Auditorium Hotel, Chicago, on receipt of this. Inform no one but Jack. He should receive letter from me Friday with instructions which I repeat here. Have him come in Monday afternoon, take room at Hotel Woodcourt, and wait word from me. He must tell no one, not M., and above all not C. Impress this upon him. Reasons imperative, as I will explain. JOSE.

"'M' is Miss Odell, of course," said Macdonald, "and 'C' is Mr. Cushing, but why is Joe playing his game so quietly? This must be a pretty hard fight."

"Much worse than I supposed," said I. "My own affair seems to have been a random skirmish. The main assault was on Joe in Mexico."

"But what the devil is it all about?" rejoined the lawyer. "And who dragged Cushing into it?"

I didn't know. My best guess was that somebody had been lying about Joe's doings in Mexico. He had told me in March that there would be a widening breach between Carranza and Villa; that the former would probably get into Mexico City before long, and that Villa would control the northern part of the country. Then there would be a fresh outbreak of trouble in Sonora, and Joe would have to stand in with the faction which could protect him and which seemed to have the best chance to win—the usual procedure of Americans in Mexico when they are bold enough to go on with their business. Joe thought that he could get on the right side, but it would probably cost him some money.

His prophecy had been exactly fulfilled; there had been plenty of trouble in Sonora; and Joe's long silence might be taken to indicate that he had got into difficulties of whose nature we were ignorant. But perhaps Cushing had been drawing secretly upon sources of real or bogus information; perhaps some one in New York or Washington had told him that Joe was backing Mexican rebellions and delaying the "peacification" of the country, with my eight thousand dollars as a part of the fund.

It was certain that Joe had not told Cushing that any such use was to be made of the money, otherwise none of

it would have come out of the Colonial Bank. Here was a fine chance for a good Mexican liar to get Cushing's ear with a story that would touch off the nitroglycerin of his temper; the more readily because he was a thick-and-thin supporter of the administration's Mexican policy, and as gullible regarding Mexican affairs as most Americans are.

"That's part of it, I guess," said Macdonald, "but you'll find there's something more personal to Mr. C. And, by the way, it seems that Joe is going to stop off in Chicago, otherwise he'd be here by Saturday morning. Is there anybody out there who's interested in the mine?"

"Ask of the winds," said I. "A good bit of money has been put in, but I don't know how much, nor where a dollar of it came from, except my own."

"Well," said he, "Joe knows a lot more than we do. In view of his telegram I couldn't advise any action on your part. With him here you can mortgage your house to meet that note, if necessary, but till he comes you'd better do nothing."

That is the kind of advice I take the easiest, especially in business matters. Haste and aggressiveness are my least faults. I was eminently willing to lay all my troubles on Joe, who was a man of action, and familiar with conspiracies through his residence in Mexico where no other form of human association is known. What worried me was the probable manner in which he would attend to his own troubles. He was fighting for prospective millions of dollars, and Heaven help the man who should stand in his way.

My brother was a quiet, courteous fellow on the surface, when the wind blew fair and the sun shone, but there lurked within him a strain of savage vindictiveness so deeply implanted that his conscience could not question it. This was his inheritance from his Mexican mother. Joined to the more solid intelligence and the cold courage of our father's Saxon stock it made Joe a very dangerous antagonist whose hand any weapon would fit. I was afraid the measures he might take, if ruin threatened him, would go beyond the law; that they would tend to justify and embitter Cushing's hostility, and perhaps wreck my brother's beautiful romance, in comparison with which I should have valued all the gold mines of the world at one brass farthing. Moreover, it now came to me that Joe's aggressiveness had seemed accentuated when he was last at home; that he had been a little changed for the worse, though in the pleasure of having him with me I had not bothered about it.

These reflections deeply engaged my mind as I left Macdonald's office and walked to the subway, and thus entranced I bowed politely to the shadow who was waiting for me on the platform. To me at that moment he was merely a familiar countenance seen dimly through a haze of gloomy thoughts, but the poor fellow's pathetic embarrassment aroused me to the truth. I observed that he had changed his green tie for a blue one, and his derby hat for a soft one slightly creased because he had been carrying it in his pocket. He accompanied me uptown, stood guard outside a restaurant while I dined, and then rode out with me to Bridgeport, where he vanished at the station, his orders doubtless being to follow me when I went away by train.

It was impossible to suppose that all this espionage was worth its cost on my account alone. The real object in view was easily to be inferred from Joe's telegram. If all news must be so carefully kept from Cushing, the chief figure in the conspiracy, the reason was that the conspirators had lost track of Joe, and did not know whether he was in Mexico or the United States. Miss Scott's business in my house was to detect any communication between

myself and Joe; the shadow at the station was to cover the possibility that I might meet my brother in New York or perhaps Washington.

Plainly it behooved me to keep a sharp lookout for Joe's letter, due Friday; and therefore I took care to be smoking my after-breakfast cigar on the veranda when the postman made his first round. I saw him quite a way up the street, and watched him with so much interest that I did not see Miss Scott coming from the opposite direction to her day's work. She neither loitered nor hurried; nothing could have seemed more trivial and more natural than her meeting with the postman precisely at my gate. No pretty schoolma'am tripping toward the old red schoolhouse on a pleasant morning could have revealed less indication of being engaged upon a crime that would cost men's lives.

She took several letters from the man, how many I could not observe because her trim figure intervened; but I noticed that she did not show the least sign of feminine curiosity, did not even glance at the envelopes after they were in her hand. She was a very ladylike girl—to quote from Mr. Fuller—agreeable to the eye, with many amiable and quiet ways, so that I was constantly forgetting our relation of hostility. But this good will had not struck in deep enough to make me accept her meeting with the postman as a genuine coincidence. She had managed it with exquisite simplicity, and yet it wouldn't quite do.

Joe's letter was one of four which she brought to me, and I had seen her take it from the postman. Also I once distinctly saw a man take six rabbits out of a silk hat. So I looked at the letter with a faint suspicion, after Miss Scott and I had exchanged the compliments of the morning and she had gone into the house. It seemed to be all right, and I thought myself foolish to examine it under a magnifying glass in the privacy of my office. However, the glass revealed indications that the envelope had been opened and sealed up again very, very skillfully.

The other three pieces of mail were advertising circulars posted in Bridgeport on the previous evening. I constructed a telephone booth with a jointed screen, and softly called up two of the senders. My name was not on their mailing list, they informed me. Their goods were unsuitable to a bachelor, but under ordinary circumstances I should have thrown the advertisements away without noticing this. The third piece was from Fuller & Gray's, and investigation seemed superfluous. Evidently Miss Scott had got hold of these circulars, and had mailed them to me herself, in order to make sure that the postman should have something to deliver.

My brother's letter must have come ahead of time, yesterday afternoon when I was away. It had been in Miss Scott's possession overnight. Not knowing where I had gone, she had not dared to open the envelope in my house, lest I should return inopportunely. She had guessed that I should be expecting it, and, indeed, it was not unusual for me to be smoking on the veranda at the time of the first delivery. She had watched for the carrier, had met him at the gate, and had deftly added Joe's letter to the three circulars which the man had brought. Later in the day I had a private word with the postman, who confirmed my theory, and promised silence for a consideration. I seemed to be in a position to send Miss Scott to prison, but it stuck in my mind that Horatio Cushing was the one who ought to go there.

Naturally, I read the letter before carrying these investigations farther than the examination of the envelope. There was nothing which added much to the substance of the telegram re-

ceived by Macdonald, but the fact that Joe had got no word from Marian or me was made clear. His return was not due to knowledge of developments in Bridgeport, and he evidently expected me to have difficulty in believing that Cushing was in a conspiracy to rob him of his mine. That such was the case he said plainly, but all explanatory details were postponed. He laid great stress upon the need for absolute secrecy. Thus he wrote:

I suppose Marian will be worrying about me, but that only makes it more imperative that she should not be told of my coming. Even though she should not say one injudicious word, her manner might betray her, for Cushing is a keen old fox. But wait and see what he looks like when I am through with him.

The instructions as to my going to the Hotel Woodcourt were the same as those given in the telegram, but they seemed now to be useless. Since the contents of the letter were now known to Cushing, and Joe's desire was to conceal our movements from him, the Woodcourt was the last place where we should meet. I consulted Macdonald about this by telephone, and he said that he would try to get into communication with Joe so that the plan might be changed, but nothing had come of it up to the time when I left Bridgeport Monday afternoon. Meanwhile I had seen Marian and had told her that I had good news which I was under bonds not to disclose.

"I suppose Joe is afraid I'll tell," she said. "Some of his ideas about women are going to be ruthlessly modernized before I'm through with him."

Mindful of the shadow at the station I rode to South Norwalk in my car, and took the train at that point. Sitting in the common smoking car, my thoughts full of apprehension and perplexity, I was yet aware of an agreeable relief, a pleasantly insistent sense of freedom, and this showed me that the constant espionage had got upon my nerves far more than I had supposed. But presently there began to intrude upon the field of my attention a vague uneasiness, no other than that delusive absurdity heretofore described: I "felt" some one staring at the back of my head. Turning, I looked straight through Horatio Cushing's spectacles.

He was standing in the aisle, having come from the rear part of the train, and he must have been regarding me for some time, for I noticed that others were wondering why he didn't sit down. The day was chilly; Cushing wore a new fall suit, dismally black, and he looked as if he meant to execute somebody and then act as undertaker. I put on a putty-faced expression to indicate restraint, and gave him the back of my head again. He blistered it with his gaze until we had passed the Harlem River; then I glanced over my shoulder, and he was gone. A few minutes later I saw him crossing Forty-second Street toward the Hotel Belmont. Marian was with him.

I went to the Woodcourt and checked my bag without registering. Then I called up Macdonald and learned that he had not seen Joe, but had just got wind of him.

"Come downtown as fast as you can," he said. "There's a chance that we may find Joe in a place I'll take you to. This is contrary to instructions, but I think he'll want to know that Cushing has read his letter."

Macdonald met me at the Bowling Green station of the subway, and led me to the seventeenth floor of the office building at 44 Broadway, and to a door lettered "Law Offices of Stein, Herrera & Gil." He touched the last name with his finger, and whispered it with the proper pronunciation, the G like an H.

"I caught a rumor that that fellow was in this game, and that Joe was looking for him," said Macdonald. "We

can probably find out whether Joe's here, or expected, without giving too much away."

It seemed to me a risky interference on our part, but Macdonald saw it in another light.

"I know this bunch," he said. "They're cheap conspirators trying to get in with a winner in Mexico. Uncle Sam's little boys at Washington have scrambled all the eggs south of the Rio Grande, and these fellows want to get their spoons into the dish; the Lord pity 'em! What gives them importance is that they're agents for Arnulfo Blanco, who amounts to something; a really dangerous man—poses as an agent of the state department. I don't believe he actually has any such connection, but who can find out? Washington won't tell, and what Blanco says doesn't count. His word isn't good for anything."

This must be the same Blanco with whom I had had correspondence, but before I could speak of this to Macdonald he had opened the door. We entered an anteroom, and at the same moment a black-haired, unhealthy youth, who had been listening at a keyhole, straightened himself and faced us.

"Is Señor Gil in?" said Macdonald.

"No; he's out of town," the youth responded. "What do you want to see him about?"

Macdonald jingled some coins in his pocket.

"Come into the hall," said he, "and I'll tell you."

The youth hesitated, looked askance at me, and finally yielded. Macdonald, passing out, signed to me that I should go into the inner room. Left alone, I tried the door softly, and it was locked; then I tried the keyhole, and got a glimpse of a man's legs in black trousers like Cushing's.

A weak, frightened voice was speaking in Spanish. It ran suddenly to a high pitch, and ended in a half-articulate cry of protest and of pain. Then my brother's voice struck in, low, steady, and menacing. The Spanish phrases, which I might have followed in more favorable circumstances, were meaningless to me because of my excitement, but the grim sound of them was eloquent.

I rapped sharply on the door and called my brother's name. He must have heard me, but he went steadily on with what he was saying, and his tone made me sorry for the person whom he addressed. I was not surprised that the reply came in an agonized babble, as if the man were testifying from the rack in frantic haste. I might have kicked the door down, but I didn't; I merely stood irresolute, trying to understand the poor devil's words and to guess what was the matter with him.

Meanwhile, Macdonald rejoined me, having bribed the office boy to go away; and before I could state the situation, the door was unlocked and opened by my brother. He wore a black suit, obviously fresh from some New York shop; it was his legs that I had seen through the keyhole. Cushing was not there, nor anybody else except a swarthy, big-chested figure of a pirate, sitting in a chair jammed against the wall, and nursing his left hand like a hurt child. Though his face was wet with tears, I had great difficulty in accepting this formidable creature as the source of the scared, womanish voice that I had heard.

Joe flung an arm around me, and almost took a piece out of my shoulder. His eyes shone like a wild cat's, and his words were hardly intelligible, but obviously congratulatory, as if we were the victors and the only survivors of some desperate and deadly fight. There was no suggestion that the big man with the tears on his face might

strike me as an unusual spectacle requiring an explanation.

"What have you done to this fellow, Joe?" said I. "And what was it for?"

"His name's Gil," said my brother. "He's against us. Never mind him now. I've got all I want."

At this, Gil jumped up and made a dive for his desk, but Joe was too quick for him. There was a scuffle lasting not more than three seconds; then Joe got the revolver which his adversary had snatched out of a drawer, and I got Gil, who came staggering to the middle of the room. He had received a blow over the heart; he gasped feebly like a dying fish. There was nothing further to be feared from him, but I thought best to hold him for his own safety.

"What's the matter with your hand?" said I, and in his weakness he permitted me to examine it. There was a spiral fracture of the forefinger, and as soon as the man had got his breath he accused Joe of having done this deliberately by twisting his finger in order to make him talk. He threatened my brother with arrest, and tried to reach the telephone to call the police, but I restrained him, and at last persuaded him to let me put the finger into improvised splints and a bandage.

Joe meanwhile had utterly ignored the accusation; he was standing by Gil's desk looking through the man's private papers, coolly enough, though he breathed hard, like one who holds a dangerous rage in check, and the breath made a faint sound as he exhaled it through his nostrils unevenly dilated.

"Look here," said he, when Gil had threatened him with arrest for about the hundredth time, "you don't want the police. You don't want to fool with me any more; you can't afford it. You'd better take the fifty dollars I offered you in the first place, and twenty-five more for your doctor's bill. You're broke, and you've got no more information to sell. The game with Cushing is played out, so there's nothing coming to you from that source. Take this money; you need it for your rent," and he counted off some bills.

There was a brief, distressing silence in that room; then Gil began to grind strange, Mexican oaths between his teeth. Joe held the money out at arm's length, tempting the man as if he had been a monkey, and suddenly Gil snatched it and his hat from the top of the desk with the same motion. He stumbled out of the room, his legs unsteady with the nervous strain. Macdonald and I stood looking at each other, stupefied by this inconceivable behavior. Joe took each of us by an arm and led us away.

"Not a fair sample," said Macdonald, with a Scotchman's discriminating interest in moral issues. "There are Mexican gentlemen of fine quality who haven't yet been shot. I have met many."

I expected to find Gil and a policeman waiting below, but in fact we were not molested. We walked toward Macdonald's office, and on the way I told Joe of what had happened in Bridgeport; but he was in the grip of his own thoughts and unable to give me his attention except in flashes until I spoke of the probability that his letter had been read by Cushing. He asked me about this several times, not for more information, but with the manner of one who is trying to form a plan around a particular fact. He gave no hint as to the nature of the plan, and it finally sank into the depths of his mind so that the surface was to some extent free for other matters.

"I have got this business pretty well figured out," he said, as we entered Macdonald's private room. "Gil gave me what I needed. This is the way it happened: Cushing came to New York last June to get track of me; he was all right then. He fell into the hands

of Gil and two or three other crooks in the same coterie—men who have been driven out of Mexico, and are hanging around in New York looking for a chance to break into the game again through one bunch of conspirators or another; they don't care which, so long as they smell money in it. A man of Cushing's wealth in that crew was simply a big pie, to be cut, but Gil and his pikers were too small for the job, and they knew it, so they had to let a real man in. Bedeviled as I was in Mexico, I couldn't locate the man higher up, but now I've done it."

"You got the name from Gil?" said Macdonald, with an uncomfortable side glance at me.

"His name?" said Joe. "Well, it's the one he goes by—Arnulfo Blanco. As a matter of fact, he's a Yaqui Indian, educated, and that makes him worse."

"You mean the state department's man?" said I.

The ghost of a sardonic grin flitted across my brother's face.

"There are a good many state-department men, if you believe all you hear," he said. "It's much safer to play Blanco for a blue-bellied he-devil working for himself and nobody else."

"He wrote to me," said I. "He asked for documents——"

"Which you didn't have," said Joe, "so that's all right. But he put it all over Cushing, whom he got hold of in Washington—made him believe that I had no title to the mine, but was trying to steal it; that I was in cahoots with the gang around Pancho Villa, and was spending the money of my American stockholders to buy guns and stir up trouble between Villa and Carranza, as if anybody but a fool would ever have thought there wouldn't be trouble enough of that kind without buying it! In short, Cushing was made to believe that I had no claim to my property in Mexico, and that my whole game was a gamble to defraud honest owners through confiscation. You know how Cushing hates that word."

"Blanco was one of the honest owners, I suppose," said Macdonald.

"Certainly; he posed as the chief of them, and their authorized representative. He actually has a kind of claim to mining property near my camp, and I suppose that helped him play his trick. He could get documents by the bushel; that's easy."

"And Cushing fell for this?" said Macdonald, staggered.

"Like a roaring lamb," said Joe, and turned to me. "There's seventy-odd thousand dollars of Cushing's money in my mine. You didn't know that."

I collapsed in my chair as if he had hit me in the stomach. If Cushing had been made to think he had been defrauded of such a sum, there was no limit to what he would do.

"Blanco persuaded Cushing that I was not only an adventurer and a swindler, but that I was bound to lose," Joe continued. "Carranza would certainly win out, and I'd not only fail in all my schemes, but would probably be shot. In fact, Señor Blanco came mighty near making that last prediction good. He tried hard enough, though I didn't know who was doing it. I was caught, up there in the mountains, and if there hadn't been a failure to come across with the price of my life I'd have been stood against a wall. As it was, they held me prisoner for two months, and I was saved from death only by the personal exertions of the consul in Hermosillo."

Joe had been a little like himself during a part of this recital, but now he began to harden again, and his face to darken toward the hue of a copper-colored thundercloud. The change in his face was almost racial; he looked like an Indian.

"And now here's the state of the case," said he. "Cushing is thoroughly

convinced against me, and you know how much chance there is of making him change his mind. He thinks that the only way for him to get his money back is to play Blanco's hand. Naturally, he has made much better terms with Blanco than he made with me, and he sees millions coming to him. He has put up money for that crook, and will put up more——"

"But what good will it do?" I interrupted. "The mine is yours. They can't——"

"Good Lord, Jack!" my brother cried, starting to his feet; "it's Mexico we're talking about; don't you understand? There isn't a court in the whole country, and nobody knows when there will be one. But now is the critical time, the time when a man mustn't be crowded out. With Cushing's money behind him, Blanco can wipe me off the map down there, so that when the United States goes in—as it must, in the end—I'll have nothing but a lawsuit a hundred years long."

"Well," said Macdonald, "I see that. But what can you do about it? It's Cushing's money that you're afraid of. What proofs can you show him——"

"Proofs—bosh!" Joe broke in, with deadly impatience. "You don't know Cushing. Nothing can be done with *him*. The only rational thing is to do up the men through whom he's working—do up Blanco."

Macdonald's Scotch upper lip lengthened, while his cold gray eyes drifted in my direction.

"Just what do you mean by doing him up?" he asked.

"Get something on him that will keep him out of Mexico, or insure his being shot if he goes there. I'm not afraid of anybody else, but Blanco pulls too many strings for me. Don't ask me any more questions now; I need an hour or two alone, to frame this thing up."

"Where is Blanco at present?" Macdonald asked.

"In Washington, Gil says. If it's true, I hope he'll stay there till I'm ready to move." My brother turned to me. "Now, Jack, we'll go along together as far as the subway; then you'll go to the Woodcourt and wait for me. I'll see you there this evening. Here's the key of my room; it's on the sixth floor, facing Forty-third Street. Don't ask to be shown; go right up. I'll try to come before you starve to death; that's all I can say."

It would have suited me much better to keep Joe under my eye, but he was uncontrollable, seeming to be obsessed by his own secret plans. What I said to him was but half comprehended; he replied readily and agreeably, often expressing an empty acquiescence while pursuing his own design without the smallest deviation. I had observed this double action of his mind while he had been telling his story in Macdonald's room. Now, as then, there were moments when in speech and manner he was like himself, though markedly roughened, but the inner personality which his eye revealed was strange to me; it was alien, unaddressable, inferior.

I had never quarreled with Joe; it seemed now for the first time possible; and the prime necessity of the situation was to avoid the least approach to it. We must stand together, as we had always done in the old days. For this reason I did not risk opposing him at a moment when he was plainly unable to take advice, but fell in with his desire, and went up to the hotel alone.

Room No. 602, which my brother had taken, was the last on the right of a somewhat narrow corridor which ended in a blank wall. The door opened into a jog like a useless vestibule, seven feet by four, perhaps, from which one turned to the left into the room, and saw first the bed with its head against

the eastern wall. Close beside it, between it and the jog, was a door, now locked, which might be used for communication with an adjoining room. This door had one large panel, near the top of which hung a picture.

I crossed diagonally past the foot of the bed, and sat down in a morris chair beside one of the windows that looked out on the street. From this position I eventually observed another picture over the head of the bed. It had a thick gilt frame, and had been pulled absurdly high, almost to the molding. Probably that was the only reason why I noticed and subsequently remembered it.

For an hour or more I sat there, thinking of my brother, and trying to take a just view of his behavior that afternoon. Gil's broken finger ached inside my skull. The man's agonized countenance and his tears; the cruel length of the scene, now magnified in memory; the merciless intensity of my brother's voice—these were evidences in support of Gil's outrageous accusation, but they failed to convince me that Joe had willfully resorted to torture in order to wring secrets out of that paltry rascal. It was much easier for me to believe that the finger had been broken in mere roughness, without definite purpose, and that fright rather than pain had been operative upon the victim; in short, that Gil was a coward who had lied on an afterthought to make his victorious enemy infamous—a trick so conspicuous in the world just then that nobody could overlook its merits. But the incident was horrible at the best; it haunted me like a disgraceful crime of my own. Indeed, it was mine, if it was anybody's, for Joe was my partner as well as my brother, and I had not interfered for Gil's protection when I had heard him babbling in that tone of fear and anguish.

A sense of shame is almost always accompanied by the illusion of another presence—some one who sees us, from whose reproving gaze we shrink; but I had never known the impression to be so strong. The spying and shadowing to which I had been subjected might perhaps account for this, but my indwelling, ancestral tenant, that timorous barbarian, refused to be satisfied with anything except a superstition; he howled for it like a dog for spoiled fish; and I began to look for a peephole whence might proceed mysterious influences darting from a human eye.

For some minutes I was the picture of a nervous old maid going to bed. I had been able to see under the real bed from my place by the window, and into the bathroom, whose door was wide open. The corridor door was out of sight around the corner of the jog; its keyhole offered no temptation to a spy who knew the architecture of the house. There was nobody in the clothes closet, as I presently took pains to discover.

It was the hour when twilight fades very rapidly. Darkness came while I stood leaning on the foot of the bed, staring at the door between my room and the next and wondering whether it really ought to be an object of suspicion. Eventually I switched on the lights, and made an examination not wholly fruitless.

Close beneath the frame of the picture, on the panel of the door, there was a hole about half the diameter of a lead pencil, very inconspicuous because of the frame's shadow. Cautiously using my scarfpin as a probe, I discovered that the hole was stopped at the other end by something not very solid, perhaps a wafer pasted over to prevent the light from shining through. The edge of the perforation had been smoothed and darkened to make it less noticeable; and this must have been done from the near side. Doubtless anybody having a key or a picklock could have opened the door in my broth-

er's absence, and worked freely in both rooms.

In my bag were some tools of my trade, including a mirror such as you may have seen an oculist wear on his forehead. I had put in these things while Miss Scott was present, so that she might think that I was trying to deceive her as to my errand, and that I didn't know that she had read my brother's letter. It now occurred to me that I might determine when that hole in the door was made, if I could light the inside of it with my mirror.

I turned out all the lamps except one which was on the end of a long cord, for the convenience of guests who wished to read in bed. Taking down the picture from the panel, I fixed the light so that my mirror would reflect a ray into the hole. All these things were done with extreme caution, for though no sound reached me from the other room, some person might be there; indeed, at the last moment I seemed to feel a slight quivering of the door, as if a stealthy hand had touched it; but this impression did not take shape in my mind quickly enough to influence my action. The beam from the mirror struck the hole and went through it, with the incomparable accuracy of luck, into a human eye.

The panel was very thin, the eye very close and perfectly placed. I distinctly saw the flare from the inner wall of the posterior chamber of the eye. The color of the flare was very pronounced, a brownish red; and the impression of this color remained with me so that I seemed to see it after I had dodged away from the hole in the door.

The person on the other side could not have seen anything at all; he had got a quick, blinding flash, and no more. It was impossible that he should guess that the light had been thrown from a mirror, and he would hardly suppose that his eye had been seen. In the hope of making him think that the flash had come from the reading lamp accidentally brought near the door, I now fastened it to the headpiece of the bed, rattling its little reflector against the brass rods. Then I sat down on the bed rather heavily, put the two pillows behind my back, and stretched my legs on a newspaper that happened to lie on the counterpane.

Over my head was the larger picture in the gilt frame, and this reminded me of the one which I had taken down from the door. If all the lamps in my room had been lighted, my spying neighbor might have noticed an additional brightness due to the absence of the picture frame's shadow, but with only the reading lamp in action, at a low level, he could not detect a difference. At any rate, it would be foolish for me to risk hanging the picture up again.

Naturally, I tried to imagine the man in the other room, listening, perhaps daring to peep once more; and in sketching his portrait before my mental vision I had a bit of evidence as to his appearance, a very odd bit, too. The color of the flare from a human eye varies with race, or, at least, with complexion. In fair-haired blonds, for example, it is orange red; in brunettes, crimson; in negroes, chocolate-hued; and the very marked brownish-red flare which I had seen is peculiar to Mongolians and North American Indians—which may indicate the origin of the latter. It seemed hardly probable that the man on the other side of the wall was a son of China; but he might very well be a Mexican, and wholly or partly an Indian; a spy loaned to Cushing by Gil or his associates. In fancy I saw him of the same breed as Gil, but smaller, a thin, snaky fellow, not too clean, and acridly perfumed with the wares of El Buen Tono, the Mexican Cigarette Trust.

The hole in the door was of little use for listening, but it gave him a fair

view of the greater part of the room. He might now be contemplating my legs, for the peephole slanted downward, as I had noticed, and he could see the lower half of me as I lay on the bed. The thought of him gave me a kind of pleasure, because I had found him out, and could warn Joe, who would credit me with a point scored in the game. Even so small a thing might help to reëstablish the blessed old team play between Joe and me, which used to be so good and was now so necessary. We had surely fallen out of it that afternoon, to my great sorrow.

These meditations were interrupted by a slight sound at my door, hardly to be called a knock. This might be Joe announcing himself cautiously; and I reached the door in four quiet strides. The visitor was Horatio Cushing.

He shouldered his way past me with barely a look, and with only a grunt for greeting. It was plain that he supposed Joe to be in the room, and was anxious to get an eye on him. I suppose he had intended to listen outside, and had touched the door by accident. Having turned from the little vestibule into the room, he paused and looked around; then he walked straight to the bed, and emphasized his contempt for me by taking the comfortable lounging attitude which had just been mine, as he could readily perceive.

Not a word had been spoken by either of us. I was occupied with wondering whether Cushing had come alone or had brought aids who might now be waiting for his summons; wherefore, after seeing him sit down, I turned back to the door and looked to the left along the corridor. No one was visible.

As I stood upon the threshold, the room behind me roared with an appalling concussion, flamed with titanic gases, as if it had been the breech of an enormous cannon out of which I was hurled like a projectile. What impelled me was a current of air, driven by and mingled with the vapors of the explosion, but it seemed absolutely solid. The iron hardness, the unimaginable, ruthless violence of it, surprised the inmost conscious machinery that we call the soul; and if I had anything that resembled a thought, it took the form of an incredulous protest against a cruelty beyond the license of the devil.

I was thrown across the corridor and clean through the opposite door, which my weight shivered into splinters. Consciousness had become a mere fragment of a hideous dream, yet it persisted, and I knew that I was lying on the floor in a dim light and a suffocating dust, and that somewhere within me encouraging voices were whispering: "You're all right; you're alive; the angle of the wall saved you." Then suddenly I remembered Cushing, and struggled to my feet.

The floor was strewn with broken furniture blown from an alcove whence now come the feeble, flickering light of little fires amid the wreckage. I staggered dizzily in, and found myself looking into my brother's room through a hole ten feet broad. Fragments of the door that had been in the partition were burning under my feet, and I stamped upon the flames while gathering my wits to search for Cushing. I could see the bed on which he had lain; the foot of it had been lifted up; the head had been driven into the floor, which was so badly shattered that a light shone upward from a room below.

All hope that Cushing could have survived in the very center of this destruction vanished from my mind. A bit of paper flamed up, showing me what seemed to be splashes of blood on the bed, and something that might be a sleeve of the man's black coat; but it was not until I had entered the room that I discerned his body, which had been hurled over the bed's foot and

against the far wall. There was no need of a closer or a clearer view to tell me whether life could linger in that mere fragment of a human form.

Men now began to come through from the other room, which was supposed by the first arrivals to have been the scene of the explosion, because the door was smashed, while that of No. 602 had only been shut and locked by the swift current that had driven me out. Most of the rescue party remained in No. 601, searching for a victim of the accident, and stamping out the fire, nearly all of which was on that side. I heard some one say in a tone of authority: "There wasn't anybody here. He's never in after six o'clock."

A man standing near me said: "That's Judd, the clerk." And another from across the room called out in a voice unsteady with nausea: "Judd, Judd! Come in here! A man's been killed. Blown all to pieces."

The clerk came through the broken partition just as some one turned on the electric light in the bathroom, which shone straight out upon the hideous object lying against the west wall. One glance halted the clerk beside the wreckage of the bed.

"That's him," he said. "That's the black suit he was wearing."

"Who?" asked several. "What was his name?"

"I don't remember," said the clerk, with hesitation. "He's a transient."

"Here's a piece of his grip," said a man by the window; "just the handle and a part of the top."

It was a fragment of my bag, and by this I was reminded of Joe's suit case, which had been thrown into a corner of the jog. Its pale-tan color in the shadows had caught my eye less than a minute ago, but now it was gone.

The corridor door, which I knew had been shut by the explosion, because I had heard men try to open it from the outside, was now an inch or two ajar. There had been ample opportunity for a thief, in the darkness, dust, and confusion, to enter through the gap in the wall and escape by the other way with his plunder. In New York an accident on top of a church steeple would find a thief ready to steal the gold leaf from the cross.

It seemed unlikely that Joe had left valuable papers in the bag, but it was possible. The person who had taken it could hardly have escaped from the hotel; he might be intercepted. My own desire was to get away as soon as possible. I was bleeding from several slight wounds, my hat had vanished in the explosion, and my clothes were whitened with lime dust; but no one had yet marked me as a survivor of the disaster. In the lighted parts of the hotel I could not hope to pass unnoticed, but there might be no man with authority to detain me. What I wished to do was to find Marian, and tell her of the tragedy before she should hear of it from the lips of strangers. I had been on the point of slipping away, when the loss of Joe's bag compelled me to accept the hazard of detention.

I drew Judd aside and told him of the theft without wasting time in explanations.

"The telephone in this room is blown off the wall," I said. "Where can we find another?"

He led the way into the corridor, and we came presently to an open door. I suppose the occupant of that room must have fled at the noise of the explosion. Judd telephoned to the office:

"Light-colored suit case stolen from 602. Don't let anybody get out with it. Know what to do? All right. I'll be here for a little while—in 605." Then to me: "Ain't your name Hollis?"

"Yes," said I, surprised.

"It's your brother——" His voice failed him; he nodded sidelong toward the place we had left. Sweat glistened on his bald head, and suddenly his lit-

tle, good-natured eyes filled with tears. "He wasn't here under his own name, and, of course, I didn't say nothing, though I knew him. I've seen you both at the Manhattan. Used to clerk there." He concentrated his gaze on my cheek, which was covered with blood from a deep scratch. "Was you with him when it happened?"

"I was there, but my brother wasn't," said I. "It's another man."

I had wet the end of a towel, and was washing the blood from my face. Judd gently pulled my hand away so that he could see my eyes.

"Not him?" said he, amazed. "I could have sworn to his trousers. There ain't much else to identify," he added, going a shade paler, and staring beyond me at the baseboard, as if he saw something lying against it. "Who was he?"

"A man of some prominence," said I. "You ought to go back there and see that his body is properly protected."

"There's two policemen in the room now," he replied, "and the boss has just gone along the hall. The responsibility's on him now; I don't want to go back there."

"You mean the manager of the house?" said I.

"Yes," said he, adding uneasily: "I suppose I ought to go and speak to him. Will you wait here?"

"I'll use this telephone to notify the man's friends," said I; and in that labor I was occupied while Judd was gone. I sent word to several persons, but made no attempt to communicate with Marian, lest some listener should send detectives and reporters to the Belmont, where I supposed her to be.

Judd brought back with him a solid, careworn man of fifty, in a gray sack suit quite like my own, except that it was very much more expensive.

"Doctor Hollis," said the clerk, his little eyes blinking, "this is the manager, Mr. Quinn."

We shook hands, while Judd took a chair beside the door, which he held a small way open so that he could see into the corridor. I knew that he was watching for my brother.

"You know how a hotel man feels about these things," said Quinn, caressing a close-cropped mustache, which ought to have been gray. "We want to have as little fuss as possible, and avoid sensational stories in the papers. That's what hurts us. Take a tip from me: the less you say to the reporters, the better—or the police, either. I'm glad to have this chance to talk with you quietly. You're the only living man who saw what happened, Judd tells me."

"I didn't see anything at all," said I. "When the explosion took place I was standing in the doorway, and I was thrown across into the room on the other side of the hall."

"Who was the party that was killed?"

"Horatio Cushing, a banker, of Bridgeport. He had come to call on my brother, with whom he had business relations. My brother was out. I was waiting for him."

"Business relations?" Quinn said. "No trouble, I hope."

"I'm sorry to say that there was very serious trouble," I replied, well aware that concealment of this fact was impossible. "A coterie of Mexican adventurers was trying to steal a gold mine belonging to my brother—or to a company of which he is the head. Mr. Cushing was a stockholder, and the Mexicans had tricked him into believing that he had been defrauded. They expected to use his money in bribing certain men influential in the Mexican muddle. They were afraid that Joe would upset this scheme, and that is why they tried to get rid of him. For you must understand that this bomb was not meant to kill Cushing, but my brother."

"This gentleman's brother had that

room," Judd explained. "Registered by the name of Howard."

"What was that for?" Quinn asked.

"Because he was working quietly to circumvent those rascals, and adjust the difficulty with Cushing."

"Adjust it? Yes, I see. And you'd come to talk with him about it. Did you send up your name?"

"He wasn't there. I had his key."

"And while you were waiting for your brother, Cushing called. Did he send up *his* name?"

Judd answered in my stead:

"No; they both got by."

Quinn continued to address me:

"How did Cushing know where to go? Who told him the room number?"

"I have no idea."

"Did he bring anything with him?"

"No."

"Did *you* bring anything?"

"A bag."

"Is it there now?"

"Shreds of it. The bag was on the bed, and was blown to pieces."

"Blown to pieces?" Quinn repeated. "And where do you figure that the bomb was?"

"Of course, I speak only from inference," said I, "but to my mind there's only one place where it could have been. The explosion was wholly in the room, not in the partition or beyond it. The bomb wasn't hidden under the pillows; I'd just moved them—put them behind my back; and, besides, there's no indication that they were thrown up into the air. In my opinion, the bomb exploded right over the pillows, and behind Cushing, who had been leaning against them, but had started up—as is proved by the fact that, while the upper part of his body was almost destroyed, all that remained of him was thrown to the other end of the room."

"Do you mean that the brass tubing of the bed's headpiece was plugged with dynamite?" Quinn asked, with lively interest. "That would be a new game"

"The headpiece was smashed, of course, but not as it would have been by an internal explosion," I replied. "It's quite conspicuous in the wreckage. No; the bomb had its own container, and it was hidden in or behind the heavy gilt frame of that picture over the bed. There must have been a mechanism by which it could be dropped and detonated by a man in the next room. A wire through the partition would have served to make the thing fall, and a measured string tied to the picture frame would have exploded it in the right place."

"That sounds convincing," Quinn observed. "I guess you understand these things. But how did anybody know when to set the bomb off? By listening? Not good enough, I should think."

"There was a spy hole in the door between the rooms. A man looking through could see about half the bed. He saw Cushing's black trousers, and thought they were my brother's; that's the explanation of this affair."

"How about Cushing's voice?"

"He didn't speak."

"Not on good terms? I see. He went and sprawled himself out on the bed, as a kind of bluff, to show you that you could go to the devil."

I made a gesture of assent.

"Then you went to the door and looked across to the door of the other room which was just opposite," said Quinn. "Ten seconds later the bomb exploded. Was the corridor door of that other room open?"

"Excuse me," said I. "Do you mean to suggest the possibility of a signal that——"

"I'm merely trying to help you fix this story for the police," Quinn responded, with every sign of sympathy. "We've got to cover this point as to how the other man knew when to set off the bomb—so as to kill Cushing and not hurt *you*."

"There was no especial tenderness for

me. The aim was to get my brother. Some one looked through the peephole and——"

"Where was your brother at this time?"

"How do I know?"

"How do you know there was anybody in that next room?"

"Because I saw his eye, looking through." And I described the incident in full, my auditors preserving an amazed attention strongly flavored with incredulity.

"I'm thinking where that hole's gone," said Judd, when I paused. "Great pity! There's nothing left of the door; it was not only busted into kindling wood, but set afire, and half a dozen men stamped on it. Door and wall and picture all gone to smash! Where are you going to find any evidence?"

"The thing to do is to find the man," said I. "Who was the occupant——"

"You say his eyes were brownish red?" Quinn interrupted. "Queer shade."

"That's the color of the flare, not of the man's eyes. They're dark, no doubt, but I didn't see the pigmentation. Was that next room rented to a Mexican?"

Quinn looked interrogatively at the clerk, who wagged a solemn head.

"About as far from a Mexican as they make 'em," he said. "And he's a man, we know, besides; he's been four years in the house—longer'n I have. Mr. Carlson, a newspaper man, one of the editors of the *Sun*. Educated; he's written books."

"What does he look like?" I asked.

"Like a high-class Swede," the clerk responded. "Blue eyes and sandy hair, kind o' grayish now, on the sides. Wears glasses; can't see anything without 'em."

"That acquits him," I admitted. "Has he had any Mexican visitors of late?"

"He don't have a caller once a month," said Judd. "Sleeps all day; goes out around five o'clock; comes back between two and three, and then writes till morning. That's his schedule six days a week, and on Saturday, which is his day off, he writes all night in his room."

"He'd gone when this happened, I suppose?" said Quinn; and then to me: "What's your brother's description? Does he look like you?"

"More or less," said I. "There's a family resemblance."

"There used to be, as I remember," Judd remarked; "but he's changed a good deal—darker; almost like a Spaniard. And he ain't so big as you by quite some."

The telephone bell rang, and Judd answered it, while Quinn kept watch at the door. Word came from below that nothing had been seen of the stolen suit case. Quinn asked for a description, and Judd told him that the bag was large and of a very light color, whereupon Quinn nodded, and began to roam around the room absorbed in meditation.

"This eye business is a good clew," he said at last, halting in front of me. "As I understand it, you're prepared to swear that the guilty man had Indian blood in him."

"Indian or Mongolian."

"We can leave the Chinese out. The party wouldn't have to be *all* Indian, would he?"

"No."

"You wouldn't pretend to identify the man by this flare, I suppose? But if he showed the wrong color, that would let him out."

"Precisely."

"This is mighty interesting," he said. "The police ought to do something with it. Do you want me to bring a detective in here now?"

"For Heaven's sake, no!" said I. "Give me a chance to pull myself together. My nerves are crackling and

streaming out of my body, like the rags of a torn sail blown loose in a hurricane. What I want is a quiet half hour in a drug store. Can you lend me a hat?"

There was a silence of ten seconds; then Quinn said: "Judd will fix you up."

Five minutes later, I made a quiet exit into a space between the Woodcourt and the Prince Albert, narrow and scantily illumined at the ground level. Overhead, a network of fire-escape balconies connected the two hotels, and I glanced aloft with considerable interest at the confused tracery of iron, while Judd was opening a gate upon the street.

"No. 601 is on this side of the house, isn't it?" I said.

"Yes," the clerk replied. "Right over our heads, as you might say. They seem to lean together, when you look up." And he touched the wall of the Woodcourt with his hand. "It's queer your brother hasn't come yet," he added. "Any idea where he is?"

"No," said I. "Don't fail to have him wait for me."

In fact, however, I suspected that Joe had already come back as far as he ever would of his own will; that he had learned of the murder from some one in the crowd outside the hotel, and had gone away to escape the reporters and the police.

From a drug store on the Broadway corner I telephoned to the Hotel Belmont, and after some slow seconds Marian's voice came to me, the mere sound of it being enough to let me know that the news had already found its way to her.

"Jack," she said, "Jack!" And at first I could hear nothing but my own name. "Are you badly hurt? Where are you? Can you come to me here, or shall I go to you?"

"I'm not hurt at all," said I. "Who has told you——"

"Joe. He's here. He said you were hurt in the face."

I remembered her peculiar horror of disfiguring wounds. Joe must have told her that my face was bleeding, but how could he have known it? Before I could say anything more to reassure her, Joe's voice struck in.

"Don't tell any one where I am," he said. "Don't lead the police over here."

"I won't; but they're bound to be there soon. What's the harm?"

"I don't want them to find me. Be careful, Jack; but come as soon as you can."

"I'll be there within ten minutes. Is there anything I can say to Marian to——"

"No," he said. "I'll take care of her. Hurry!"

My telephone booth was between two others, which were in use. Through the glass of the door I could see a man who had followed me from the Woodcourt, and now stood as near my booth as he thought prudent. I had noted him, without disquiet, but now I was under orders to elude him, though my own judgment did not approve. As to how it should be done I had three minutes for reflection, in the prescription room of the drug store, where I finished attending to my visible scratches.

I crossed the White Way westward to the little delta north of the Times Building, where the war bulletins were exhibited, and where one of the most extraordinary crowds ever assembled in New York swirled nightly in a dozen eddies of debate, filling all the space between the tall structure and the subway kiosk, and overflowing into Broadway and Seventh Avenue. My shadow dared not follow me too closely, and, without much difficulty, I put more and more of the crowd between us, until the man became alarmed, and tried to push his way roughly through.

That was what I had counted on. I had seen the so-called "debating so-

ciety" on my last visit to the city, and had read about it both before and afterward; how it preserved an unbelievable good humor in the heat of strangling excitement that made men's eyes bulge from their heads. There was plenty of pushing and struggling, but not of the kind to which my shadow resorted; his rudeness violated the first rule of the game, and in the twinkling of an eye he was hustled fifty ways. He had been the prisoner of all nations before he escaped from that warm bubble of the melting pot; and by that time I must have been well along toward the Belmont in a taxicab.

TO BE CONCLUDED.

The second part of this story will appear in the next POPULAR on sale two weeks hence, April 7th.

A SHOCKING PROCEEDING

THE aunt was a dear old maiden lady who had spent her life making pies, knitting socks, and doing all the housework there was in sight.

The niece, who was visiting her during the summer vacation, had spent much time at college in communion with the "higher things," and she had a great disdain for housekeeping and such drudgeries.

One evening the aunt, who had been to the neighboring town to make some purchases, returned and inquired of her niece:

"Emily, where have you been all the afternoon?"

"Oh," replied Emily in a rapturous tone, "I've spent the whole afternoon in the hammock with my beloved Walter Pater."

"Emily," said the aunt sternly, "if I hear of your doing anything like that again, I'll send you straight home."

One Touch of Nature

A STORY OF THE ROYAL NORTHWEST MOUNTED POLICE

By Lawrence Mott

CONSTABLE GROVE NELSON, of the Northwest Mounted, stopped his jaded horse on the top of a little rise. On every side the gently rolling distances fell away until their outlines were lost in the purple-gray gloom of a hot summer evening, and the shrill, yelping bark of coyotes hunting in an arroyo somewhere beyond floated sharply on the still air.

Overhead the skies were delicately tinted with the last reflections of day. Pale red and orange, streaks of heavy amber, and, at the horizon's edge, threads of brilliant gold laced the heavens in long, irregular lines that were broken into by splashes of ruby crimson.

"Well, Ben, my boy," said the young, powerfully built constable, slipping to the ground and affectionately patting his horse's neck, "we've done our good seventy miles since daylight, and it's too dark to see the trail, so"—he tugged the cinch loose, while the animal, on whom sweat had dried in foamy patches, gently nibbled his shoulder—"we'll bunk here for the night." He slid the saddle to the ground with its holstered carbine, took off the bridle. "Water's scarce, boy, this'll have to do." He soaked a sponge with some of his own scanty supply and carefully washed out the horse's mouth. "Now nibble away on anything you can find—'tisn't much, I'm afraid."

The horse seemed to understand and moved off in the gloom, plucking at bits of green here and there that had not had the life blasted out of them by the fierce July sun.

With the care of long training the constable hung his coat over one end of the saddle, and, using his carbine as a support, made a little tent shelter in which he put a small spirit lamp and poured all the water left in his canvas-covered bottle in the receptacle over it. Carefully shading the light he touched the wick, and a little blue flame sprang into life. He dropped the other edge of his coat across the rifle, and not a ray of light could be seen. From his saddlebags he got a loaf of bread and a tin of corned beef and some tea. When the water was boiling he put the tea in it and ate his meal in the vast loneliness of the rapidly darkening prairie. Then he methodically put the utensils back in the bags, unrolled his light blanket, got his pipe going—using the same care in lighting it, and quickly shutting the perforated metal lid over the bowl so that no telltale glow might be seen. With the saddle as a pillow, he stretched out on the warm ground.

Above him the sky was a limpid blue-black space, from which the myriads of diamond-brilliant stars seemed to be mysteriously hung. Brightest of all, the north star glittered, seeming to change color.

"I wonder where Jim Thorpe and his cronies are making for, anyway?" the constable mused, half aloud. "I'm on their trail all right enough—I'd know the pacing stride of that stallion of his anywhere; but what they're trying to do, heading northwest, beats me! I'm

between them and the line, and they can't keep on much farther or Dickson and Ellis'll head 'em off at Mud River Post. They're about eight hours ahead of me, by the look of the tracks."

He put the pipe in his pocket. The stars wavered strangely in the heavens as he watched them more and more drowsily.

"There's his cussed horse, Jim—we got to look out fer that brute! He just loves Grove, an' he'll whinny sure as th' sun rises ef he gets onto us. Grove never tethers him 'cause he's better'n any watchdog ever born!—I know"—he added significantly.

Four men lay flat, peering over the edge of the arroyo, whispering into one another's ears. In the star-lighted darkness they could see the outlines of the horse, and, farther on, the black blotch made by the constable as he slept, head against his saddle.

"Tell you what let's do, and the only thing to do," Jim Thorpe, one time—no one in the Northwest ever knew quite when—but one-time gentleman, whispered.

Jim Thorpe had a thorough education, a magnificent physique, and he molded men as clay in his hands. "Handsome Jim Thorpe," the rough and lawless element of the West called him because of his six feet two inches, his broad shoulders, his bold, deep gray eyes over which long lashes curled, that looked *"at* a man, not all round the hull damned prairie," as Jack Willis, one of the most celebrated outlaws of the great Northwest, said after his famous encounter with Jim Thorpe.

It happened in this wise:

A stranger, on a good-looking piece of horseflesh, rode into Battleford late one night, stalked into "Dutch" Billy's saloon. Dutch was acting as barkeep that night because his assistant had doped out the wrong drink to a man the evening before, and was temporarily laid up with a bottle-gashed skull in consequence. Dutch told the story the next day:

"Py golly, you know dot feller he iss ingecommen choost like he scairt. 'Give me a glass of vatter, blease,' he say, choost gentlelike. I sees dis feller iss a stranger, so I gif him de glass vatter. On de next to him vas—you know vat Chack Villis iss—ya? Vell, Chack, he say, 'Dere iss no vatter sold here,' und he make smash de glass on de floor—ya! I dodch unter de bar, t'inken shootin' goin' gommence, *aber nein!* Vould you belief me but dot stranger he valk over to Chack und he say ver' shtill: 'Pick oop dose pieces!' Chack, he pull hiss gun, und he say: 'Say dot ag'in!' Und de stranger he say—'Pick oop—dose—pieces!'—chust shtill. Und py golly, Chack, he put hiss gun avay, und he get down on his knees und pick oop der pieces! Ya! Sooch a ding I neffer see! Neffer! De odders in de bar dey all loog und loog, und de stranger he stand dere und make leedle laughing. 'So—dank you,' he say—'shake'; und Chack he vipe hiss righd handt on hiss drousers und he say, 'Put it dere, bardner!' und he say to me: 'Dutch, pring dis chentlemens von glass de best vatter you got, und be gevick aboud id!' Ya—und de odders dey all like poodles 'rround de stranger den. Dey make all kinds nicenesses, but he trink hiss vatter, get on hiss horse, und go avay in der blackness—ya! Vat it vas I don't know, but dere vas somedings aboud dot man dot Chack Villis vas afraid of—und Chack—he has killet hiss seffen men alreatty—ya!"

The four men backed noiselessly into the arroyo.

"We'll have to go round and try to rush him before the horse makes a racket, easy now, boys!" He led the way noiselessly and the four moved on as shadows. A very faint night breeze

eddied about in the arroyo and whiffled over its edge. Ben, who had been quietly nibbling at such grass as he could find, suddenly threw up his head suspiciously, nostrils opened wide, ears pricked forward. Then he wheeled and trotted over to where the constable slept soundly in the cool, tired after the long, hot ride.

"Down!" Blunty Edgars muttered. "Git down, quick! How in blazes d' that horse know? We ain't made a sound?" They flattened themselves on the ground.

Ben pushed his soft muzzle into the constable's face, snuffling gently.

"What—what is it, Ben?" Nelson sat up sleepily.

Not a sound anywhere in the darkness save for the little noises of night insects, and a yip-yip-yipping of coyotes. The constable got to his feet, stretched himself, then, arm over the horse's powerful neck, he listened, and watched.

Nothing.

Ben could no longer get the scent, though he lifted his head high, then lowered it close to the earth. Man and animal stood for several minutes.

"You're worse than an old woman at hearing things!" Grove said aloud, patting the sensitive nose. "Must be a good three hours before daylight yet, and I'm going to have another nap!"

He curled up again against the saddle.

But this time the horse, instead of looking for more grass, stood close beside the constable, who was soon asleep again.

"Best thing that we can do is to rush him, horse or no horse!" Thorpe said. "Now!"

They were on him before he knew it.

"Put 'em up, Nelson!"

He fumbled for his revolver, but the four had him tied hand and foot in an instant.

"Grove? Well—well—well!" Thorpe said, peering into the constable's face. "I had no idea that you would be sent after us!"

"You will be sorry yet for this deal," the policeman answered quietly.

"It looks to me as if I hold the cards!"

"Does look that way—now!" The constable rolled himself over on his side. "But you know us too well, Thorpe, to hope to get away with it."

"I don't like to kill you, Grove—I really don't. You are a decent sort, but——"

"Aw, kill him!" Scar growled. "He knows us all, an' we'll never be able t' see Canady ag'in ef ye don't. You look t'other way an' I'll 'fix' him! Ground's soft in th' coulee an' we kin bury him thar!"

"That's right, Jim," said Edgars. "He knows 'bout th' bank job, an' it's fifteen fer ours, b'hind th' bars."

"No-o," Thorpe answered, "I have never killed a man yet, except in self-defense, and this could hardly be called that. No, we'll tie him safely and peg him down. This is out of the line of the patrol, anyway, but old Aleck King will be along to-morrow—he always crosses here, and by that time we will be——"

"Safe, you're goin' t' say!" interrupted Scar. "Nix! I'm not goin' ter risk fifteen years just because you don't like ter shoot!" He leveled his arm, but Thorpe was too quick, and the bullet buried itself in the earth three inches from the constable's head.

"Thanks!" Nelson said quietly, shaking his head to get rid of the burned powder grains. "Just in time!"

"You coward!" Thorpe drove his fist into Scar's face, knocking him flat. He picked himself up and holstered his weapon.

"Ye needn't be so rough 'bout it!" he whined.

"You men know me well enough to realize that when I say a thing I mean it. We've got plenty of time to get across, and we've got money enough to start over again when we get there, so it is up to us to move! Daylight's coming."

"I'm goin' ter shoot th' blamed horse, anyhow! Knows near enough ter talk!" Scar grumbled.

"Why kill a good horse?" the constable asked, as the other drew his revolver. "It hasn't done you any harm, and——"

"Shut up, Scar!" interposed Jim Thorpe. "We'll take the horse with us. No use in killing anything unless we have to, and we don't, in this case."

"Thanks again, Thorpe." The constable rolled over on the other side to ease himself. "I am——"

Ben whinnied loudly.

"Now what in——"

"Hands up!"

Scar fired at random toward a group of police that rushed over the arroyo's edge. Came a flash from the oncoming force, a report, and Scar dropped limply, twitched, and was still. Thorpe stood, both hands over his head. The other two ran to the edge of the arroyo, and tumbled into it.

"After 'em, men, lively!" Sergeant Atkins bellowed.

"How'd they get you, Grove?" he asked, as he untied the bound constable while another policeman, weapon in hand, relieved Thorpe of his revolvers.

"I was a blessed idiot, Tom!" Nelson got stiffly to his feet. "Ben warned me, but I thought that they were miles ahead!"

"H'm!" the grizzled sergeant chuckled. "Don't you know that Thorpe"—he looked up at the outlaw—"is the cutest thing on two legs? When I got back and heard that you'd gone on alone after him I knew what would happen, so we followed Ben's heavy track till sundown, and guessed at the trail the rest of the way. We'll share the reward—it's five thousand dollars from the express company and two thousand from the government. Bracelets fast, Steve?"

"And locked!" The constable handed the key to the sergeant.

Nelson rubbed his chafed ankles and wrists, stamping up and down to restore the circulation.

"We'll have to get the horses—they slipped away from us down in an L in that bottom."

"You're a fine lot of rookies!" the sergeant said disgustedly, as the five reported. "Bring up the horses, then—though I'm not particular about the others. *That's* the man we want!"

Thorpe smiled genially. "You've got me, so cheer up!"

"You bet we've got you!" snapped Sergeant Atkins. Then to Nelson: "Grove, you take him back to the post, and wait for us. I'll catch those other sons of guns or drive 'em into the States—better drive 'em over, and then we won't be bothered; here's the key. I'll bring Scar's body with me. A hard end to a hard life," he said musingly, looking at the brutal face.

After a cup of tea, the sergeant and his men went on, following the two fugitives.

Pink and gray and green, the lights of dawn brightened the east. Tinges of yellow were higher up, and to the west the azure blue of the sky promised a cloudless day.

"They've taken my horse!" the outlaw said quietly, "so I'll have to foot it. Ready?"

Until noon the two plodded on in the glaring heat, neither saying a word.

"We'll have a rest here," Nelson said, as he and his prisoner reached a coulee bottom through which a thin stream of cool water gurgled. He unsaddled Ben.

The outlaw sat down in the thick grass. Nelson got the rest of the bread and meat from his saddlebags.

"I cannot do much this way!" Thorpe said whimsically, holding up his manacled hands. "You will have to feed me!"

The young constable looked at the wrists where the metal had chafed the skin. He hesitated—then he impulsively unlocked the cuffs. "Go ahead and eat, man!"

Thorpe looked at the scanty supply of food. "If I eat there'll be nothing left for you."

"Eat it!—I ride, you *walk!*"

He watched his prisoner as he finished every crumb. "Have a smoke?" He tossed the making of a cigarette to the outlaw, and filled his pipe.

Wee brown thrushes warbled among the undergrowth that lined the bottom, filling the hot air with their dainty songs, and far above a hawk swung lazily in great circles, watching for some unwary gopher.

"You're taking risks, aren't you?" the outlaw asked, as he lay back in the grass and smoked.

"Chance 'em!" the constable answered laconically—"and, besides, Thorpe, I can't stand seeing a man suffer with those cuffs all day."

The other looked at him quizzically through half-closed eyes.

"Supposing that I told you that I have an old mother, Grove? Supposing that you read this letter?" He pulled an envelope from an inner pocket, and tossed it to the other, who hesitated, then opened it.

The writing was a mere feeble tracery, and the constable read:

My Dearest Boy: Thank you for your last letter that brought me much cheer. I am so glad that you are doing well on your farm, and only wish that I could see it. Your father was a great farmer at home in the olden days, and his name was respected far and wide, as I have so often told you. It is a source of gratification in my old age to feel that you are a law-abiding inhabitant of the great Canada of which your father so often and wistfully spoke. How much he would have enjoyed seeing your success, and participating in it with you. Do you ever think of him, my boy? Although he has been dead twenty-five years, it seems but yesterday since he put his arms round me as we watched you playing in the garden at Montrose, and he used to say: "He will make a fine man!" And you have proven it.

I do not like to cause you anxiety, but could you not spare a little time to come and see me? The doctor says that I have—I have forgotten the name of the disease—and that I have not much longer to live. I am seventy-eight years of age, my boy. You never knew how old I was because I always wished to seem young to you, so that you would remember me as cheery and happy. But although the spirit is still young, the body is very frail, I am sorry to say, and I would like to see you once more before I go away. Could you come soon?

You send me so much money! Ranching must pay well. I have not needed half of that which comes so regularly, so I have been helping a foundling asylum here, in your name. I, through you, have so much to be thankful for, and those poor little children have none of the advantages that you had. You do not mind, dear, do you?

My blessings and my love to you, my only child. Fondly, Mother.

Slowly the constable folded the thin paper, put it back in the envelope, and gave it to the outlaw without a word.

The thrushes twittered, a little field mouse scurried across an open space, and the hawk still swung lazily round and round.

"Where is your mother now?" Nelson asked roughly to hide the huskiness in his voice.

"Duluth."

"Look here, Thorpe, you've got a record behind you that means twenty years."

"I know it."

"And you've also got a record of never having lied to a living soul—that's the story they tell at Regina, anyway."

The other smiled whimsically. "That won't count for much against bank

holdups and a lot of other things—will it?"

"If I let you go to see your mother will you give me your word to deliver yourself at Regina within two weeks?"

Jim Thorpe sat up, reached over, and put his hand on the other's shoulder.

"Do you mean that?"

"I do."

But the constable was not thinking so much then of the outlaw, as of one whose photograph he always carried under his khaki coat.

The midday heat was stifling.

"Thorpe, the reward money for you will buy me out of the service, and"—he laughed awkwardly, tapping his boot with a twig—"and there's a girl waiting for me. She——"

"I know, my boy, I know what you mean."

"It would ruin both our lives if you went back on me."

"It would."

"But I'm going to trust you. Stretch out your wrist." He unlocked the cuff. "The others may come this way, so you'd better hurry."

His fine gray eyes soft as a woman's, the outlaw bent over the young constable.

"I'll report! Good-by."

"So long. Here, take this bread and meat."

"No, thanks, I can get something at Elson's, and it's only fifteen miles to the line from there."

The constable watched the other's figure as it grew smaller and smaller until it disappeared. He whistled and Ben trotted to him.

"Now for it!" he said aloud, as he got into the saddle and took the trail again.

"You say, constable, that this man Thorpe showed you a letter purporting to be from his mother, stating that she was ill and wanted to see him, and that on the strength of it you permitted him to escape into the United States?"

The commissioner's office at the Mounted Police headquarters was still, save for the spasmodic buzzing of a fly that was caught between the shade and the windowpane.

"Yes, sir."

The commissioner's orderly clicked away on the typewriter while the adjutant idly drummed his fingers on his knee.

"H'm!" the commissioner said brusquely, after a moment's silence. "I am afraid, Nelson, that I cannot give credence to your story. I have a report here"—he drew a sheet of paper toward him—"that states entirely different facts. How much did Thorpe give you to free him?" he asked, so suddenly that the orderly jumped.

"Nothing, sir," Nelson answered quietly, but the muscles under his uniform tightened.

Through the still, hot air came the gruff orders of the sergeant in charge of a riding squad of rookies on the drill ground.

"Fourrrrs forward, four right—trot! Gallop!" Then the thunder of horses' feet on the sunbaked earth. "Halt! By twos—left wheel!"

"H'm!" the commissioner said again—"sorry, Nelson, because you gave promise of upholding the honor and standing of the Royal Northwest Mounted Police, a force that has no equal in the world, and that has never had a stain on its colors. I sentence you to two months, and dishonorable discharge at the expiration of that time. Adjutant Wiley, will you——"

"Oh, but, sir, I——"

"That is all, Nelson, I am sorry. On the face of it your story is incredible. Thorpe is one of the cleverest rascals at liberty. You can see for yourself—the two weeks within which you say that he promised to report here elapsed three days ago. To make nothing more

serious of it, a man who forgets duty, for sentiment or any other sake, has no place in the force which I have the honor to command."

"But if he should come, sir?" the young constable asked, blinking hard to keep the moisture out of his eyes.

"Ah, that would be a different story, but he is not the sort of a man who would deliberately give himself up to twenty years for your sake!" the commissioner said grimly. He resumed his work.

Nelson looked at him, started to speak, then followed the adjutant out into the brilliant sunlight and across the grassy barracks square to the cells. The constable on duty brought his rifle to present. His face was expressionless, but his eyes were full of sympathy as he listened:

"Constable Nelson, in number six. Order number three hundred and twenty-four from the commissioner." He handed the other a slip of paper.

When the rattling of the bolt was finished and the sentinel resumed his pacing up and down, Grove Nelson sat on the iron cot, and dumbly took a little photograph from an inner pocket.

From one of the officer's houses across the square the thrilling, cheery notes of a canary floated, and one of the commissioner's daughters was playing some old-time melody on a guitar. Vaguely he heard these sounds, and more vividly the scrunch—scrunch—scrunch of the guard's feet as he moved to and fro, the sun glistening from his rifle barrel.

The shadows of evening were softly closing down over headquarters. Guard had been mounted for the night. Still Nelson sat on, staring through the bars.

"Too bad, Grove. We're all so sorry," the new patrol whispered. But Nelson did not answer. Nor did he speak when his food was brought.

Finally he slept from sheer exhaustion while a full moon shone serenely, and the still night air was broken only by the rhythmic walk of the sentries.

"Commissioner wants you, Nelson," Sergeant Rourke said, unlocking the cell.

Without a word Grove got into his clothes. The two crossed the moonlit square. The same bare office with its maps on the walls, the same adjutant, the same commissioner.

"A-ahem, Nelson, a good"—he repeated and emphasized the adjective—"a *good* friend of yours wants to see you."

Grove's first thought was of Her, but she could not possibly know of his disgrace yet. He waited. The commissioner touched a button, and Jim Thorpe, handcuffed and followed by a constable, walked in.

"Hello, Nelson! Told you I'd come, but mother, she—she was dying when I got there, and I had to bury her. I have explained the situation to the commissioner. He understands." The strong, handsome face was sorrow-lined, but his voice never faltered. "I have never lied to a man yet, though my record in other ways is not as bright as it should be. See these?" He held out his manacled wrists. "No one has ever put them on me but you, my lad, and many have tried—as the commissioner knows. My mother is gone, still believing that I led an honorable life. She understands *now*, but she died, humanly speaking, in peace. I have you to thank for this. I could do no less than keep my word. You have a girl to live and work for, as you told me; I"—he shrugged his shoulders—"have no one now who cares, and quite frankly I'd rather do my time in prison than to have it on my conscience that I had ruined your career and your future life. I have told the commissioner that you took me in the first

place," his deep gray eyes looked hard at Nelson—"and that, therefore, the reward is yours. I further state that I claim myself as your prisoner, and I deliver myself to the law so as to keep my word to *you,* and to no one else. With the reward you can do as you said you wished to do—buy yourself out. Do it, my lad. The R. N. W. M. P. is a wonderful body of men, but, begging your pardon"—to the commissioner—"it is a sordid game to hound men to prison. They usually come out worse than when they went in, and with a hatred of humanity in general. Get out of it, lad. Dig the soil, as my mother wrote that my father used to do. Make *it* give you happiness and success." Turning again to the commissioner, who shaded his eyes for some reason or another: "You understand, sir?"

"Quite!" And the bluff soldier stood up, put a hand on the outlaw's shoulder. "You are a dangerous man, Thorpe; you have been the bane of the police for years, but I must say that a finer type of man I have never seen in all my career in his majesty's service."

"Please!" Thorpe smiled.

"And, furthermore, Thorpe, I intend to use my influence to have your sentence mitigated as far as justice will permit. A man that has acted as you have in this matter, when you might easily have escaped, has a lot of good in him, and, personally, I do not think the law is intended to bear too heavily on such a man. The reward is yours, Nelson. I suppose that you wish to buy yourself out—eh?" he chuckled.

"But, Commissioner Martins, I cannot take all the reward, because Sergeant Atkins——"

"Tut, man; the sergeant says he had nothing to do with it. However, decide that among yourselves."

Several days later, all formalities concluded, ex-Constable Nelson was ready to leave for home.

"Good-by, Jim!" he said, with a lump in his throat.

The outlaw patted him on the back. "Cheer up, my lad! The colonel will look after me. You go marry that girl and look after *her!* Good luck, boy; give her my best wishes—that's all I have to send." The smile was a forced one, and when the grated door closed and Grove had disappeared, the outlaw leaned his head against the bars and closed his eyes.

The little canary trilled sweetly in the sunshine, and the murmur of voices and laughter came from the officers' mess.

"I beg your pardon, but is this Grove Nelson's farm?"

"Yes," the young woman answered; "but he is over on Section Four to-day, and will not be home until dark. Can I do anything for you?"

"No—no—that is—yes. I used to know him well long ago; would it be too much to ask to be allowed to wait out here under the trees?"

His deep gray eyes met hers fearlessly, and with a Western woman's intuition she felt that he was "right."

"Certainly; but we're just going to have lunch. Come in!"

He hesitated. Then, "Thank you," he said gravely, and followed her into the neat, comfortable home.

"I must look after that Chinese cook of ours; he is uncertain about some ways of doing things—even yet!" she laughed. "Don't let the children tease you."

The eldest, of three, a sturdy little lad, looked at the stranger curiously for some instants, then he ran out and came back with an apple; he shyly offered it. The stranger took it solemnly and ate while the lad watched, one hand on the man's knee.

"Very nice!" he said. "Thank you!"

During the meal Mrs. Nelson chat-

tered merrily about the farm, their success—he answering in monosyllables.

"You must know Grove very well?"

"Very."

"Did you ever hear him speak of a man called Thorpe—Jim Thorpe? He has so often told me about him, and he is always hoping that some day Thorpe will come to see us."

"I do not remember ever hearing him say anything about Thorpe."

Then she told him how Thorpe had sacrificed himself.

"The only thing that I don't like about it is that the reward—though we were able to marry on it—seems like blood money." She shivered slightly. "We have everything, and that fine man in prison! Jackie, don't bother Mr. —er——"

"Eh? Oh, Black. He does not bother me." He patted the shock of golden curls.

After the meal he went out and wandered about the big vegetable gardens and the outbuildings. More than once she looked out to see what he was doing, with a feeling of interest that she could not understand.

At dusk he came in.

"It is almost time for—— Here they come, now!" she called to him from the back piazza, as the sounds of horses' feet came on the sweet evening air.

"Supper, Edith? Starving!"

"There's been a man here since early, waiting for you, Grove."

"That so? About that new fencing, I suppose—name Ely?" He unsaddled as he talked.

"No—Black."

"Black—Black? Don't know any Black. I'll be in in a minute."

"You want to see me, sir?"

The stranger was looking out of the open window when Nelson entered.

"I told you that I'd come, my lad," he said simply, holding out his hand.

"Jim Thorpe!"

As a child, Grove Nelson threw his strong arms round the other's shoulders.

"Glad to see me?" the outlaw asked, with a pathetic catch in his voice. "Won't be ashamed to tell your wife? She doesn't know."

"Ashamed? Ashamed? *Edith!"*

She came running.

"This is Jim Thorpe, to whom we owe everything that we've got."

"But *he* said—I thought his name was——"

"I wanted it to be a surprise, Mrs. Nelson," said Thorpe. "I wanted to hear with my own ears, I wanted to *see* for myself, what Grove would say and do, and I am more than repaid. Forgive my deception! It was innocent."

"It is late, and I must be going on to-morrow, so——"

"Going where?" Nelson interrupted.

The three sat in rocking-chairs on the grass under the glittering night lights.

There was a silence.

"I am not sure; but somewhere—to work," Thorpe said slowly.

Impulsively Nelson got up, put both hands on the other's shoulders. "You'll do nothing of the kind. What Edith and I have is the price of ten years in——"

"Don't, lad! That is all over. I——"

"You have no friends, have you?" the younger man continued, almost sternly.

"No."

"Any relatives?"

"None that I care about, or that would want an ex-convict near. But I can——"

"Then, Jim, you must stay here with us! Don't you see how it will help us in a small measure to repay all——"

"No—no, lad, I couldn't think of such a——"

The girl—for Edith looked no more

than that—knelt beside his chair, took one of his hands.

"Please stay?" she said softly.

"Please, Jim, for auld lang syne!" Nelson added.

Nothing but the faint rustlings of leaves as the night breeze breathed.

"If—you—put—it—in—that—way, I —will."

Jim Thorpe, one time the bane of the Northwest Mounted Police, cleared his throat huskily. "Sure that you want me? I'm getting old, and never did know much about farming; but maybe I can help in some way. I know how to make shoes!" he finished, with the same old whimsical chuckle. "Yes, I'll stay till you get tired of feeding me."

"Good boy, Jim! Well, good night, old man! We are happy now, eh, Edith?"

"Indeed, yes!"

"First room at the top of the stairs on the right is yours, Jim. Good night!"

"Good night—and God bless you both!"

In a short time all the lights but one went out in the house, and still Thorpe sat on, thinking long, long thoughts.

"There is good in the world, after all!" he whispered, bowing his head.

Noiselessly he closed the front door after him, put out the light in the neat hallway, went softly upstairs. The sheets of his bed were cool, sweet smelling of dried Indian grasses. Through the open window came the little whispering of the wind and the sheen of the stars.

"Thank God I played the man!" he whispered.

THE STOLEN TIP

MANY of the really big men of the financial world are rarely known to the public. Their names are not often seen in print, coupled with great events. In Wall Street such men as Norman B. Ream, the late H. McK. Twombly, and the like are known as the "Factors." They do great things in a quiet way, and if they make mistakes their puppets bear the brunt of public criticism.

A bright Wall Street youth of eighteen was employed in the office of one of the Factors as a confidential messenger. On the morning of July 17, 1906, this boy was on his way to his employer's broker with a sealed order. He was getting sixty dollars a month, and the sum seemed small. Then the devil suggested that if he knew his boss' secret he could make a pile of money. So he opened the envelope, read the order, and resealed the cover.

When he got to the broker's office, the boy asked him to buy him some stock on a two-point margin. The broker frowned and looked askance at the lad. But it pays a broker to keep on good terms with a Factor's clerk, so he agreed to the suggestion.

That afternoon Harriman and his directors met and suddenly declared a ten-per-cent dividend on Union Pacific. It started the biggest boom Wall Street has ever seen. Stocks shot up like skyrockets.

The Factor, who knew what was coming, had bought Union Pacific. So had the clerk who had stolen the tip. The clerk made ten thousand dollars in two days. It was his first easy money, and it ruined a bright career. He quit his job, and never worked again.

Some of the big opportunities of life are worse than none at all.

Jake Pod Compels the Tourists to Come In

By William H. Hamby

Author of "The Hill Billy Stories," Etc.

"The fellow who has ideas and hustles gets in on the ground floor—while the rest of 'em stay outside and eat chaff." This bit of philosophy comes from Jake Pod who evolved it from a hard experience. Jake's ideas were sometimes startling. Witness this tale of how he ran the Ozark Tourist Hotel

THE trouble with you fellows, Mitch," said Jake Pod, sticking his ax into a white oak stump and sitting down on the woodpile to catch his third wind, "is you ain't got no idees nor you ain't got no hustle. Before I was twenty-one I was getting two-seventy-five a day working on the bridge gang of the old C. B. & I."

He pushed back the mustache from his upper lip with the knuckle of his left forefinger. Jake wore a tawny mustache, for it was one of his "idees" that a mustache helped a fellow to get married, and Jake lacked considerable of being married.

"You see," he resumed, after waiting for the astonishing sum of two dollars and seventy-five cents to sink into Mitch Wells, the hill billy, "you got to be thinking up things all the time, and you got to everlastingly hustle to get along in this world."

Mitch did not say anything. That was the best way to encourage Jake to go on. The hill billy was about twenty-four, six feet long, and lean. He had thick, brown hair and a tanned, serious face, with mild, humorous gray eyes. He sat on the green log as though resting all over. But when he jumped a deer, or spotted a turkey gobbler, or ran his boat over the rapids there was not a sleepy muscle in his sinewy body. Those who knew said Mitch was the best boatman on White River, and the best hunter in the Ozarks. He almost smiled as he remembered, alongside of Jake's boasted two dollars and seventy-five cents, what he got for the day's work when he saved those three St. Louis fellows from drowning. But he said nothing.

"Now take me," went on Jake, pushing back his mustache with the knuckle of his right forefinger, "there I was up in Ioway working by the day—but savin' my money—you bet I saved my money; when I come across a fellow that wanted to sell that there black stallion—the one I traded to old Zack Bond. Now I had an idee. I said to myself: 'Jake, that's a mighty handsome horse, but he ain't registered. You can buy him for four hundred dollars, for a horse up here where they know what is which that ain't registered is n. g. You can buy that horse and take him down in the Ozarks where they don't know a pedigree from a white oak stump, and you can sell him for a thousand dollars.'"

Jake stopped to slap his leg, and chuckled a little, stringy, swiggling sort of chuckle. "And I done it—and more.

I traded him to old Zack for sixteen hundred on this place. Told the old codger he was from Arabia and would make his fortune—skinned old Zack out of twelve hundred clear as a whistle.

"Then here comes this Iron Mountain Railroad. Runs slap across my land. Don't hurt it a bit—helps it, in fact. But I bleeds 'em for eight hundred cash. Now I'm pretty well heeled.

"You see, Mitch, some of you worthless cusses would say that was luck; but it ain't. It's idees. The fellow that's got idees and hustles gets in on the ground floor—while the rest of 'em stay outside and eat chaff."

Mitch yawned, looked at the sun, and got up.

" 'Bout grub time. Have to be gettin' along toward the shack."

Jake did not ask him to take dinner with him. He never did, and if any visitor ever stayed by mistake it cost him a quarter.

As Mitch followed the path along the ridge toward his own place, a slow smile began to inhabit his face. The smile emerged very gradually from somewhere away inside Mitch Wells. He was thinking of Pod. He was the only fellow in the neighborhood who could talk to Jake without getting mad. And when Mitch was asked by his neighbors why he stayed around Jake's so much, he merely grinned and drawled:

"Oh, he's a funny sort of cuss. He talks so much with his mouth."

Mitch stopped at the door of his own shack. It was not a shack, but a very comfortable house set high on the bluff above White River, and in the rich valley below were forty acres of good farm land that belonged to him. He looked lingeringly across the valley and the sweep of the brown hills, whose woods were reddening with sap in the March sun. It would not be long until the redbud and dogwood were in bloom on the bluff. Zoe Murray had never seen any dogwood in bloom. He went in, still smiling, to get his own dinner.

Three days later, while Mitch was breaking his rich bottom patch, which he divided evenly between corn, cane, and watermelons, Jake Pod came down upon him in great excitement.

"Mitch," he said, slapping the hill billy's shoulder in his exuberance, "I got a idee—the biggest idee you ever heard of. As I's tellin' you the other day, it's idees and hustle that does the business.

"Now here's my idee—and I'm going to give you a job, Mitch, a good, steady job that you can lay by money on. I'm going to favor you, Mitch. There'll be a hundred fellows after the job, but it goes to you first.

"Now here's what I'm going to do." Jake paused long enough for dramatic suspense. "I'm going to lease the St. Louey Clubhouse."

"Are?" Mitch was mildly surprised.

"Yep." Jake nodded with fatalistic positiveness. "I have done it."

The St. Louis Clubhouse was built on a beautiful site high up on a bluff overlooking the river. The new railroad crossed the stream just a quarter of a mile below. The place had been built by a party of wealthy St. Louis business men for a summer fishing and winter hunting camp. The building and grounds had cost thirty thousand dollars. There were accommodations in the big, delightful structure for forty guests, and the grounds afforded tennis and golf. There were boats and canoes and fishing tackle by the load, and a boathouse at the foot of the bluff by the river's edge. The interest of the clubmen waned or was shifted to other points. The hunting club was disbanded, and the building had been leased for two years as a tourist hotel, and had lost money both years.

"I got it a whole year for seven hun-

dred and fifty," went on the exuberant Jake. "And I'll boom things. You see, what the reason is it's failed, the fellow that runs it ain't got any idees or hustle—and he's wasteful. Once I get the place known, there won't be half enough room for them that come. I'll just keep puttin' up prices until I have just enough to fill it all the time.

"What I want you to do, Mitch, is take charge of the boats and the fishin'—and take parties out riding. We'll charge 'em twenty-five cents an hour for the boat and fifty cents an hour for you. You can have all you make up to two-fifty a day. If it runs over that, I get it."

He paused for Mitch's grateful acceptance. But the hill billy unwrapped the lines from around his wrist, rubbed his lean cheek with his right hand, and seemed in doubt.

"If you make it two and a half straight, rain or shine, and I don't have to be there only when there's tourists—I'll come," concluded Mitch.

Jake protested it was a holdup; that he'd be bankrupt—and that by his best friend. But Mitch only shook his head, took hold of the plow handle, and clucked to his team. Then Pod gave in and agreed.

"You can ring the bell when you need me," said Mitch. "I can hear it easy from here, and I can get up there in about twelve minutes. It won't hurt none of them to wait that long."

Jake Pod took charge of the St. Louis Club the twentieth of March. He at once changed its name to the Ozark Tourist Hotel.

"It is my idee," he explained to Mitch, "to economize, especially at first. Most of these here hotels waste enough to support a family of ten. They come mostly for the scenery, you know. I've hired Buck Stauber as cook."

Mitch looked at him in a sort of quiet surprise.

"Buck ain't so overly much, is he?"

"Oh, he's pretty fair." Jake nodded and rubbed his mustache back from his mouth with his knuckle. "He cooked for the Halwell Restaurant three months, and I got him for five a week and board. He'll do all right."

For ten days Mitch went on breaking and harrowing his rich bottom patch, and the bell did not ring once to call him to his duties as boatman and fisherman guide up to the big Ozark Tourist Hotel. Instead, Jake Pod came down Saturday afternoon. He followed Mitch's plow a couple of rounds and talked and handled his mustache in a nervous, propitiatory way.

"I reckon, Mitch," he said finally, "I can let your wages begin about the last of next week."

"I reckon, Jake," Mitch turned his mild gray eyes on him with a look of definite finality, "that my wages begun ten days ago. You owe me twenty-five dollars right now."

Jake squirmed and evaded and pleaded no receipts. But it was so sure with Mitch that he wouldn't even discuss it. Finally Jake confessed judgment, and promised to pay—when he began to make money.

"I tell you, Mitch," he brightened, "I've got an idee to make things hum. The reason that thing ain't never paid, people don't know nothing about it. Once they know what a wonderful place I got, they'll flock there like wild pigeons to a night roost. Why, that editor fellow from Kansas that's been up there a week says he's been all over everywhere—Europe and Colorado and all them places—and this is the finest scenery he ever saw."

"Gettin' free board, isn't he?"

"Yes, but I can afford to let him stay free for the advertising he's going to write—he's going to boost the scenery big."

Mitch smiled. Jake had missed the point.

"What does he say about the grub?" Mitch looked off toward the reddening woods to hide his grin.

"He ain't made no complaint," assured Jake.

"Mitch, here's my idee." Jake extended his left hand and tapped the palm with the knuckle of his right forefinger. "What I need is just to once get the people up here—and let 'em see what a place I got. Then you can't keep 'em away with bulldogs.

"Now there ain't nothing that draws like something free. I'm going to send out word to Halwell and Michael and Soper Springs and Big Bend—and other towns, inviting them to come down for a spring picnic—and offering them a big, free dinner."

"Can you afford it?" Mitch was astounded at this burst of generosity.

Jake gave a slow, significant wink, and tapped Mitch's shoulder. "That's where the idee comes in, Mitch. You or nearly everybody else could of thought of a free dinner—and getting a crowd that-a-way. But here's where the brains come in. The dinner won't last very long. It naterally couldn't with such a crowd. I'll go out and explain we only expected thirty or forty —and are awful sorry, but the cook is doing his dad-blamedest.

"Then of course I'll have scattered all around the place refreshment stands —ice cream and pop, and hamburger sandwiches—and pretty nearly anything anybody wants to eat. I'll make more than enough profit on these to pay for the dinner I give away, and I'll get the advertising free. See?"

Mitch shook his head thoughtfully, and ventured a suggestion:

"It seems to me, Jake, that free shows don't generally draw the sort of fellows that buy tickets. You'd be lots more likely to catch them if you'd put up a ten-foot board fence all around the place and tack up a sign 'Keep Out,' and then stand at the gate and let 'em bribe you to get in. A fellow like that don't care shucks for what the crowd goes for, but he'll walk twenty miles and pay ten dollars to get into a turnip patch that nobody else is allowed in."

But Jake merely scoffed at the hill billy's philosophy and went on with his plans for the big event which was set for April 10th.

In the meantime Mitch finished his plowing and spent several very warm, springlike days fishing along the river within call of the bell. He took Jake several good messes of trout, and also took a basket of fine silvery ones to Miss Zoe Murray and her aunt.

Saturday he and Miss Zoe went climbing the bluff after dogwood and redbud blossoms. It would be an illuminating chapter on psychology to tell how it came about that so modest a girl as Miss Zoe and so shy a young man as Mitch ever discovered that they both wanted to explore the bluffs and gather flowers at the same time. But they did, and came down a little before sundown with arms well laden with white and misty pink spoils of the woods.

It was all new, these hills and bluffs and woods, to the girl. It fairly intoxicated her. Mitch loved the hills and river, of course—loved them unconsciously as a bird does the air it flies in. But to Miss Zoe, born and raised on the flat lands east of the Mississippi, where the world is all farms and towns, it was a new element, and thrilling and strange as the air is to a birdman.

She thanked him very prettily at the door as he turned over to her the load of blossoms. The flush was still in her cheeks, and the April flash and warmth in her eyes.

"I reckon," said Mitch, his shyness coming back as he held his soft hat in his hand, "you wouldn't care to see Marble Cave?"

"I reckon I would," she laughed. "I would love to see it."

"Thank you." And he hurried away, overcome with bashfulness, and hated himself for a week for not asking her when she would see it and if she would see it with him.

Monday Jake Pod hunted up his boatman to caution him to be on hand early Wednesday morning for the big free day.

"There'll be a scramble for boats," he warned, "and I want you to make the most of it. Rent 'em as fast as you can, and charge them double if they are out a minute over an hour. If they want you to take them rowing, charge them twenty-five cents a head and don't be gone more than a half hour. There'll be a lot of scary old hens and fluffy young chickens that'll want to ride, but'll be afraid with anybody but our brave, trusty guide. Ha!" Jake slapped Mitch generously. He was in fine spirits to-day.

"While I think of it, Mitch," Jake rubbed his mustached lip, and looked very devilish out of the corner of his eye, "I am much obliged for decoratin' up for me Sunday."

Mitch's mild gray eyes asked for an explanation. Pod laughed almost as heartily as a man.

"Why, down at Misses Dake's—and Zoe's, you know. I took dinner with 'em Sunday. And say, jiminee, but that girl can cook! She told me you had helped gather the posies to decorate the house with for me. Mighty clever of you, Mitch; mighty clever." He punched the hill billy in the ribs with the ends of his fingers.

"Don't you know I'm a good notion to marry that girl? They are mighty keen on it. The old aunt is just baiting me like a sparrow with crumbs."

Then Jake grew thoughtful, and shook his head doubtfully. "But I guess I can't afford it quite yet. They ain't got nothing. They are in purty hard luck. Old aunt has as'ma. That's why they came to these mountains. And Zoe has been trying to get a job keeping books or something to make expenses. Still, she's shore some peach of a girl, ain't she, Mitch? And she's as sweet on me as a pint of molasses on a slice of light bread."

He went off, wagging his head in matrimonial doubt.

Mitch climbed over the rail fence, went into the woods, cut a hickory club the size of his wrist, and beat the bark off a white oak sapling. He was still carrying the club when he went up to his house on the bluff and stuck it under the bed.

The advertised free picnic and dinner at the Ozark Tourist Hotel drew a good-sized crowd—seven or eight hundred. It was a fine day, and lots of natives who had never been inside the place were curious to see it.

Jake Pod was elated that night when he checked everybody up. Mitch had taken in enough at the boathouse to pay his wages to date and ten dollars over. The refreshment stands had cleared enough money to pay for the forty dinners, and leave a surplus of over forty dollars. Only one thing fogged Pod's gratification. He had heard remarks. "Mitch, it seems to me," he said reflectively, after pocketing all the surplus change, "that if I was eating a free-gratis dinner I wouldn't be so all-fired particular as some people. From the way some of the galoots talked you'd 'a' thought they was paying a dollar a plate."

"Still," observed Mitch extenuatingly, "Buck's a good whistler, but he ain't so all-fired much when it comes to playin' tunes on a kitchen range."

"No," admitted Jake, "but think of it—it wasn't costing them anything."

"Except their car fare," suggested Mitch.

"But things will hum from now on," said Jake, rallying. "They saw what

a place I got. We won't have room enough from henceforth."

Mitch didn't say anything. He was watching the red arch in the west above the trees on Moon Mountain.

"I'm a good notion to fire Buck and hire that Murray girl to cook," said Jake reflectively. "Zoe shore is a cook all right, all right. Been to some sort of cooking keebosh where they teach it to 'em like their a b c's. I would hire her if it wasn't for one thing. She's so all-fired particular she wouldn't stay up here without her aunt to act as chapperony. And the aunt's got as'ma, and ain't overly handy at work. And," Pod took a deep, sighing breath, "she's powerful hearty. Still," he concluded, "it might be money in my pocket to get Zoe up here to run things. She's sort of tony in her looks and would give the place some swell style."

But Jake finally decided against this extra expense—at present.

Two weeks, three, four, passed, and still tourists did not flock down like homing pigeons on the Ozark Hotel. A few, a very few, came, tarried briefly, tasted, and fled.

The first Saturday in June, Buck got his "walking papers," and Miss Zoe Murray and her aunt—fleshy and asthmatic—were installed in the new hotel.

"She held me up for ten a week and board for her and the old un," grumbled Pod to Mitch. "The old critter ain't even her real aunt, either—just some step relation that Zoe feels she has to keep up. I wouldn't have thought," Jake shook his head, "that after I'd been as friendly to 'em as I have, she'd held me up on her wages like that. But all these women are mercenary, Mitch; mercenary." Jake loved that word, which he heard at Chautauqua once. "Besides all that, she's got to have a assistant."

If it was a struggle for Zoe Murray to accept the post of chief cook and manager of Jake Pod's hotel, no one ever knew it. She was a slender girl, with very blue eyes and lips that closed softly. But there was strength in her slender hands, and she was deft and capable. These mountains were the only place they had found where her aunt could be comfortable, and she had learned to love them herself in a few months. As this was the only employment she had found, she had accepted it readily, and Zoe was not the sort of girl to apologize for the work which she had accepted.

Still, as large a place as the Tourist Hotel, even with only two or three boarders, required a burden of work greater than she expected. The one assistant, whom Jake had picked for her cheapness, was Jane Mullins, a slovenly hill girl, whose chief occupation was to keep from stumbling over her feet and falling on the table.

One evening soon after taking charge of the hotel, Zoe had finished clearing away the supper, and went out on the wide veranda to rest and cool. It had been a hot June day. Mitchel Wells was there on the edge of the porch with his back against a pillar, watching the twilight.

"You are employed here, Mr. Pod tells me?"

"Yes," answered Mitch, "I have charge of the boats. When anybody wants me to row, you are to ring the bell—or," he finished, "when you want me for anything."

"Thank you," said Miss Zoe. And she, too, gave herself up to enjoying the soft glow of the hills in the summer twilight.

But still the guests did not come, and Jake went around torn between terror of what it was costing him and a struggle to get his idees working.

Finally he got it. It was Saturday afternoon. He ran, and rang the bell so violently that Mitch came at double-

jump speed, thinking some one had fallen into the river and was drowning.

"Oh, I've got it! I've got it!" Jake said, rolling on the grass of the lawn in glee. "Mitch," he said pityingly, "I don't see how a fellow like you, without a single idee, ever got through the world. I reckon," he added philosophically, "you couldn't if somebody didn't look out for you and give you a job. Now I'll venture there ain't a man in these hills up against it like me here with a big hotel on his hands could have thought of a way to make it pay.

"Oh, but it's a great one!" He rocked on the grass again, fairly tickled into ecstasy with himself. "It'll bring them here—and just the kind we need."

Of course, he refused to tell what it was. That would never do.

The next week he seemed to get blue, but Mitch saw a sort of self-praise dancing in his milky eyes all the time.

"Mitch," he said, "I want you to stay around and see to things for a while. I'm going back to my old job—working on the bridge gang. I sent my recommend to the Iron Mountain, and they jumped at me. I sure was a good bridgeman. I'm to work regular for a couple of weeks, and if they like me they'll make me foreman of a gang of my own.

"I'll be making some coin to help out," he added deprecatingly, "while we are getting ready for the big summer rush."

Sure enough Pod went to work with a bridge gang the next Monday. And sure enough he was a good bridgeman, and one week later was put in charge of a regular gang.

There were a few tourists during the next month, and the new management made both the table and the scenery interesting. They had gone away with praise, and a few more had come.

"As I've told you all along," said Pod one Saturday night to Mitch, "all in the world this place needs is to once get it known. If I can get a big bunch of the right ones here they'll go home and scatter our fame to the four winds, and we'll be run over with tourists.

"And," he leaned over and jabbed the ends of his fingers in Mitch's ribs, "I'll get 'em here—don't you never worry. I got idees, and I got hustle.

"And say," Jake was quite confidential in the twilight after a hearty supper, "I reckon when the boom comes I just as well marry that girl. The old auntie is a hearty eater, but she's some help, and that girl is shore a born cook. Besides—I's owing her forty dollars in wages."

Mitch did not say anything. He was thinking of that hickory club under his bed in the house up on the bluff.

The evening of July 15th a wagon came up from Halwell with a load of provisions.

"I did not order these," said Zoe Murray.

"Pod did," explained the driver.

"I wonder what in the world he means," said the girl as the chunks of meat, cans, boxes, and crates were unloaded. "We didn't need this stuff."

Next morning there was the clink, clink, clink of sledges on spikes down at the bridge where the railroad crossed the river a quarter of a mile below the hotel.

Jake Pod and his bridge gang were at last at work on the bridge near home.

At eight o'clock next morning Zoe and her aunt and the assistant were clearing up the breakfast dishes when a bohunk that seemingly had not washed since coming to America appeared at the screen door with a soiled scrap of paper in his hand.

The girl took it and deciphered:

Prepare for a big surprize. JAKE.

Zoe went on helping with the dishes, puzzling over the note as she worked. She was tired already. The month

had been a hard one. To manage the kitchen and the office, do practically all the cooking, and two-thirds of the drudgery besides was telling on her.

"Now what in the world does he mean?" she said. "Oh, I have it!" She set down the platter she was wiping, and turned to her aunt. "He is going to bring his whole bridge gang up here for dinner—is going to board them while they are here at work.

"Of course we can't let them eat in the dining room," she reasoned practically. "They would spoil enough linen to give Mr. Pod the grumps for life. I tell you, we will fix up a table out in the shade in the back yard."

Miss Zoe went at once for Mitch. He was down by the bluff, outfitting the four boarders for a day's fishing.

"All right," he said. "I'll be there in a few minutes."

As soon as the fishermen were gone, Mitch went around back of the hotel and erected a long, rough board table under the shade, and this they covered with discarded oilcloth which they found stuffed away in the pantry.

"How many bridgemen has he?" asked Zoe.

"About thirty, I think," replied Mitch. He helped her set the table with the heavy plates and thick cups that had formerly been used by the servants.

"Auntie," directed Zoe, "put on a big kettle of beans with about a half a side of fat meat. We'll bake a half bushel of potatoes, and, Jane, you make seven pones of corn bread. We'll make a boiler of coffee. Use that fifteen-cent coffee that Mr. Pod had when we came. We've got to give them enough, but it must be cheap, hearty victuals if he is to make any profit on them. They can't pay more than seventy-five cents a day for board."

At half past ten everything was going well. The hearty, inexpensive dinner would be ready promptly at twelve. There was little more to do. Miss Zoe went out to the front porch, where the west breeze was particularly comforting this July day. She felt particularly tired. Mitch saw the dainty white apron and the cool blue waist, and drifted up from the bluff and sat down on the edge of the porch and proceeded to fan himself.

"Did you ever pick wild blackberries?" he asked casually.

"No, I never did, but I'd just love to." Miss Zoe was keen for new experiences.

"I know where there's the finest patch," he suggested, "about two miles up the river, where there used to be a field. It's all blackberries now—and walnut shade."

"We must go right soon."

"Might be boarders here then. Let's go this morning. You don't need to stay and help feed them bohunks and dagos. They can feed themselves. Just have 'em to put the grub on the table and they'll get at it."

She hesitated. "Do you think I better?"

"Sure," replied Mitch confidently. "It's cool up there, and in the kitchen it's as sultry as a nigger dance. Anyway," he finished as a clincher, "we need some blackberries to make pies."

It would be fun to get away and pick wild berries to-day. She went in and gave final instructions for the dinner.

"Now, auntie, be sure and not to let those beans burn. And, Jane, watch your corn bread. At twelve put everything on the table. You won't need to wait on them. They'll reach and pass things. All Jane will have to do is to keep their coffee cups full and see the 'grub,' as Mitch calls it, does not run out."

And with a sunbonnet on her head and a tin pail over her arm she and Mitch went down the bluff and got into a boat.

But the beans did burn, and they burned pretty odorously before they aroused the comfortable auntie from the delightful discursiveness of an old English novel. Also, the corn bread burned. Jane, free from the firm hand of Miss Zoe, relapsed into native slowness and slovenliness. Knowing how long it took her to get a meal assembled, she began putting things on the table at eleven o'clock, one thing at a time as it got done. And the flies smelled the feast, and gathered from Dan to Bear Creek. Jane gathered a handful of buckbrush, and waved it up and down the long table, crying:

"Shoo-shoo!" The flies gave way for the waving brush, and then settled back on the fat pork and greasy, burned beans. Jane trotted back to the kitchen and brought out a glass of preserves, and grabbed the brush and gave another "Shoo!" She was still racing in her hurried slowness with most of the dinner set out for the delight of the flies when a sharp whistle in the valley below made her jump and drop a crock of buttermilk. The whistle was followed by a half dozen others, sharp and incessant.

It was the eleven-thirty passenger train.

As foreman of a bridge gang, Jake Pod was a different man. He knew the job, and he was a driver. He ruled the gang with a tongue of rawhide. He was Lord of the Trestle and Commander of the Bridge. The gang took orders and asked few questions.

At ten o'clock, when Jake ordered all hands to begin tearing out a whole section of the trestle that approached the bridge over the river, it was not theirs to question why. The few Americans in the gang did swear among themselves and wonder if the boss was crazy. And they reminded him that it was a profanely foolish thing to do to tear out a whole section at once, when it could be replaced piece at a time without disturbing the track.

But Jake assured them in a varied and picturesque line of profanity that he was boss of that job, and that they didn't have any more sense than the law allowed. He knew what he was doing. He also grudgingly informed them that the Southeast Express, due at eleven-forty-five, was three hours late, and no through freights were expected. Hence they would have plenty of time to get out the dotty timber which Jake professed to have discovered; and to rebuild the track as it ought to be done. No bridgeman had ever seen a piece of work done like that, but they were paid to obey the boss, and down the trestle came, piling and all, leaving a gap like a flood had passed.

Then came a low, distant humming far up the winding track among the hills. The hum grew into a roar. The men looked at each other significantly, and glanced sidewise at the boss, who seemed frantic with astonishment.

Then the sharp whistle and the screech of grinding brakes. The Southeast Express, with its four coaches and observation car, loaded with through passengers, came to a stop a few rods from the signalman waving his red flag.

The brakeman was the first off; then came the conductor. The engineer leaned out of his cab inquiringly. The fireman jumped down and trotted after the conductor and brakeman.

The language of the conductor when he took in the situation may be represented in the imagination by large, round, yellow and black spots shooting across the horizon like sparks from a hickory chunk.

Jake apologetically tried to explain that word had been sent him by one of his men from the Halwell station that the express was three hours late.

But argument and abuse was use-

less. The blame could be fixed later. The only thing now was to get the track back with all possible speed.

Jake assured the trainmen he would do his best, and they saw he really was moving things now with intelligence. He regretfully informed them that the least possible delay would be two hours.

The passengers began to swarm out, and came down the track singly, in twos, and droves. They gathered around the end of the bridge and swarmed over the dump, and climbed the bluff and asked and answered each other innumerable questions.

A large, portly man, who gave evidence of possessing vast importance and a stirring appetite—a man of authority—approached Jake Pod where he was blazingly directing four bohunks in the placing of beams.

"About how long until we get by here?" demanded the important one.

"No telling," Jake threw at him. "Two hours at least—maybe five." Pod directed his face to the bohunks.

"What's a fellow going to do for something to eat?" demanded the man with an appetite. "The Southeast Express was due to stop for dinner two stations below Halwell."

The question thrilled Jake like the sight of the white flag in the enemies' ranks thrills the victorious general.

"Why," he said, with sudden friendliness, "there's a big, fine hotel right up there—just a couple of hundred yards up the bluff."

The fat man joined a group, the bearer of important intelligence. He had learned officially they might be delayed five hours, and there was a big hotel right up the bluff.

The word passed down the line. Jake could see it spread. The fat man and his party were already halfway up the bluff. There was a thin line beginning to follow.

Directly more went. Everybody got out of the train, and suddenly, as if possessed by the great fear that others might beat them to the hotel and get all there was, the crowd charged up the bluff road.

For a while Jake tried to count them as they went over the edge of the bluff and headed for the hotel. But the trainmen were swearing in a deadly, quiet way, and he had to keep his eyes busy on the bridge.

But there must have been two hundred, and his heart sang within him. He exulted as a strong man who has already run the race and kicked the dust into other eyes. They were the people he wanted—important people, well-dressed people, spendful people from all parts of the country. It would make the reputation of the Ozark Tourist Hotel forever. Besides two hundred dinners at seventy-five cents each meant a hundred and fifty dollars!

Let the trainmen swear. Of course he'd be fired. But he intended to quit But he intended to quit to-night, any-to-night, anyway. His work was done. The big idee had taken root and borne fruit. It was great to have idees and be a hustler!

In a little while the people began to come back. At first the few nervous ones who are always afraid the train will leave them. Then more; and directly the rest, seeming to sense as a crowd does that when some start it is time for all to hurry, came pouring down the hill.

Pod looked at his watch. It had been only an hour. He wondered if they all got dinner. He was a little uneasy lest he had not sent enough provisions. He had been saving to the very last on provisions. They might have stayed longer and looked at the scenery.

Still, they had a glimpse—and a glimpse was enough to win them. They would be back in droves to spend a week or a month.

Part of the crowd idled along the

tracks. Some of them climbed the bluffs in a desultory way. Some went back to the coaches; but many of them gathered around the bridge to watch the hurried, desperate work to get ready for the train to pass.

Jake was working with all speed. The occasion for delay was over. He was everywhere, even taking a hand here and there. Things were moving.

He climbed up the dump at the end of the trestle to direct the moving of some timber. The fat man, the man of importance, was lingering near, picking his teeth with a match.

"How long now?" he demanded of the boss.

"Forty minutes," replied the sweating Jake.

"Push her up!" he admonished. "I'm hungry!"

"Hungry!" laughed a drummer standing near. "I thought you were one of the brave ones that tackled that dinner."

"I was," confessed the fat man gloomily. "And talk about your dinners! That was the toughest proposition I ever ran into—not excepting the Commercial House, at Parigoric, Arkansas."

The drummer laughed. "I couldn't go it. I can eat my way through a hedge fence, but when the flies are in the majority—I back off."

Dully, with a sort of doomed persistence, Jake went on with the work. He heard other things. He tried not to hear. Sorry puns, punky jokes, ridicule of the country and the people and the scenery—and the victuals—ugh, horrors!

The train passed over the bridge at two-ten.

It was five o'clock. The gang had gone to Halwell an hour before quitting time. Jake, tired and grimed with sweat, climbed the bluff with that seething, sickening feeling which comes to a man when he blames others because his plans miscarry. After all he had done and risked, his big idee—and his hustle—had come to naught because his "hirelings"—he repeated that words—yes, his "hirelings" had failed in their duty.

Well, he reflected grimly, there was one thing sure, whether he married Zoe or not she'd pay up for this dearly. And Mitch—Mitch could go hang or whistle or do anything he pleased. He was fired right now, and Jake would law him until goats quit eating leather before he'd pay him his wages.

The hotel was as empty and deserted as a night rider's tobacco barn. Jake crossed the deserted porch and went all the way through the clubhouse, and not a sign of human life. There was not even a sound in the kitchen. On out he went.

In the shade of the kitchen porch the old aunt had fallen asleep over her discursive English novel. And the table—the board table, with old oilcloth, was undisturbed since dinner. The remnants of the burned beans, fragments of bread, masses of preserves on the thick, heavy plates, half empty cups of coffee—and the shade had drifted until the sun poured down upon it—and flies over all.

He clutched the aunt as sharply as one of her asthmatic spells.

She was sorry, apologetic. Jane had got flustered when the people began to come, and what they said got the girl crying mad, and she had packed off home at once on foot. The aunt had given up until help came.

Zoe? She didn't know where she was. She and that Mr. Wells had gone off to pick blackberries and had not come back yet.

It was too bad, said the aunt. But she had taken in fourteen dollars—which she proffered to the man of idees, now numb and sick with anger and disappointment.

The sun was just down. Jake sat on a rock by the edge of the bluff, his head in his hands. Below there was the swish of oars, the crunch of a boat on gravel, and a laugh. Jake raised his head and looked down.

Up the steep path came Mitch with a pail of blackberries in one hand and Zoe's hand in the other. They were laughing as though the world was really a fit place—not at all too expensive to live in.

They were very near Jake before they saw him. He glared. Miss Zoe, unconscious of what had happened, nodded and smiled.

"Mr. Pod, aunt and Jane fed your bohunks all right?"

Jake stared a minute—moistened his lips—started to speak—changed his mind. Then dropped his head into his hands.

The two went on to the hotel, puzzled, but not for long.

"Mitch," said Jake that evening, when explanations had tempered his wrath, but not his disappointment, "I'm going to throw her up. I've lost four hundred dollars on the lease already. This ain't no country for idees. I'm going back to Ioway."

The cool breeze tempered the July evening. The stars were thick, and Mitch looked out affectionately over the twilighted hills. The soft murmur of the river came up from below.

"Jake," he said deliberately, "I'll take the hotel off your hands."

"Why, what'd you do with it?" Jake turned to him in surprise. "Who would run it for you?"

It was quite dusky, but even then Mitch looked away.

"Why, my—wi—Mrs.—Zoe," he answered stammeringly.

Jake pondered bitterly the inscrutable ways of chance and women.

"Well, Mitch," he said at last thriftily, "you can have it if you'll pay up the rest of the lease and knock off your wages. But what in Sam Patch you are going to do with it I can't figure. There ain't either one of you got any idees of how to run a hotel."

Mitch grinned at the evening star, and ran his palm over a lean cheek.

"Maybe not, Jake, but grub's a purty good substitute."

REGARDING OUR FOREIGN POLICY

AT the time when Villa and about half a dozen other patriots were scurrying up and down Mexico with great ambitions and little ammunition, somebody asked Representative Flood, of Virginia, chairman of the House committee on foreign affairs, whether he thought the United States government would recognize officially Villa or any other of the Mexicans.

Mr. Flood refused to commit himself, but he said the question reminded him of an interview the French minister to this country had with Daniel Webster when that great statesman was secretary of state. The minister inquired whether the United States would recognize the new government of France.

"Why not?" replied Webster, looking very wise and solemn. "The United States has recognized the Bourbons, the Republic, the Directory, the Council of Five Hundred, the First Consul, the Emperor, Louis XVIII., Charles X., Louis Philippe, the——"

But by this time the Frenchman was so excited that he jumped up and down, and ran out of the office to write a dispatch to his home government.

The Hound of Marat

By John R. Coryell

SYNOPSIS OF OPENING CHAPTERS

France in the early summer of 1793 was in the hands of her maddened, bloodthirsty populace. One of her aristocratic victims, Raoul, Comte de Lestourmière, found himself a hunted thing, his sole friend and servant being Jean, a faithful peasant. On the road near the forest of Argonne the two refugees meet with a corporal of the republic and a common soldier. Talk reveals the corporal to be what he himself is proud to be called—"the hound of Marat." He suspects Raoul of being a disguised aristocrat. A fight ensues in which Corporal Maniquet and the soldier are killed. Thereupon De Lestourmière and Jean assume the clothes and rôles of the vanquished enemies and proceed on their journey out of the terror-stricken country. Among the papers found on Corporal Maniquet is one from Marat demanding the persons, dead or alive, of a Marquis de Lazire and his daughter, Yvonne. Adventurous and chivalrous, Raoul determines to warn the marquis and his Yvonne of their danger, though it will delay his own escape and take him to out-of-the-way Pierrefitte, a town which is also a nest of rabid radicals. Raoul is just in time to see a mob collect to assault the château wherein live the marquis and his daughter. He makes the most of his credentials from Marat. But he reaches the château barely ahead of the rabble which clamors for blood and fire. The Marquis de Lazire is killed before Raoul or Jean can reach him, but Raoul secures the dead noble's ring and papers. Now follows riot and an orgy of horror. Yvonne de Lazire and her maid are held up to insult and vituperation. Hulin, the beastly leader of the mob, suggests marrying the girl and her servitor to two of the horde. Raoul, as deputy of the great Marat, thereupon takes matters in his grip and himself marries Yvonne, while Jean is joined in wedlock to the maid, Elise. In the frenzied hubbub the two girls disappear. Then the mob is frantic. Search is instituted as the château burns. Luckily, Raoul and Jean find their "wives" in the forest; but the girls do not recognize the men inasmuch as they have changed into elegant apparel. There is no time for thought, however, for at their heels bays the mob.

(In Four Parts—Part II.)

CHAPTER VIII.

ONE moment!" Raoul said, speaking quickly and authoritatively. "It is not safe for us to run blindly in these woods, for those miscreants may be in all directions. If you listen you will hear shouting over there, behind us. No, mademoiselle, you must go and hide in the pit once more."

"And you?" she queried, her face white.

"We can serve you better by remaining here."

"I understand," she said, her eyes flashing; "you mean to lead the mob in another direction, so that we shall not be found."

"If that is best to do, mademoiselle, we shall do it. Please go!"

The little hand that rested on his arm glided down his sleeve and fell into his ready palm. His fingers closed greedily on hers. The thought in his mind was that she was his wife, and that it was his right to love her. She was too much excited to notice what he did, and she was thinking of other things.

"You are a brave gentleman," she said, "but there may be too many of them, and afterward they may find us; for, after all, it is most likely that they are seeking us, not you."

"What are you thinking?" he asked, his eyes searching hers.

"That death for us is better than capture, and that——"

His eyes flamed as he interrupted joyously: "And that you permit me the honor of dying with you? Ah, mademoiselle! Jean! Bring the powder and balls. I will take the muskets. Mademoiselle does us the honor to wish us to go with her." He gathered up the

muskets in his arms as he spoke, now turning to smile at Yvonne, now flashing glances of passionate exaltation at Jean. "At your service, mademoiselle," he cried gayly, as with the muskets under one arm he held out his disengaged hand to Yvonne. "Hurry, Jean! And take care of Elise."

He and Yvonne led the way, Elise crowding close behind them and Jean following. The sound of the voices fell on their ears, now faint, now in increased volume, as if the rabble moved erratically.

Yvonne looked up into the face of her companion, instinctively seeking to know how he was affected by the danger that menaced them. She was at once conscious of an exaltation there, even though he smiled gayly at her when he caught her upward glance.

"You will trust me to do what a loyal gentleman can, mademoiselle?" he said inquiringly.

"I trust you entirely," she answered.

"Man never had better reason to do the best that was in him!" he cried. Then he thought of the numbers that might overwhelm him, and wanted to tell her how complete his right was to die for her. He did not, however, for it had entered his head that if they escaped this peril there might be time and opportunity for him to win her love. He could not hold her to the ceremony, but would have to lend himself to its annulment. What joy, then, if, in the meantime, he could make her wish the marriage to remain valid!

The pit to which Yvonne led them proved to be a shallow excavation of sufficiently far-away date to be mostly hidden by the shrubs that had grown up in and about it. Raoul comprehended its advantages and disadvantages at a glance. It was a better place of concealment than of defense. They might lie there while their enemies passed within a yard of them, and yet hope to remain undiscovered; but, if discovered, they would be worse off than in the open forest.

"Go down in there and conceal yourselves," he said; "I will see if you are well hidden."

"You will not leave us?" pleaded Yvonne. "Promise me you will stay here with us! Without you we are helpless; for even though we escape from these men, how shall we find safety alone? Promise me!"

She clung to him, studying his face. He tried to look stern and impassive, as he conceived a man should at a time of such peril; but in truth he exulted in the thought that she credited him with such a complete devotion, such a reckless courage. He laughed shortly, tossed his head, cried out:

"But I thought that was understood, mademoiselle? Yes, certainly I shall remain with you, to defend you, if possible, to save you if such is my good fortune; anyhow, to have the honor, which any gentleman would crave, of doing my utmost for you. Go down in there, then, and hide. You, too, Jean. Stupid! I shall come, too. I wish only to see if that great carcass of yours can find anything big enough to conceal it. Go, then!"

"No tricks, then, Monsieur Raoul," growled Jean, as he unwillingly helped first Yvonne and then Elise down the sloping side of the pit. "In anything else," he went on, grumbling half to himself, half to them, "I would not say a word, but when it comes to fighting he always is greedy. Well!" raising his voice; "how is this, Monsieur Raoul?"

"It is good; I understand what to do now," was the response; and in a moment Raoul was with them, studying the situation with eager eyes. "Load the muskets, Jean, while I make a plan of campaign."

His cheerful, eager alertness, his smiling unconcern, sustained Yvonne's confidence in him; and there was a responsive light in her eyes, a sympathetic

smile on her lips whenever he looked toward her; and he did that as often as the least excuse presented itself; for he was elated, intoxicated by the new emotion that possessed him, and which only grew in intensity because of the dangers that threatened, because of the brief period during which, perhaps, he might enjoy its blissful influence.

"You, Jean, take your post there with two muskets. I shall guard on this side. Do not fire or show yourself or speak until I give the word. Oh, you glutton!" he laughed, as Jean betrayed suspicion by a gesture; "you shall have your full share of the fighting, I promise you."

"I should like it better out of this hole."

"There is no other way, Jean."

"I did not mean to complain. You shall be satisfied with me, Monsieur Raoul. It makes me think of the day I fell into the bear pit. Do you remember that time? St! They are coming nearer."

"Down, mademoiselle, I beg of you!" murmured Raoul in a low tone. "You two are better where you are. I shall be here, you see."

Elise crouched as if her trembling limbs had forced the movement; Yvonne sank slowly to one knee, her face bloodless, but her lips firmly set and her eyes luminous.

"I can shoot a musket very well," she said in a low tone.

"There is no need," answered Raoul in the same tone, his eyes dwelling on hers in a look in which were mingled pride, admiration, and love. She was within reach of him if he but stretched out his arm. He sighed, and looked to the priming of his muskets.

"They come! Oh, they come!" moaned Elise.

"Hush, Elise! Monsieur, there is something——"

"Yes, mademoiselle?"

"It is strange, but I do not know to whom I have the happiness——"

"It is true," laughed Raoul; "but you see there was no one to present me. Permit me!" He removed his hat with a ceremonious sweep, and with a certain pride showing through his gayety, presented himself: "Mademoiselle de Lazire, I have the honor to present to you Raoul du Bois, Comte de Lestourmière, your most humble and devoted servant."

"I am most glad that we have met, Monsieur le Comte," and she held out her hand, which he caught in his with a sudden passion, and kissed vehemently. She did not try to withdraw it, though the ready blood flooded her face. She understood his meaning well enough; she had understood all along that she had made a deep impression on him. Quite recently, too, there had come a beautiful story to her ears of a confession of love in a tumbrel that was conveying condemned aristocrats to the guillotine in Paris. "It is very plain," she went on when she could control her voice, "that there are very many of them, and that they are coming this way."

"Bah!" he answered, pressing the slender fingers before letting them go; "they are so stupid that they may never suspect that we are here. Besides, if we are only two men, we shall not be easily conquered. Eh, Jean?"

Jean showed he had heard by nodding his head. At the same moment there came to their ears a loud cry of rage, followed by a voice calling to certain ones to come quickly. The bodies of the dead men had been discovered. Soon the whole rabble would be gathered near their hiding place.

"Monsieur le Comte!" Yvonne was horribly pale, and there was an expression in her great, sapphire eyes that was dreadful to see. "They will soon be near us, and there are many, many. You can hear them."

"There are many, but the end is not yet."

"But you will promise me something on your oath?"

"Whatever you will, mademoiselle."

"I must not be taken alive. Do you understand?"

"Yes, mademoiselle," he whispered hoarsely.

She caught him by the wrist and held his eyes to hers by a look that was all horror.

"I have twice been in their hands," she said, speaking rapidly; "and I have escaped by a miracle; but I know what to expect from them. If I were to tell you all, you would see that I must not fall, alive, into their hands again. They respect nothing; neither religion nor womanhood. On your sword, swear that when the worst comes you will plunge that blade into my heart."

"Mademoiselle!" He had stood ready to do that very thing only an hour ago, it might be, but he had not known her then, had not looked into her soul or felt his blood tingle at the touch of her hand.

"It is to save my honor, monsieur."

"Ah! How can I?" groaned Raoul, pressing his hands to his temples and staring at her wildly.

"You have promised!" she pleaded.

Jean turned at this moment and laid his sword at the feet of Yvonne, saying briefly: "I shall not use it. Better if mademoiselle keep it to use when the time comes. How can Monsieur Raoul fight if he have that before him?"

"Jean!"

"But he is right, Monsieur le Comte," cried Yvonne, stooping and taking up the weapon. "I was wrong to ask it of you. After all, I am a soldier's daughter, and should not falter. Forgive me for asking so much of you, will you not, monsieur?"

"Oh, why was it not something I could do, no matter how difficult or terrible? Anything but that. But you will not resort to that remedy until no hope remains, will you? And—and before that there is something I must say to you—must say—Yvonne."

His voice trembled so that he could hardly articulate; and his last word was scarcely audible. He wondered at himself for such daring, wondered if she would scorch him with such a glance of scorn and disdain as he knew those eyes of hers were capable of. When he had the courage to look at her, her eyes were cast down and her white fingers were toying with the point of the sword. In her mind was a thought of the lovers in the tumbrel. And she knew what was in his mind. Her heart beat the quicker for it.

"Now they are all there," said Jean. "At least thirty of them." He could see them by peering through the bushes.

"Courage!" whispered Raoul, unaffectedly reaching out and taking the little hand from the point of the sword.

"Do not fear for me," she answered in a tone of exaltation; "I shall know how to die as a De Lazire should. There has never been a coward of the name, monsieur. I shall not be the first. But you, monsieur! Now that it is too late, I feel that I should have urged you to escape, as you could have done."

Raoul smiled with his lips, but there was melancholy in his eyes. This lovely creature whom he had learned so easily to love was his wife. If only she had learned to love him, he might now be holding her to his heart, giving what comfort he might, bidding her farewell with that passionate joy which even the imminence of death could not stifle. He studied her eyes yearningly, wondering if in her soul was one little spark of the divine fire that burned in his breast.

"Jean," he said suddenly, "you will tell me if they come this way."

"Yes, Monsieur Raoul. But I do not like being killed in this hole, like a rat. Why can we not go out to meet them

when they come? There are not more than thirty."

He turned his fierce, white-encircled eyes toward Raoul. It was plain that he meant to obey his young master, and die there if he must, but that his soul was raging to die dealing blows.

"Oh, no, no!" wailed Elise, who until now had crouched in panting silence at the side of her mistress, her eyes fixed for the most part on the stalwart shoulders of Jean, who to her was the very embodiment of strength and protection.

"Hush, Elise! It must be done as Monsieur le Comte orders."

"You will obey orders, Jean?"

"You know I will," and Jean turned his face away and stood watching the men in the forest.

"Do I not know it, my brave Jean? Your hand, Jean!"

He retained his hold on the little hand of Yvonne, which she had made no attempt to withdraw from him, and reached out his other hand to Jean.

Jean turned quickly and caught the hand held out to him and held it while he pressed it with passionate devotion. "There is a thing you perhaps have not thought of, Monsieur Raoul: If they could be saved, eh? It would be simple enough if you would permit, dear Monsieur Raoul. You see, we cannot conquer so many, not even you and I. If we remain here, then all may perish; but I could steal out on that side without being seen, and could come upon them on the side nearest the château. It would be only I, then; you and they could escape. Ah, Monsieur Raoul!"

"But I tell you no, Jean," and Raoul stamped his foot vehemently. "How would you like me to leave you and go die there alone? No, no! Have you no heart, that you speak of such a thing? Go, then! Stand at your post and obey orders. Tell me when they come this way. Be ready to do what I tell you. And, remember this, Jean: it is not of me you are to think, but of Mademoiselle and Elise."

Jean returned to his post and Raoul turned to Yvonne, who had been an eager, breathless listener to the conversation.

"What a heart of gold!" she murmured.

"Is it not?" he responded warmly; then paused for a moment. "Mademoiselle," he went on abruptly, "there is something I must say to you. We are in great danger, as you well know, and it may be that I shall have no other opportunity to speak to you, Yvonne."

Yvonne was very, very pale, but her eyes did not falter as they gazed straight into his. She felt the touch of his hand on hers, she seemed to hear the beating of his heart, she believed that their very souls were in communion. An hour ago she had not known him; but one lived swiftly in those bloody days, and conventional rules seemed paltry in the face of death. The lovers in the tumbrel had found these things true. She had caught the meaning of his whispered "Yvonne," and now her heart was throbbing with expectation.

After all she had passed through, both life and death appeared to her abnormal; and, with all the strength of her romantic young nature, she reached out for such a love as this, which must be pure and uplifted, with the eagerness of a saint for heaven.

"My name is new to you," Raoul said, "but yours is not so to me. I told you as much when I found you out there. I met a wretch coming from Paris with an order of Marat for the capture, dead or alive, of you and your father. I destroyed the man and the order, but your name I could not forget, and I repeated it to myself many times. Yvonne is so sweet a name! When, later, I discovered how to find the Château d'Entraigue, I hastened to it, hoping to be in time to warn you

of your danger. I was too late to save your father, but you, Yvonne——"

"They come this way!" cried Jean in a low tone.

Raoul drew Yvonne close to him, with a low cry, in which joy and anguish were mingled. She made no resistance. "Yvonne," he went on, with a passionate tenderness in his voice, "they are coming, and these may be our last moments together. First I must tell you that I love you; and then you must know that I have a certain right to—to——"

"They have turned back!" broke in the voice of Jean. "They are going away, carrying the bodies with them. There will be no fighting."

Speech died on Raoul's lips. Yvonne gently disengaged herself from his encircling arm. He retained her hand, and searched her eyes with his. She withdrew her hand from his, and looked away. "It seems, then, that we are safe," she murmured unsteadily.

"Yes, mademoiselle." He tried to catch her eye, but she would not look at him. It was plain enough that the unfinished episode had left its embarrassments behind it. Raoul could not understand why, for in the blissful moments when she willingly nestled so close to him, he had been ecstatically sure that love had come to her as suddenly as it had to him.

"What shall we do now, Monsieur le Comte?" she asked.

"I was making for the Prussian army before good fortune put me in your path," he answered. "Perhaps you know a safe shelter nearer than that?"

"Alas, no!"

"No château as yet unmolested? No humble friend?"

"No, monsieur; it is with me as with you, no doubt; only out of France is there safety."

"And—and you will do me the honor to seek the Prussian army under my protection?"

"Alas, I should add to your peril!"

"Then," laughed Raoul, unable to subdue a note of exultation, "it is understood that you put yourself under my protection?"

It seemed to Raoul that it would be impossible for her to refrain longer from looking at him, and he was right. With a slow, reluctant movement of her head, she looked up, the red color of confusion dyeing her round cheeks, her full bosom rising and falling under the stress of her emotion. He waited eagerly, hoping to surprise an expression in those sapphire eyes that would give him the courage to hope, at least. But when the lids were raised and the eyes looked full into his, he felt his heart sink, for he saw nothing but timidity, appeal, and grief. When she spoke, making at the same time a timid gesture of deprecation, her voice trembled.

"I am a lonely, helpless girl, Monsieur le Comte," she said, "and would better die here than try to reach the Prussian army without your assistance. Alas, with your assistance I may only succeed in involving you in disaster. I will not do you the shame of asking you to leave me to my fate, since, already, I know that your title is not your only claim to nobility. So, trusting you as I would my brother, if I had one, I place myself in your hands. My father, alas! is dead, so that he cannot thank you for your care of me, but you may be sure of the gratitude of my betrothed, the Comte de Choiseul."

"Your betrothed!" gasped Raoul, starting back as if struck. Then he understood; she was giving him an answer to what he had said to her and to all he would have said. He swallowed hard, bit his lip, drew a deep breath, and bowed very low as he took her hand respectfully and sank to one knee.

"I accept your trust," he said. "As a brother would guard over a sister, so

shall I guard over you; and as I fulfill my trust, so may God deal with me."

He was young; it was his first great disappointment. Perhaps a time might come when in making such a speech his voice would not break nor his eyes fill with moisture.

"Jean," he cried, leaping up and turning quickly away, "let us go see that those wretches are all out of the way. We shall return in a few minutes, mademoiselle."

CHAPTER IX.

"They have disappeared!" cried Raoul, returning before many minutes had elapsed. "I am sorry I do not know these forests. If I did, we might travel in them and be well hidden until we were near the Prussian army. As it is, we would better make for the open, which is not far to the east. Once there, we will decide. It is the best I can think of."

"It seems wise to me," she said quickly, eager to show her confidence in him. "Shall we start at once?"

They paired off naturally, Raoul and Yvonne, Jean and Elise. This was altogether satisfactory to all but Jean. Not only was he afraid of the buxom Elise, despite her very great timidity, but he was desperately uneasy because of her very frank admiration of him. The fact that she was his wife only increased his discomfort. It appalled him to think what would happen if she found out.

For a while Raoul and Yvonne walked in silence. It was not easy to talk of commonplaces after what had passed between them; besides, Raoul could not help thinking of what had taken place. It puzzled him to recall how in the moment of danger she had seemed to accept his love, only later to crush him with the name of her fiancé.

"Would it be an impertinence," he demanded suddenly, "to ask mademoiselle's age?"

"I am seventeen, monsieur," she answered eagerly, rejoiced to have him talk of anything, for she had been timidly seeking a topic.

"You are young to be betrothed," he said.

She bit her lip, but a glance into his gloomy face moved her to pity. "We were betrothed a year ago," she said softly. "The De Choiseul estates are contiguous to ours. It was my father's most cherished dream; and if he had succeeded in escaping over the frontier, his first act would have been to see our marriage solemnized."

"Ah!" cried Raoul, his eyes lighting up at the thought that it probably was not a love match, at any rate. "And Monsieur le Comte awaits you in Prussia, then? At least, with the Prussian army."

"He is with the Prussian army."

"Your estates joined," said Raoul, after another long silence. "Perhaps you were playmates?"

"He and my father were friends," she replied in a low tone.

"Ah!" cried Raoul, with a sudden lightness, almost a laugh in his tone. "It was he and your father who were playmates, then?"

Yvonne's face was serious to the verge of haughtiness. "It was a union indicated by all the circumstances. I am the last of the De Lazires, and nowhere in France could have been found a family into which the De Lazires could better be merged than the De Choiseuls. They are of the oldest nobility, as are the De Lazires."

"It seems to me," said Raoul, a little sulkily, "that to be noble is to be noble." The Du Bois patent of nobility was hardly a century and a half old.

"What!" cried Yvonne in surprise; "why, there are families that are lost in even two centuries."

Raoul tried to look scornful. Nevertheless, he was wishing that the original Du Bois had dated back a few hundred years more. Then he smiled calmly;

after all, why trouble himself about that? Yvonne was his wife, and the Come de Choiseul, with all his thousand years of ancestry, should not take her from him. Then he wondered angrily if she was trying to warn him not to expect her to return his love; to show him that she was far too high above him because she was a De Lazire.

"I suppose, then," he said abruptly and with scarcely concealed irony, "you will be married as soon as you reach the Prussian army?"

"That will be decided when I reach there," she answered, changing color.

Raoul unconsciously adjusted his hat to a fiercer angle, and stalked on in silence, his head very much in the air. Yvonne glanced up at him several times, conscious that he was suffering. She wished she knew what to say to take away the sting of what she had told him. He had saved her life, and he was every moment risking his own for her. Moreover, that had been a sweet moment in the pit; and she knew that if death had threatened more closely she would surely have given him an answer that would have satisfied him. But what could she do with that awful marriage of the morning, and her solemn betrothal to De Choiseul besides?

Suddenly Raoul broke out: "If you were my fiancée I would not be in the Prussian army waiting for you. I would be just where I am now—by your side."

Yvonne smiled, and flashed an eager, assenting look up at him; then remembered herself, and said gravely: "It was my father who made this arrangement. The Comte de Choiseul is a soldier and a brave man; and no doubt he would have been here if there had seemed sufficient reason. Alas, my father was so scornful of the canaille."

"Sufficient reason!" cried Raoul, devouring her with his eyes; "you are reason enough. I would not have waited for you."

"Ah!" murmured Yvonne, thrilled by his tone, but struggling to speak calmly, "but my father was one not to be opposed. He held a high position among the royalists, and had done much to confound the rabble government. He was engaged in communicating with other royalists in hiding, and in making arrangements for the invasion by the Prussians. Alas, he had on his person papers which will reveal the plans of the Duc de Brunswick, and, worse than all, the names and hiding places of hundreds of royalists, who have so far escaped the bloody revolution."

Her grief at the thought was so profound that Raoul was in instant sympathy with her, and advanced the hope that the papers had not fallen into the hands of his murderers. Yvonne stopped and looked up at him with such a flame of bitter, burning passion in her eyes as betrayed to him that side by side with her naïveté and gentle, tender womanliness, was a power of fury and anger not at first to be suspected.

"There is no such hope," she cried vehemently. "With my own eyes I saw the murderer of my father, his hands still wet with that noble martyr's blood, point to the papers which he had taken from the still warm body. The papers and this—this ring," drawing it from her bosom with a passionate gesture. "The ring he—he—I gained possession of, but the papers he still has. I know his name, however—it is burned into my memory—it remains there to be cursed; cursed while yet cherished. For the one object of my life shall be to bring death —or worse, if worse can be for such a brute—to that monster. Oh, I can see him now." She covered her face with her hands and sobbed.

Raoul, aghast at the sight and troubled by the thought that unconsciously she was cursing him, was on the point of revealing the truth to her, when, with a new accession of fury, she

snatched her hands from her eyes and went on:

"There is no one else on earth I hate but that man; and some day he shall pay the penalty for his deed. What wealth and what influence I have shall be used to bring about his punishment. Sodden, bestial caricature of a man! I see his horrid, brutish eyes, I feel his loathsome touch, I hear his harsh, discordant voice. Oh, he was worse, far worse than the wretch from whom you rescued me!"

Raoul exchanged shocked glances with Jean. No, he would not tell her the truth yet; it would be much better to wait.

The walk was a long and difficult one because, with all her courage, Yvonne's strength gave out. Even the more robust Elise would have sunk exhausted long before if Jean, with great perturbation and indeed only on the suggestion of Raoul, had not supported her with his strong arm.

Very timidly Raoul offered his support to Yvonne; and she was forced to accept it, if she would go on. Not that she betrayed any reluctance in doing so, but that she knew how contact with her would affect her escort, and also she was afraid of herself.

"We must have horses, mademoiselle," said Raoul finally, seeing how footsore and weary she was. "I must confess the truth, I have very little money. If I had it, I wouldn't know where to buy horses; but I know I would steal them if I had the chance. But have courage, dear mademoiselle; we shall be out of the forest before nightfall, and it will be strange if I cannot find for you a place to rest and something to eat."

"You are very good, monsieur," she said gratefully; "and your courage and cheerfulness are unfailing. I am tired, but I can go on until you give the order to stop. As for money, I have a little gold, but, more than that, I have a bag of jewels worth many thousands of crowns. If you will take charge of the money and jewels, I shall be so glad."

He took them from her reluctantly, saying: "I may not need them, but perhaps it is better. We are in the enemy's country; I will take the horses, if I can find them."

An hour or so before nightfall they emerged from the forest, famished and weary. Yvonne and Elise, indeed, were hardly able to drag themselves along, even with the assistance of their escorts. Luckily, there was an inn a short distance away by the side of a road that was evidently a main highway.

There was risk in showing themselves at such a place, but when they were near enough to it it was plain that it held no guests, and that the only thing they would need to fear would be the innkeeper. This latter, however, turned out to be a very old woman; so they went boldly up to the place and demanded food and lodging.

The old woman eyed them sharply and shrugged her bent shoulders. It was evident enough that she knew them for aristocrats; but when she had demanded payment in advance and received it, she said no more but set about procuring food.

"We run a terrible risk here," Raoul said, "but you must have food and you must rest. I will bring you water, which will refresh you; then, after eating, you must lie down at once. Do not remove your clothing. Jean and I will take turns watching during the night. Perhaps the old woman will know where horses are to be had."

Yvonne thanked him with a sweet, if weary, smile, and obeyed him without question. She bathed in the water brought her, ate of the food set before her, and went up to her room after it like a docile child. And Elise, too tired even to cast admiring eyes at Jean, followed her example.

When they had retired, Raoul went

into the kitchen to interview the old woman. He knew she recognized them as fugitives, but as she had made no sign of dislike, he determined to save time by being entirely frank with her. He meant to watch her, in any case, to prevent her going out to betray them.

"Mother," he said to her, "we are fugitives, trying to get out of France."

"I don't want to know anything. You have paid me, and I have given you food. That is all there is between us."

"Even if I tempt you with a piece of gold?" and he showed her the coin and noted her old eyes light up with avarice.

"What do you want, then?" she demanded.

"Where does this road lead to?"

"Saint Mihiel."

"Are there French soldiers there?"

"It is full of them. Keep to the south, if you would avoid them. You will come to a byroad about two leagues from here."

"Good! Now, about horses: Do you know where I can get any?"

"No; the soldiers have them all. They took even my poor old mare; and paid nothing. The Prussians robbed me when they came last year; and now the republicans rob me."

Raoul was desperate. It was impossible that his charges could continue on foot and hope to escape out of France; whereas with horses it might be possible to be in safety in another day or two at most. "Do soldiers ever pass this way?" he asked.

"Often. You don't think they will sell you any horses, do you? They will more likely run their sabers through you. There is a detachment stationed in the village two miles back—cavalry. Perhaps," and she laughed discordantly, "they have some of your horses. You come from Entraigue, don't you?"

"You said you didn't want to know anything," Raoul answered.

"I don't. Give me the gold!"

Raoul gave her the coin, and returned to Jean. "You know, Jean," he said, "the most necessary thing for us is to have horses."

"Yes, I should think so. I couldn't carry Elise all day."

Raoul laughed. "Don't forget she is your wife, Jean; and a very pretty one, too."

"I know she's heavy," grumbled Jean.

"So much the more reason why we should have horses. Do you know, my Jean, that about two miles from here there are a number of fine horses?"

"*Parbleu!* We'll go get them, then."

"No, Jean, *we* won't, but *I* will. Not now. Just now I am going to sleep and you are going to watch. Don't let that old woman go out; and wake me if anything happens. If nothing happens, let me sleep till midnight. Then wake me up. But, Jean, if I get horses I shall have no side saddles. How can they ride, those two?"

"If they were only men!"

Thank God they are not! But you give me an idea." He went back to the old woman. "Have you two suits of boys' clothes, mother? I have another gold coin to pay for them."

"Yes."

"Where are they?"

"In the room where they are sleeping."

"Good! Go to bed now. I will wake you when I want the clothes."

At midnight, when Jean aroused him, he in turn waked up the old woman and bade her go to the sleeping room and rouse Yvonne. Grumbling, she did so, and Raoul spoke from the other side of the door.

"Dear mademoiselle, the old woman will give you two suits of boy's clothing. Will you and Elise please put them on? I am sorry to ask it of you, but I hope to have a horse for you to ride, but no side saddle. Shall you mind?"

"At least I can do what you wish,

monsieur, and I will. When do you want us to be ready?"

"At once! I want you to watch while Jean sleeps, please," and then in a lower tone, finding her near the door, he explained that he would be away for a couple of hours, and would want them to be ready, when he came back, to jump at once into the saddles. "Can you ride cavalier fashion, mademoiselle?"

"Yes, both of us can. It is not so long since we rode our ponies in that way, Elise and I."

It was a most desperate adventure that Raoul was bound on, and Jean protested till Raoul solemnly assured him there was no other way. "Be ready to jump on your horse when I bring it up."

"Yes, Monsieur Raoul."

Yvonne and Elsie came down, after a little while, wearing the clothes of the boys and carrying their own garments in little bundles. No doubt they blushed and were uncomfortable to be so dressed, but it was too dark to see more than their outlines.

"Now I will be off," he said.

"You will not run any risk, monsieur?" pleaded Yvonne. "You know my whole dependence is on you."

"I will be very careful," he answered in a low tone, "because I am looking forward to riding by your side tomorrow. Besides, I know I shall not die until I have confided to you the great secret of my life. Good-by!"

It was a long, weary wait after that. She persuaded Jean to sleep. Elise slept without persuasion. Yvonne had time for reflection. It seemed incredible to her that so much had happened in one day. It was as if a whole lifetime had been passed in that time. And to think that she was betrothed to one man, wedded to another, and loved by and—yes, loving another! She would not delude herself as to that; but all the more reason why he should not know.

It was very near dawn, and she was becoming frightened lest something had happened to Raoul, when she heard a distant sound of hoofbeats on the road. She waked Jean at once and Elise.

"Some one is coming," she said; and then to herself: "Heaven send it be Raoul!"

It was Raoul, riding one horse and leading three. "Mount quickly," he said, flinging himself off his horse. "Put Elise into the saddle, Jean!" He picked Yvonne up in his arms and hastily seated her. "See to her stirrups, Jean!" He shortened Yvonne's stirrups as he talked. "We are pursued," he added, "but I picked out the best horses in the stable, so I don't think they will catch us. Good-by, mother!"

They rode off in the dim light, and for a while kept at a steady gallop that soon carried them far on their way.

"How did you do it?" Yvonne asked finally.

He laughed. "I stole them from the soldiers in the village. I had an idea the stable wouldn't be guarded. And, indeed, there were only two men there. I quieted them easily enough, and then went in and took my pick of the horses. These are English horses. Is it not strange that these republicans can see the value of ancestors for horses, but not for men?"

"You are not hurt?" she asked, knowing that he must have run a terrible risk in spite of his light way of telling of it.

"Not in the least; but I am afraid one or two of the soldiers were hurt a little."

"How brave and how resourceful you are! I wish my father might have known you!"

"How I wish it! How I wish I might have rescued him!" he answered, with a fervor that told Yvonne why he wished her father under a serious obligation to him.

His insistence in recurring to the one topic thrilled and delighted her, and, at the same time, filled her with fear.

"What are we going to do now?" she asked, to divert him.

"We are going on until we come to a little byroad. Then we will turn into that, and Jean and I will turn republican soldiers, if you will promise me not to hate me in that guise."

"I could never do that," she said reproachfully; then, fearing he might build hope on that, she asked hastily: "How can you turn soldier?"

"I borrowed two suits from the soldiers, and have them behind me on my saddle."

In half an hour, and before it was clear daylight, they reached the little road and swept into it. At a suitable spot, a distance on, Raoul and Jean dismounted and went into the bushes to change their clothes. Luckily for Jean, Raoul had picked out a big suit.

Jean had faithfully kept the four muskets he had taken from Hulin and his companions, and carried them, slung over his back. Raoul put two of them out of commission by breaking the stocks and throwing them in a thicket; then slung one of the others over his back.

"Will you ride in such company?" he demanded gayly, when they stepped out into the road.

"Oh, gladly!" she answered.

They secured their bundles of clothing to the saddles and mounted. Once more they were on their way; and this time Raoul was filled with hope. "Now," he said, with a sidelong, lingering glance from head to foot of the charming, blushing boy by his side, "I begin to feel that we really shall see the Prussian army. But you ride like a hussar, Mademoiselle Yvonne!"

"Of what use is it to change my garments for these if you betray my sex in that way?" she demanded, confused under his admiring eyes, but her spirits rising with the new prospect of escape.

"How, then, shall I address you?" he demanded.

Their eyes met, and hers fell. "Perhaps Yvon would be best," she said in a low tone.

"Yvon!" he repeated, his voice breaking in his eagerness. "Oh, Yvon is charming. Yvon, Yvon! Yes, it will do admirably. Yvon!" he ended in a tone so unaffectedly tender that the girl felt her heart leap.

They met no one on the road, but occasionally a frightened peasant who saluted timidly; so they rode along at an easy pace, talking. And as each was filled with the thought of the other, the most natural subject of conversation was themselves. They were eager to know all about each other, and soon were laying bare their simple lives, until it seemed to them that they had known each other always.

They went on till the morning was half gone, when, coming on a lonely inn, Raoul, by dint of some silver coins and a few threats, procured some food for his hungry little band, and some hay for his horses. He unsaddled, too, and washed and rubbed down the steaming animals.

When they started on again they were all in a gay mood, for, besides having eaten, they had brought along enough food for another meal. Even Jean spoke occasionally to his plump and ingratiating partner. After all, he thought, I might as well get used to her; she is my wife.

In the afternoon, seeing a favorable spot some distance off the road, they went to it and unsaddled and rubbed down the horses, and then, with loosely girt saddles, let them crop the succulent grass, while Yvonne and Elise freshened themselves at a brook and afterward rested. Raoul knew that St. Mihiel could not be far away, and he was anxious to cross the River Meuse either just before dark at night, or at very early dawn. He had no doubt that the alarm had been carried on to St. Mihiel so that there would be a lookout

for them. It was probable, in fact, that there would be patrols out. If only they could pass the Meuse safely!

He decided that it would be best to stay where they were until evening; so they ate their meal and then gladly lay down to sleep on the soft grass under the trees. Jean and Raoul watched by turns.

It was quite late when they started, but Raoul thought there should be time enough to get to the river before nightfall. He knew its direction was north, and that by keeping an easterly course they must come upon it.

It grew dark, however, much more quickly than he had calculated, and he was greatly concerned. A freshening of the breeze, a distant rumble of thunder, and a flash of lightning caused Raoul to break the silence all had observed: "It is going to rain. I wondered why it was so dark, and had not thought of that."

"You have had enough else to think of," Yvonne said quickly. "Ah! I felt a drop of rain."

"It will be pouring presently. I wish we had shelter. How dark it is! Like midnight." In fact, they could hardly see the sides of the road.

The drops became more frequent, and the thunder and lightning were awesomely close. There seemed no hope that they could escape a drenching, when of a sudden the horses whinnied one after the other, and simultaneously swerved from the path and broke into a trot which presently became a gallop. At the same time they ceased to feel the raindrops, and seemed immersed in pitchy blackness.

"What has happened?" cried Yvonne, her horse crowding closer to his.

"We have evidently entered a forest road. You can hear the patter of the rain on the leaves overhead. I believe the horses know where they are going. Ah, but it is pouring now!"

Indeed, it seemed as if the clouds were letting out sheets of water, for it penetrated freely through what must have been a dense canopy of leaves. Raoul checked the horses, and they crowded together by the side of the road, close to a great tree, whose bole he could touch with his hand.

"Ah, monsieur! What are you doing?" the voice of Yvonne cried reproachfully.

"I beg you to permit me," was the pleading response from Raoul, as he took off his soldier's coat and put it about her shoulders.

"But you will be wet through, monsieur!"

"It would not be the worst that could happen, Yvon; nor would it be the first time in my life; would it, Jean? Do you remember the night we came home from the fair?"

"It was like swimming the river," chuckled Jean.

"It seems to me," said Yvonne in a tone that Raoul alone could hear, "that you always have your own way. Nevertheless, if you take cold——"

"Ah, mademoiselle," he answered softly, "I shall put on the coat when the rain is over, and then I shall be warmed through to the heart. I beg you to make no objection. I have hated the republican thing until now; but from this moment it will be a delight to wear it. Besides, the worst is done now; the storm is abating."

"I am getting very wet, Jean," they heard Elise say dolefully.

"Ah, bah! The storm is almost over," was the gruff response.

Yvonne laughed softly. "At least," she murmured in Raoul's ear, "the old proverb does not hold good in this case; it is not like master like man here."

"My poor Jean François!" laughed Raoul; "he is too much afraid of Elise to be polite."

When they were sure the rain was over they urged their horses on, at Raoul's suggestion letting the reins lie

slack on their necks so that they might take their own direction. "They will know better than we," he said; "and I have a hope that this is an avenue leading to some habitation."

The sagacious animals went forward at a swift walk for fully half an hour, at the end of which time the party emerged from the forest, and became aware of the fact, already suspected, that the storm had passed away, leaving the sky bright and clear.

"Thank Heaven for the stars!" cried Yvonne in a tone that betrayed the previous tension of her nerves.

"And for shelter, also," added Raoul. "See the ruin of the château there? If only the stable is not destroyed!"

As it turned out, the stable was the only part that had not been laid in ruins. There, for some reason, there was a loft full of hay, and the grain bin was half full.

"Ah, but this is fortunate!" cried Raoul, who had climbed up into the loft and felt the soft, fragrant hay under his feet. "Come, Yvon! Your hand!" And, as he guided her across the hay: "This would not indeed be much of a bedchamber for the Marquise de Lazire, but confess that for Yvon it is decidedly luxurious. Why, you should sleep like a baby up here. And you are tired enough, mademoiselle?" he ended, with tender solicitude.

"Yes, I am very tired, but, oh! not as I was last night, Monsieur Raoul. This is nothing."

"You must be hungry, too. What have you in your bag? I have part of a loaf of bread."

"My bag is full of food. Elise has some, too; have you not, Elise?" She gently withdrew her hand, which he had continued to hold.

"I have shared with Jean," replied Elise, who had climbed into the loft without assistance, Jean being too busy with the horses to give her any attention. "We ate together as we rode. It was the only companionable thing he would do."

"Yes," laughed Raoul, "Jean eats better than he talks, and, which is lucky for you, Elise, he fights better than he eats. Is there anything you will have that I can get you, mademoiselle? Are you not thirsty?"

"Thank you, monsieur, but I wish nothing so much as to sleep. I did not know how tired I was. And I had such a good rest this afternoon, too!"

"We shall be just below you, you know," he said; and began gathering up hay to throw down to Jean. "Sleep well," he said finally, as he was about to descend the ladder; "we shall make an early start."

"Listen to those horses," said Jean to him when he had descended; "do they not eat like horses who appreciated good living? *Parbleu!* This is like magic to come here in the darkness and find all we need. I hope I shall not wake up to find I have only dreamed it. It needs only a little for my own stomach to make happiness complete."

"Glutton!" murmured Raoul; "and Elise says she shared her food with you. Nevertheless, I will share my loaf with you."

"Elise!" muttered Jean scornfully. "When I am with her I don't know whether I eat or not. As for me, I have a carcass of a chicken to share with you, Monsieur Raoul."

"Just the same, ungrateful that you are! you are lucky to have so pretty a wife. Admit it, now!"

"She is not so bad; and I am getting used to her."

Raoul laughed immoderately; then sighed, and was silent for a long time. He wished he had as few complications in his affair.

CHAPTER X.

Raoul called Yvonne while dawn was still breaking. "I cannot offer you many luxuries this morning, mademoi-

selle," he said to her, when she came down, "but there is the fountain in the front of the château, and in the salon you will find some bits of broken mirror. I can answer for the water being clear and cold, notwithstanding the basin is choked with rubbish. And you may be sure of complete privacy."

"Thank you so much, monsieur! But is there time?"

"The horses are still eating, and Jean is rubbing them down. While you are busy with your toilet I shall be getting the breakfast ready. Ah, you look incredulous! Wait, then!"

He was so cheery and gay that Yvonne, followed by Elise, ran off in good spirits. When she returned, looking, as Raoul thought, ravishingly beautiful, with good color in her cheeks, a bright light in her eyes, and her hair arranged in a style that was a delightful compromise between the maiden she was and the peasant boy she pretended to be, she found Raoul presiding proudly over a tempting pile of cherries.

"There, Mademoiselle Incrédule!" he cried triumphantly; "what do you say now? Did you ever sit down to a better breakfast? To be sure, it is a little early for a fine lady to be up at all, but that is the penalty one must pay, in these days of freedom, for being well born."

"Oh," she cried, quite at her ease since she had had a glance in the splinter of the mirror, "you know very well that you cannot surprise me with your impossibilities. Already I am used to seeing you perform them."

"Ah, who knows!" he exclaimed, his eyes resting on her adoringly, "I may surprise you yet with an impossibility."

She guessed at his meaning, but ignored it. "You have found a way of escape, then?" she demanded, with a very pretty assumption of surprise.

"I was not thinking of escape," he answered, "but of overcoming what has the appearance of an insurmountable difficulty." Then, with a sudden change of manner, as if he dared not continue longer in that strain, he added: "But I have been thinking of escape, too. I have discovered that the Meuse, for which I have been seeking, is not five hundred yards away."

"I know nothing of the Meuse. Is it a large river? Is there a bridge we must cross?"

"I, too, am ignorant. We may need a bridge or a ferry; or we may cross at a ford. Perhaps, even," and he looked anxiously at her, "we may have to swim. What would you say to that?"

Elise looked frightened at once, but Yvonne's eyes flashed and her head went up higher. "I shall do whatever you command, monsieur. I do not swim, but I shall trust myself to you unfalteringly."

"And I," cried Raoul, pale with joy over her words, "will take you to safety. I swear it!"

The sun was not yet above the horizon when they rode away from the ruined château. "It seems to me," said Yvonne, looking proud approval at Raoul, "that you must know where you are going, you lead the way with so much assurance."

"I studied the country the first thing. It was not only cherries I climbed trees for. Ah, if only I can get across the Meuse without trouble, I shall put your endurance to the test. You see that Jean has put on each horse grain enough for two days. That means that I hope, with hard riding, to come to where enemies are fewer and friends more plentiful in that time. Is it not worth risking some fatigue for, Yvon?"

"Oh, yes, Monsieur Raoul. I can stand anything better than to fall into the hands of those wretches. So ride as hard as you will, and you shall see that a De Lazire, even if only a girl, can endure much. And do not be

afraid of Elise. She is timid, but she is devoted to me, and would rather risk her life with me than cast in her lot with the butchers and the wolves of the republic."

Thanks to having studied the country pretty thoroughly, Raoul was able to make his way with assurance through the lanes that led to the riverside. It was true that the hedges which served to hide them also prevented their seeing on either side, but presently they came out on a broad stretch of meadow that ran down to the river bank.

"I see an opening in the fringe of willows," cried Yvonne.

"And there are cart tracks running down to the water. It must be a ford," Raoul said.

"Look to the south, Monsieur Raoul!" shouted Jean.

A mile away, but coming toward them at a gallop, was a small troop of horsemen. Yvonne looked at Raoul, her face suddenly pale. Elise uttered a cry of terror, and clutched at Jean's arm.

"They have been watching for us," said Raoul calmly. "Come, then! Ford or not, we must cross here."

At a word and a light touch, the horses broke into a run which carried them swiftly across the meadow; the dull thud of their hoofs in the damp grassland not making noise enough to drown the cries of their pursuers. Raoul touched his horse with his heel so that it sprang in front of Yvonne's animal, and led the way down the gradually sloping river bank.

Undoubtedly the opening marked a ford in ordinary times, but the spring rains had so swollen the river that it was plain at once to Raoul's eye that in midstream the horses would be swept off their feet. Nevertheless, there was no choice but to make the attempt, since their pursuers would be upon them in a very little while.

"There will be some swimming to do, Jean," he said quickly. "Look out for the priming of your musket! And look out for Elise, too. Trust him, Elise. Do as he tells you. Come, Yvonne!"

She smiled bravely, and dashed into the stream by his side. He exchanged a glance with her; then took her horse's bridle and led it into the stream.

The river was about three hundred feet wide, with the channel nearer the farther side, as was evident by the character of the water there. But already the horses were in to their bellies, and were fighting the current, which was very swift.

"Don't get off your horse unless I bid you," Raoul said briefly; "then slide off next to me and hold by the pommel of the saddle." The next instant he was off, the horses having dropped suddenly, so that they were off their feet and swimming frantically, as horses will.

A cry from Elise, coming simultaneously with the sound of a volley of musketry, caused them both to look around. Elise was clinging wildly to her saddle, but was unharmed, and there was no sign of their pursuers.

"What was it?" demanded Yvonne.

"A signal, I'm afraid. Watch the other bank; you are higher than I."

They were in the channel now, and the horses were being carried down the stream. But that did not trouble Raoul, for he had noticed that there would be a good landing, and an easy bank to climb almost anywhere. He was mainly concerned about Yvonne, and watched her anxiously.

Already her horse's back was submerged, and she was under water to the waist. She contrived to keep her place in the saddle, however, partly by clinging to the pommel and partly by the pressure of her legs. Her horse swam vigorously and kept its nose well out of water. The firing continued behind them, and Yvonne scanned the bank in front with anxious eyes, talking to Raoul in brief phrases.

"There is no one. I see nothing. But a little farther, now. Oh, are you safe? No one yet. The bank is clear. Ah, the horses touch!"

It was true; their horses felt the solid earth under their feet, and plunged rapidly forward. Raoul climbed into his saddle as his horse went forward. And now, fierce, wild yells sounded behind them, and the ping! ping! ping! of musket balls passing their heads spurred them on.

"Canaille!" cried Raoul scornfully; "they can't shoot any better than they ride."

He gave an anxious glance at their companions, and, seeing them safe, took the bridle of Yvonne's horse and dashed out of the water and up the bank, followed closely by Jean and Elise. A minute later they were all gathered together, sheltered from the farther bank by a clump of willows.

"Well done, Elise!" said Raoul, with a return to his gay manner; "before we are with the Prussians you will be an accomplished cavalier."

"It was Jean," she answered, a sigh and a glance at him causing the blood to leap to his florid cheeks. "He is so brave and so strong!"

"Bah! bah!" he exclaimed. "Do we remain here, then, Monsieur Raoul? It seems to me those sans-culottes are going to try the river, too. Shall I try a shot at them?"

"No; save your fire for those on this side."

"There they are, monsieur!" cried Yvonne suddenly, pointing across the meadow.

"It is what I feared," he murmured; "and they come by the only road."

"It is a trap, then," snapped Jean. "That is why they fired as if they expected to hit the moon. Bah! there are only six of these, and we have our two muskets and our two swords."

Yvonne watched Raoul intently. He sat very erect, and a grim smile lurked about the corners of his mouth. His alert composure was very reassuring; and the danger, which had seemed so great at the first sight of the soldiers, grew less in view of his calmness.

"As Jean says, there are only six before us. Those behind will not matter. You will obey me?"

"You know I will."

"Oh, yes, you are a good soldier, mademoiselle. Well, listen, Jean! Do you see that they come this way, puzzled by the sight of us making no effort to escape. We will let them come as close as they will. When I give the word, and not sooner, shoot carefully, so that there will be but four opposed to us."

"Yes, Monsieur Raoul."

"You, Yvonne"—he looked into her eyes to let her know that he purposely, in this moment of danger, called her by that name—"and Elise will remain with us until we charge, which we will immediately after shooting. When we have engaged them, pass us and make for the road where they entered."

"And you?" she demanded breathlessly.

"Will follow you if we can. There is no other way, Yvonne. Jean, are you ready?"

"Yes, Monsieur Raoul."

"Let them come very near. Fire when I raise my musket. I will take the one on the right, you the one on the left. If we do not follow you, Yvonne," he went on quickly, lowering his voice, "you must trust to the good God, and ride hard!"

"Oh, Monsieur Raoul!"

"I hope—oh, I expect to join you, Yvonne; but if I do not, remember that I loved you. Ah, I have said it again! I had meant to wait until a better moment, but—— Be ready to fly! Jean!"

The troop of soldiers had come toward them, secure in their numbers, although hesitating because the little group did not have the air of being

fugitive; and because the firing of muskets continued on the other side of the stream.

But when Raoul and Jean placed themselves in front of the other two, the leader of the troop suddenly cried out: "The ci-devants!" At that moment Raoul raised his musket, and the reports of his weapon and Jean's were almost simultaneous; and instantly they dug their heels into their horses and dashed forward.

Two men toppled over as they began to move; the remaining four fired wildly, and then turned to ride away. But Raoul and Jean were on them before they had fairly turned. Two went down at once; the other two fled down the meadow, away from the exit.

"I thought there would be some fighting," grumbled Jean. "It seems these republicans——"

"Come!" interrupted Raoul; "there will be pursuit." He touched his horse, and it sprang after Yvonne and Elise, who had just passed. Yvonne was going slowly, looking back. "Hurry!" he said, overtaking them; "they may pursue us. Anyhow, it is better to get as far away as possible."

CHAPTER XI.

They rode out of the meadow and came upon a byroad, which presently brought them to what was evidently the main highway. Raoul would have preferred a less-traveled way, but dared not either make inquiries after one, nor check his speed.

For an hour they galloped on, passing straggling soldiers, other pedestrians, and wayfarers, but meeting with no unfriendly bodies. Alert for danger, Raoul, nevertheless, frequently studied the face of his companion, and found it always serious.

He checked his horse at last, and they fell into a walk to let them breathe. "I see," he said then, "that you are angry with me."

"I angry?" she answered, her full lower lip quivering.

"Yes, you are angry, and you have reason. Now, I promise you, on the word of a gentleman, to importune you no more with my love, but only to serve you truly and to the best of my ability, until I have placed you in the hands of Monsieur le Comte de Choiseul."

"Oh, Monsieur Raoul!" breathed Yvonne, a strange tumult in her heart, her breath coming and going quickly.

"But when I have placed you in his hands," went on Raoul, with a sudden change in his manner, "I shall win you if I can. I have that right, as you shall admit some day when you know all the truth."

She placed no especial meaning in his final words, so stirred was she by his sudden fire. And she knew that if he had been able to read her heart at that moment his despair would have been turned to joy.

She bent her head so that he might not see in her eyes what was going on in her troubled breast. He was very far from dreaming, however, that there might be any hope for him, and he turned his face from her and rode by her side in silence.

A number of times during the morning she tried to engage him in conversation; but, without being sullen, he was not in a mood to talk, and only said as much in response as courtesy demanded.

It was a desolated country they were passing through, and the story of military occupation was plainly enough told by the broken hedges, muddy roads, untilled, deserted fields, and every now and again the charred ruins of farm buildings.

Where the roads were good they put their horses to their best speed, and rested them by walking through the deep mud of other parts. Where a village of any size was discovered, they made a detour; or when that was not

possible, rode through it with reckless swiftness.

On these latter occasions, Yvonne crowded as close as possible to Raoul, until their stirrup irons clanked together; and as they emerged beyond the hamlet their eyes were sure to meet in a long look that left them both confused and troubled.

Toward evening they were alarmed by meeting small bands of evil-looking armed men, who studied them half threateningly, and seemed inclined to stop them, but were evidently persuaded not to by the apparent readiness of the party to defend itself; and, perhaps, too, by the sight of the officer's coat worn by Raoul.

"The republican army must be near," Yvonne said, with a shudder.

"These are rather bandits than soldiers," he answered; "but it is time we left the main road. The horses are tired, and you are ready to fall out of the saddle. As for Elise, she has been moaning to Jean these two hours."

The fact was that Raoul had been more alarmed than he wished to admit by the several meetings with the little bands, which were plainly made up of those predatory ruffians which ever hang about the skirts of an army. So at the first byroad that led northward he turned from the highway, and, half an hour later, stopped at a lonely farmhouse, which stood far from the road.

How far they had come during the day he could not tell, since they had lost by the detours they had made, and by the necessity of wading slowly through the occasional stretches of deep, sticky mud. But it was certain that the good horses were tired, and that Yvonne and especially Elise were worn out and unable to go any farther.

There were no men about the house, the oldest boy being not over fourteen years old. The women were dull and sullen, and looked half starved. A sort of fierce misery of endurance and hate was stamped on all the faces; and no one came forward to hear what the strangers had to say, or seemed to pay any attention to them beyond a lowering scowl.

"It seems they are so used to visitors that they are indifferent," said Raoul. "Never mind. We will alight, and I will talk to them. You will be glad to get off your horse, mademoiselle? Jean, assist Elise to dismount!"

He jumped off his own horse and abandoned the tired animal while he aided Yvonne to get down. In fact, he was obliged to fairly lift her off her horse; and when she was on her feet she was forced to lean on him because her numbed limbs refused to support her. As for Elise, she clung to Jean like a child, heedless of his stammered protests to release him so that he might take care of the horses.

"Ah, mademoiselle!" murmured Raoul; "you are the bravest of your sex. Is there another tenderly nurtured lady in all France who would have endured what you have to-day?"

The children were watching them with a dull curiosity that was pitiful in its unlikeness to the ordinary ways of little ones; the older members of the family moved about sullenly, glancing furtively at them. Raoul half carried Yvonne to the house and seated her on a chair at the door.

"Where is our worthy citizen Jacques?" he demanded, with an affectation of heartiness.

A middle-aged woman, who was manifestly the head of the household, turned from her occupation of stirring a pot on the hearth, and, after staring at him dully for a moment, answered sullenly: "There is nothing left. What do you come here for?"

"I shall pay for what I get, citizeness. Service of the republic!"

"La! la!" came contemptuously from the woman. Evidently she had come to the end of both endurance and belief.

"See, then!" said Raoul, drawing from his pocket one of the few remaining silver coins; "it is yours for some hay to sleep on and for a few mouthfuls to eat."

The woman looked from the coin to his face; and the others drew near and eyed the piece of money as if it had been one of the seven wonders of the world. Raoul put the coin in the woman's hand.

"There!" he said; "now will you believe that I mean to pay? You will give us something to eat for ourselves, and hay for the horses?"

The woman bit the coin with her glistening teeth and let it fall on the hearthstone. It answered both tests satisfactorily.

"Say, then, Ange!" she called out, quite as if repeating an order already several times given; "will you take the citizen captain's horses and give them some hay?" Then to Raoul stolidly: "What we have you shall share. Let the citizenesses come in."

The dull, sullen eyes had been keen enough to spy out the sex of the two pseudo boys, but probably the same eyes had looked upon too many horrors and novelties in the swiftly moving days of military occupation to be disturbed by so trifling a thing as a girl in the garments of a boy.

Jean took the horses to the stable and fed them, and returned in time to have his share of the boiled lentils and black bread, which was all there was of the meal set before the family. And, from the greedy way of the children, and the thoroughness with which the platters were cleaned, it could be guessed that the meal was fuller than usual.

After the food was eaten, Raoul saw that Yvonne and Elise were comfortably established in the hayloft. He then went to talk with the woman, to try to find out the things he needed to know.

The woman talked readily enough; indeed, she seemed glad to rehearse her wrongs and ill usage. And Raoul listened patiently because he soon found that by interjecting questions he could obtain all the information he so much needed.

Briefly told, her story was that the able-bodied men of the family had left the farm at the beginning of the call for soldiers to go to Paris. There they had joined the republican army, some going one way, some another. As for the farm, it had been as rich as the best, with sheep and cattle on it, as many as could be raised. These the republican army had helped itself to from first, and then the Prussians. And then one band and another had swept over the place, and it was as it was. Of course, she was a patriot, and such a wicked enemy of the people as the king ought to be killed. And, after the baker, the baker's wife, of course. But for her part she was worse off than ever, let the patriots say what they would. She supposed she was lucky to have a roof left on the place; but how did she know that when the Prussians took Mayence, they would not come and burn everything she had, and take them all into slavery? That was what those Prussians did, she was told. They had not done it when they robbed her of her sheep, but no doubt that was because they were in such a hurry.

"The Prussians are at Mayence, then?" asked Raoul.

"There, and anywhere between; and robbers everywhere. Why can't the patriot army at Metz at least drive out the robbers?"

"Metz is your market town, then?"

"Metz? No. Pont à Mousson," and the woman pointed eastward.

"How far away is that?"

"A league, perhaps."

"And to get there I first cross the Moselle?"

"It is on the Moselle."

"How do I cross the river? Is there a bridge?"

"Just now the bridge is down, but there is a ferry this side, if you wish to cross. Then you can go north to where you like. Unless the ferryman is dead. They use us, and then shoot us. I suppose it is the brigands; but how are we to know who they are? They look like soldiers. They don't come like you, citizen captain, with silver and an open hand."

"And the road beyond the Moselle, citizeness?"

"I do not know it. My husband could tell you, but he is not here."

"But Ange?"

"He knows nothing the other side of the river."

"Will he take us to the ferry in the morning? I have a small coin left to give him for his service."

"Ange, do you hear? The citizen captain will give you a sou to take him to the ferry. He will take you, citizen captain."

"Of course, there are soldiers at Pont à Mousson?"

"A regiment, they say; and they devour everything. We have not a cow, not a sheep, not a chicken, even, on the place. How long will this last, citizen captain?"

"Until the Prussians are beaten, I'm afraid. Well, good night, citizeness! Early in the morning, Ange!"

He left them, but stood behind a tree and watched the house until he was sure all had gone to bed, and that no one meant to go out to bring the soldiers on them. When he joined Jean in the stable that faithful follower was snoring in one of the stalls next the horses.

CHAPTER XII.

"There is no fountain this morning, mademoiselle, but you will find the horse trough a very fair substitute," was Raoul's salutation, when Yvonne came down from the loft in the early morning. "Alas, that I have no mirror for you; not even a splinter."

Rested and refreshed by her night's sleep, Yvonne laughed gayly, and blushed, too, as she answered: "Perhaps Elise can do what you cannot, then. I think she saved a piece of mirror from the château. You may say it was in vanity, but I declare it was for a memento."

"Ah!" he sighed; "I, too, would have saved a bit of the mirror if I could have seen in it what you can. Shall I order breakfast while you are making your toilet?"

"If you will be so kind, monsieur," she answered, laughing to hide her consciousness of his compliment. "And whatever else you order, be sure I have some black bread!"

"Always incredulous," he cried after her. "Wait, then, till you see what there is for you!"

When she returned, she found him waiting under a lilac bush between the house and the stable. He had made a substitute for a table by resting two boards on some great stones, with grape leaves spread out for a cloth.

"Ah, how charming!" she cried, touched to the heart by his thoughtfulness. "And strawberries! Wild strawberries! Ah, Monsieur Raoul, how much you do for me!"

He felt himself repaid for the trouble he had taken by the break in her voice and the moisture in her beautiful eyes. It was worth while to search the woods at daybreak for such a reward.

With Ange for a guide, they had no difficulty in finding the ferry; and the ferryman was only too glad to serve people who paid him.

From the old ferryman, too, Raoul learned that he could come upon the highway between Metz and Forbach by going northward. As this was the thoroughfare for the republican troops stationed at Saarlouis, he contrived to

draw from the old man the fact that by crossing the hills and the valley beyond he would come upon a road that ran along the foothills of the Vosges Mountains, and made toward Mayence.

It was not very definite, and it made their journey longer, but it seemed best to take that course; so, after leaving the river, they climbed the hills that bordered it, and from the top could obtain a sufficiently good idea of the country they were to cross.

"At least," said Yvonne, "we have gone through the worst of our journey."

Raoul did not think so, for he could see indications here and there of troops, as if small detachments were scattered over the country. He did not speak of it, however, but kept himself constantly on the alert and ready for flight or battle as seemed wisest.

The morning passed with only an occasional encounter with small bodies of soldiers. Once, on their way through a small hamlet, some soldiers lounging in front of an inn tried to stop them, and as they passed at full gallop, fired a few scattering shots after them.

About noon, Raoul took advantage of the shelter of a tongue of a large forest that covered the hills beyond to rest and feed the horses and themselves.

It was plain to all of them by now that their affairs were in a more desperate condition than they had been at any time; but Elise was the only one to make any sort of moan, and it seemed that she did it rather to draw sympathy from Jean than for any other reason.

They discussed the matter, but in the end decided that there was nothing better to do than go on as they were going, seeking the byroads and making for the forests higher up on the hills, where they might hope to be sheltered.

The afternoon was filled with a succession of small alarms, which had no worse effect than to keep them all on the alert; and which had the good result, according to Yvonne's way of thinking, of restoring Raoul to his customary gayety. He called her Yvon once more, and jested with Jean and Elise when occasion offered. It must be said of Jean, however, that he treated his master's jests more philosophically than he had done at first. Not that he was actually reconciled to Elise's companionship, but at least he was becoming wonted and could even utter several consecutive words to her without danger of serious congestion. As for Elise, her admiration for Jean was so great that she practiced every art she knew and many which she invented for the occasion to put him at his ease and to induce him to look at her for long enough to discover how pretty she was.

Twice, when evening came and the horses were showing unmistakable signs of exhaustion, Raoul led the way to a farmhouse, and each time had been obliged to hastily change his course because of soldiers seen lounging about. It seemed as if the country were alive with patriots in uniform.

"I am afraid, Yvon," said Raoul, at the second encounter, "that we shall have to sleep in the forest to-night. What would you say to that?"

"You know that I shall say what you say," she answered, smiling wanly. "There we shall have nothing worse than wolves to fear. I mind them less than patriots."

So that was settled, and Raoul made directly for the fringe of the forest which showed itself not more than two miles away. It was dusk when they reached it, and grew rapidly darker the moment they entered it. They stopped near a little mountain brook so that the horses might have water.

Raoul and Jean gave their first moments to unsaddling and rubbing down the horses that had done their work so faithfully, and upon whose further endurance their safety depended. They

were given but half a mess of grain, so that another half mess might be left for the morning; after which they were hobbled and turned loose to complete their meal on the tender green leaves of the young trees and on such grass as was to be found nearer the edge of the forest.

It was inevitable that while they ate their frugal meal of black bread and cheese, Raoul and Yvonne should draw close together and talk in low tones over their situation. And who could wonder if the danger that menaced them, the darkness that surrounded them, the brook that sang to them drew them closer in spirit.

He called her Yvon and she said Monsieur Raoul, as she always did when there was perfect peace between them. It seemed to both of them that their friendship was a thing of all the past, and destined to be continued through all the future. Her heart grew very soft, and she longed for some word from his lips to suit the tenderness that throbbed in his voice. And the words she craved to hear were ever trembling on his lips, but were held there by his vow of silence on the theme of love. And if he had spoken them, she would have rebuked him, so little consistent was the wish of her heart with her sense of duty.

At last she took alarm at her own longings and cried out abruptly: "It is late; I must sleep."

He took her hand and kissed it. It trembled, but was helpless. He made a pillow of leaves for her and put his coat in her lap. "I shall not need it now," he said, peremptorily stilling her remonstrance. "I shall watch a while. Besides, if I need anything more, there is my other coat in the bundle."

When Yvonne came to her breakfast after her toilet at a pool higher up the brook, she cried out in wonder at the meal that was ready there. A hare, roasted in an oven of hot stones set in a hole in the earth, and strawberries served on oak leaves. Her expressions of delight over the food and her amazement at his fertility of resource, filled Raoul with joy, though he made light of what he had done.

"It is nothing," he said. "I would be a poor hunter not to be able to find something for you to eat in these woods. Many a time we have done the like at Lestourmière; have we not, Jean?"

Jean nodded, busy with his share of the hare.

"It is not as tender as I would have had it for you, mademoiselle," said Raoul, "but in the spring one must take what one can find."

They started off merrily, even the horses seeming to share the high spirits of their riders; and yet there was less reason than ever for exhilaration that morning, as a glance over the valley spread out below them warned Raoul. Everywhere was evidence of soldiery.

"Getting ready to relieve Mayence," murmured Jean to his master. "We shall have some warm work to-day."

"Hush! It is only to-day, I hope."

The fulfillment of Jean's prophecy came in little more than two hours after their start, when at a turn in the road they came upon a company of infantry marching in good order toward them. Involuntarily a cry escaped the lips of Yvonne, and Elise almost threw herself from her horse in her desire to get into the arms of Jean. Nothing could persuade her that there was any safer place in time of trouble, so complete was her confidence in him.

To turn and fly might in some circumstances have been safe, but a glance at these men was sufficient to assure Raoul that their fire would not be wasted.

There was no time to consider; he must act at once. He drew his party to the side of the road with all the calmness of appearance he could as-

sume, and saluted with the utmost gravity.

The captain of the company saluted in turn, and then walked up to Raoul, his keen eyes studying the group, and plainly penetrating the disguise of the two seeming boys.

CHAPTER XIII.

Raoul studied the patriot captain as he approached, and in spite of the danger he spelled for them, he could not help admiring him. He was not noble; that was evident at a glance; but, on the other hand, he was a soldier from heel to crown, and evidenced the fact by the fierce alertness of his eyes, by the trimness of his poor apparel, by the poise of his head, and by his perfect self-assurance.

"Are you going to the relief of Mayence, then, citizen lieutenant?" he asked, his eyes dwelling both curiously and boldly on the pale but lovely face of Yvonne.

Raoul had calculated the time it would take the company to pass—two minutes, perhaps, at the rapid swing with which they moved along. To keep this inquisitive patriot amused so long was all.

"It is as you say, citizen captain," he laughed as if taking the question as a jest. "We are going to the relief of Mayence. This is my sister. Do you think they will be glad to see us there?"

"They would be fools else," was the reply, pointed by a look of admiration at Yvonne. "What regiment, citizen lieutenant?"

"My own regiment is the Twelfth, just now at Pierrefitte, where we have been smoking out some ci-devants, as you might judge by our horses."

"And what takes you to Mayence, if that is really your destination?" the captain asked with manifest suspicion.

Would the soldiers never pass? Raoul laughed heartily and shook his head as if in admiration of the astuteness of the other. "Aha! citizen captain, one can well see you were not born yesterday," he cried. "Shall I show you my dispatches?" He began to feel in his pockets, first one and then another with an increasing frown. The last rank was passing.

"Ah, yes, then, the dispatches!" said the captain ironically; and turned his head, the word halt forming on his lips.

"Jean, you pig!" shouted Raoul angrily, "you have the dispatches. Why do you not give them to me when you see me seek for them? The dispatches! the dispatches!"

He flashed a look at Jean, which the latter only half understood, but as it proved that was enough for the purpose. The road was clear now, and Jean dug his heels into his horse and caused it to leap out so as to stand between the captain and his moving company. Elise, true to her faith in Jean, would not leave him and pushed her horse to his side.

It was almost simultaneous with the cry of "Halt!" from the captain. The company stopped, but in that very moment the butt of Raoul's musket struck the captain between the eyes and sent him reeling across the road. Still another moment, and before the men were aware of what had happened, Raoul and Jean, having caught the bridles of the other two horses, were racing madly away.

Scattering shots were fired after them, but they came too late to do any harm beyond frightening Elise; and the party galloped on a good ten miles before they drew rein.

"He suspected us," Yvonne said.

Raoul looked at her face with an admiring smile. "You betrayed us. Never was a boy so beautiful; never bearing so aristocratic."

"I am sorry," she murmured.

"I am glad;" and his eyes said what his tongue was under vow not to utter.

Their noonday meal was black bread for themselves and the roadside grass for their horses. They were away from the edge of the forest now, and dared not apply at any farmhouse they saw lest they should run into a nest of soldiers; for it was plain that small bodies of troops were quartered in every available shelter. Why there was not a general march toward Mayence, they could not understand. Raoul learned afterward that the trouble was in the confusion at Paris, where suspicion of General Dumouriez had caused an unsettlement.

A mile beyond their resting place, as they made a turn in the road, the sound of clattering hoofs and jingling accounterments fell on their ears. They stopped with one impulse to listen. Then all saw at once and looked at each other with set faces. A detachment of cavalry was coming up the hill toward them by a road that joined theirs a hundred feet away. And the cavalrymen had caught sight of them. To be questioned was to be lost; the sex of Yvonne and Elise would alone cause comment and investigation. To turn back might lead to safety, but more likely to destruction after what had happened with the infantry captain.

"We must run for it and pass the road before they get to the top. Forward! Whip and spur!"

They were in movement instantly, and so were the foremost of the cavalrymen. The latter had to climb an ascent, however, and the fugitives had passed the fork in the road while the soldiers were still twenty yards away. They were hailed with cries to stop and with threats of shooting, but they only bent lower and sped on.

Raoul fell back and Elise was sent to take her place by her mistress. Bullets flew around them, but fell harmless. Raoul looked back and saw that they were distancing their pursuers. Then bullets whistled past him. Yvonne's horse plunged into the air and settled back, motionless. Raoul was by Yvonne's side and had her in his arms before the animal had time to fall.

"Leave me and save yourself!" she cried generously.

"Leave you!" he laughed exultantly. "Will you take my horse and leave me? Will you, Yvonne?"

"No, no!" she answered quickly. And was it true that she clung to him?

But with this added burden Raoul's horse could no longer widen the distance between him and the pursuing soldiers; and the yells of the latter showed that they knew it.

"There are only six," said Jean, doggedly keeping back with Raoul.

Raoul laughed as he looked into the white-encircled eyes. "A better six than any we have seen yet, my Jean," he said. "But perhaps you could make it five. Try!"

Jean drew up deliberately, turned and took aim. He behaved as if firing at a mark. A man fell. Jean joined Raoul again. "Only five," he said. "Your musket."

Raoul bade him take it from his shoulder, he being unable to disengage it; but before it could be done, Elise, who was riding ahead, unconscious that she was not closely followed, drew up suddenly, and, with a scream of terror, pointed ahead. A body of infantry was marching toward them.

Raoul felt his heart rise up in his throat. He looked over the side of the road into the valley; a precipice stood between them and safety. On the other side rose the rocky slope of a hill. No horse could scale it by any possibility.

"Off and follow me!" cried Raoul. "Help Elise, Jean!"

He was off as he spoke, and with Yvonne's hand in his leaped up the steep back. Jean followed, at first dragging and then half carrying Elise. They could hear the pounding of the horses and the cries of their pursuers; but they

had nearly a hundred yards the start of them, and their objective point was not more than fifty feet above the road.

It was a clump of rocks that Raoul had seen, and behind which he hoped to make a stand while he studied some means of escape. It was a stiff climb to the rocks, and they were all panting when they reached them.

Raoul pressed Yvonne down on a rock behind the shelter of the larger ones; and Elise dropped, whimpering, at her feet, only releasing Jean when the latter rather forcibly pushed her away from him. Raoul looked about him for a second, then turned to Jean and clapped him on the back.

"See then, my Jean François!" he cried; "is not fortune with us? Here is a rampart already made for us; and as we came is the only way here. We can hold it against an army, you and I. Come, my Jean, there shall be some fighting, I think."

Jean was loading his musket with grim calmness.

They had come upon what might be called a hillock torn away from the hillside back of them; for a chasm fully thirty yards wide separated them from the hill beyond, so that they were practically impregnable on that side, while on the three other sides there was but one way of approach—that by which Raoul had providentially led his party.

"We can stand a siege," Raoul said, smiling gayly at Yvonne, who was watching him steadily.

"If we had food, perhaps," she responded, smiling, too.

"Have we not half a loaf of black bread?" he cried. "But bah! I forgot, it was on your horse. Never mind! It was peasant food, after all. Besides, we are so well fed we shall need nothing but drink, and there is plenty of that below us. You can hear it running down there."

"Shall I pick off one of those republicans, Monsieur Raoul?" asked Jean, his musket sighted through a crevice in the rocks.

"No, no, Jean, you are under orders now, and must do nothing until you are commanded. This is to be a siege in regular form. Do you not see that those patriots have studied the situation and realize its difficulties? They will wait for reënforcements, and then there will be a storming party. Shall we be unworthy of our position?"

Jean, ever ready to enter into the gay spirits of his adored master, turned to him with a smile and saluted, saying, with sudden gravity: "Yes, my corporal."

Raoul made a swift, startled gesture of dismay; then collected himself and laughed aloud. "No, no!" he cried. "I am commandant of this fort, Jean; a colonel, at least. Ah! I have it! Château d'Yvonne!"

"Thank you, Monsieur le Colonel," said Yvonne, a bright smile on her face, and her eyes sparkling as if this fun in the very eyes of deadly peril were to her taste. "You will wish to fly your colors, is it not so? Here they are, then!"

As she spoke she rapidly manipulated her hair so that it fell in a long braid down her back; and from the end of the braid she took a bit of red ribbon, half a yard in length, which she handed to Raoul.

"With my life, mademoiselle," he said, in a low tone, kneeling and putting the ribbon to his lips; then resuming his louder tone of gayety, "now a ramrod for a flagstaff, and our colors will float to the dismay and consternation of our enemies."

"They will think us reds," said Jean, in his matter-of-fact way.

"Jean, you mortify me."

"But no, monsieur," cried Yvonne, "he is right. Give me the ramrod."

They alternately watched her and the men below. The latter evidently intended to await the coming of the main

body before doing anything on the offensive. Yvonne took a dainty lace handkerchief from her bosom and tied it and the ribbon to the end of the ramrod, so that the two colors were mingled and would float together.

"Now it is royal," she said, handing it to Raoul, who as before, knelt to take it from her.

He did not rise at once, however, but after a moment's pause said, in a tone from which all lightness was gone: "I swear to defend this flag and those sheltered under it with the last drop of my blood."

"Monsieur Raoul permits me?" cried Jean huskily, kneeling beside his master. Raoul took his hand and pressed it. "I will die, too," Jean said, with noble simplicity, as soon as the pressure of Raoul's hand gave him permission.

"My Jean François!" cried Raoul, and embraced him.

"My brave Jean!" said Yvonne, her voice breaking as she put out her little hand to him.

"Bah! bah!" said Jean, kissing the hand hastily and leaping to his feet. "Shall I put our flag in place, Monsieur Raoul?"

"I must do that myself, Jean."

He selected a place where the flag would be at once conspicuous and yet out of their way in repelling assault. There he fastened it firmly by wedging it in a crevice with splinters of rock. When it was done, he climbed up on one of the tallest rocks in full view of the observant soldiers and the road below. One of them raised his musket to shoot, but Raoul made a gesture to desist and addressed them with smiling courtesy.

"Messieurs, behold the flag of the Château d'Yvonne! It is new to you. Never mind, you will know it better. You are waiting for your comrades. That is well. I beg you to give them my message, to deliver to them my only terms, offered in my capacity of commandant of the garrison: You shall all lay down your arms, retaining only your side arms, and march away with the honors of war!"

"Sacré aristocrat!" yelled one of the men, raising his musket.

The bullet whistled over Raoul's head as he stepped leisurely down.

"I think they do not mean to accept my terms," he said.

"I wish my father might have known you, monsieur," Yvonne murmured.

TO BE CONTINUED.

Patent Applied For

By Frank R. and Leslie Adams

This story of a psychological criminal may tax your credulity, but if you doubt the fact of telepathy there is an interesting experiment suggested by the author which you can try for yourself with three strips of colored paper

IN January happened the first thing that ever occurred to Thomas Mercer which he could not explain.

Mr. Mercer was one of the most prolific inventors that America has ever known. To his credit stand hundreds of the conveniences which make modern life what it is. Whatever difficulties presented themselves to civilization Mercer was almost invariably first in the field to solve them.

The baffling event referred to was the discovery, when he attempted to patent a nonrefillable bottle, that an almost exact duplicate of his invention had been filed at the patent office only a few hours previous. Coincidences of that sort have occurred before in the history of invention, so Mercer pocketed his disappointment and charged up the time he had spent to profit and loss. Still, it was curious that another mind should have hit upon the identical device that his own had perfected.

By the following week he had become absorbed in a scheme for increasing the candle power of electric lights without increasing the consumption of current. As was his custom, he worked night and day on this idea until in the latter part of April he had his result in tangible enough form to make a model and apply for registration.

He had quite forgotten the incident of the nonrefillable bottle, but had it brought forcibly to his mind when he received a polite note from his attorneys in Washington, calling his attention to the fact that his second invention for the year was also just a little too late to be patentable.

This seemed to savor more of robbery than of coincidence, and after considerable thought Mr. Mercer consulted a detective agency and asked for protection. The official of the agency who investigated his case suggested that there must be a leak somewhere in Mr. Mercer's own shops where the models of his inventions were constructed. Therefore, as a safeguard, before he commenced to work on a fresh idea, Mercer had built a small shop for himself, apart from the main building where his men worked. In order to obviate any danger of spying, he had this sanctum made absolutely soundproof, windowless, and ventilated by shafts.

Locked in this building, to which he alone had a key, Mercer proceeded to construct with his own hands the model of a carburetor which was to make possible the burning of kerosene as a fuel in automobiles. No detail of the manufacture was intrusted to any other hands than his own, or would he even speak of his ideas to any one. When his model was complete and he had satisfied himself that it was practical, he boxed it carefully, and, obsessed by the loss of his former inventions, made the trip personally to Washington, carrying the model in a grip which was with him constantly.

In Washington, accompanied by his attorneys, he made preliminary inquiries at the patent office to see if by any chance he had been preceded in the field.

An emotion akin to bewilderment overwhelmed Thomas Mercer when he was informed that a model of a kerosene carburetor had been deposited the day before. He was allowed to look at it, and discovered that, while it varied considerably in shape and minor details, the essential and patentable feature was identical with his own.

The patent rights were held by a New York corporation, which he knew had been organized solely for the purpose of exploiting the work of unknown inventors. Impelled more by curiosity than anything else, he stopped off in New York City and paid a visit to the holders of the patent. They refused to give him the name of the inventor, claiming that they did not know his identity themselves, having dealt with him entirely by mail. However, they had full power to dispose of the patent rights, and offered them to Mercer himself for one hundred thousand dollars.

Mercer refused the terms.

Before returning to Marsden, New Jersey, where his shops were located, he hunted up his old friend, Doctor Homer Vanderlinde, a member of his class in college, who had since won fame as a psychologist. In the course of their conversation, Mercer told him of his troubles.

"The especially annoying thing about it," said Mercer, after he had outlined the history of his losses, "is that my own factory, where we manufacture a great many of the things that I invent, is practically idle in consequence of the fact that everything that I have done since last year has proved futile."

Vanderlinde questioned him closely regarding the precautions he had taken for safeguarding his ideas, and asked for details of the construction of the soundproof, windowless workshop.

"Would it be possible," he asked, "for any one to hear or see through the air shafts?"

"Hardly," replied the inventor. "No one could hear anything because I do not talk to myself while I'm working, and I provided against spying by placing several elbows in the shaft."

"And is all your work done in that room?" Doctor Vanderlinde went on.

"Every bit."

"Do you ever take away with you any memoranda of the progress you have made during the day?"

"No."

"Isn't it just possible that you may put scraps of paper with drawings on them in your pockets when at work, and forget to take them out when you go?"

"Impossible," declared the inventor. "I do not wear the same clothes in the shop that I do outside. I wear my street suit when I go to the shop, and then change to working clothes as soon as I get there."

Doctor Vanderlinde was silent for a moment. Then he said: "It looks like an interesting mystery. Suppose you let me have a try at solving it for you. I can't do any harm, and I might accidentally hit on something the detectives have missed."

"I'd be only too glad," said Mercer, with unfeigned pleasure.

"Good! Then I'll go up there tomorrow with you."

"But," protested Mercer, "I was going to-day."

"It will be better for you to wait for me. As I understand it, you'll gain nothing by beginning another invention until you have solved your problems, and I'll be in better shape to work on it after I've disposed of my other business. Besides, I'd like to have a little time to think over what you have told me."

The inventor yielded to the importunities of his friend. They were both mental giants, and each in his own field dominated. If Mercer gave in now in a matter pertaining to psychology, Vanderlinde in his turn would bow to the other's judgment on a question of practical mechanics. Both were men in the prime of life, just beginning to be slightly grizzled in the service of humanity.

Mercer had been given by nature a thick, stocky body, built on the plan of a shock absorber, which he had come to disregard. Since it had always responded to every strain he had put upon it, he had never stopped to consider that there would ever be a limit to its endurance. His was the theory that a man needed but two hours' sleep out of the twenty-four, and to him efficiency meant the constant employment of all the hours between rising and retiring.

Doctor Vanderlinde was taller and slenderer, of a quick, nervous temperament, as are so many physicians who make a specialty of treating mental breakdowns.

The next morning, in the smoking compartment on the train to Marsden, Mercer asked him if he had come to any conclusion regarding the theft of his inventions.

Vanderlinde replied: "There is one obvious conclusion to be drawn from the facts you've given me. You said yesterday that from your workshop you carried nothing you had used during the day except your mind. The leak, therefore, is from your own brain. It has to be."

"Do you mean," demanded the inventor, "that I talk in my sleep or that I am not responsible mentally?"

"Not necessarily," Doctor Vanderlinde hastened to assure him. "I am only giving you the result of the process of elimination which you suggested to me by your own remark."

"If you don't mean that I'm crazy, explain how else I could give away my own inventions."

The doctor smiled. "It's quite possible that some one hypnotizes you and makes you talk under his influence."

"Not very likely," the inventor replied. "As a matter of fact, I have voluntarily offered myself to professional hypnotists on several occasions in the past, and they've been unable to gain the least control over me."

"However," continued Doctor Vanderlinde insistently, "it is quite reasonable to suppose that you think of your work pretty constantly even when away from the shop, isn't it?"

"Yes."

"And I also presume that you have rather more than the average power of concentration, have you not?"

"Why, yes," the inventor admitted, "simply from the nature of my employment. I've learned to put my mind on one thing because that is the only way I can ever obtain any results."

"You can think or not think of a subject at will, can't you?"

"I suppose so, although it would be rather more difficult not to think of some one thing, to absolutely exclude it from the mind than it would be to think of it to the absolute exclusion of everything else. However, it might be done."

The doctor withdrew to his own thoughts for the space of half a cigar, breaking his silence with: "Is there any considerable body of water in your town with a bridge over it?"

"Yes. There is a bridge across the river just above my electric power house."

"Is the water deep?"

"Twenty feet, I should say."

"Can you swim?"

"No, I never had time to learn."

"Good!" The doctor was evidently rejoiced at this information.

The inventor was frankly puzzled.

"What has that to do with finding out what becomes of my ideas?"

"Possibly nothing at all, but it is very convenient for trying a theory of mine."

"Here is Marsden," announced the inventor. "Shall we take a rig up to my house, or would you rather walk?"

"We'll walk," said the doctor, "but not to the house. I'll have somebody take my grip to the hotel. Now, if you will, please lead me to your workshop —the private one, I mean, with the soundproof walls."

Neither of the men said much until they reached the inventor's studio. The doctor examined it carefully, inside and out, even exploring the ventilating shafts for possible concealed mirrors.

"You are absolutely safe in here," he announced, "from any intrusion except by force. What do you keep in that safe?"

"Oh, valuable metals used in experiments, such as platinum, radium, and others of that nature."

"Worth much?"

"I can't say exactly how much there is there now. I have had as high as fifty thousand dollars' worth at one time."

"Isn't it rather careless to have valuables so easily accessible?"

The inventor laughed. "The contents of that safe are not really much more accessible than those of the Bank of England. I made it myself. The combination is one which absolutely defies the fingers of the most expert cracksmen."

"Possibly, but remember that this building is detached from any other around it, and, further, has soundproof walls. What is to hinder the use of nitroglycerin?"

"Nothing, except that the inner lining of that safe is connected up with about twenty thousand volts of electricity. I never caught any one trying to bore through it yet, and for their sake I hope I never shall. Even the combination is so arranged that if a thief should accidentally hit upon the sequence of numbers which releases the lock, the mere fact of the tumblers being set in that position automatically connects up the handle of the safe with a paralyzing voltage of electric current. The only way the handle can be touched safely is by simultaneously pressing a concealed spring, the location of which I alone know."

After the doctor had completed his examination of the room, he sat down at the inventor's desk.

"Are you willing," he asked slowly, "to run a little risk personally in order to test out what I consider the only solution of the mystery?"

"Yes," Mercer decided promptly. "Unless I can stop the activities of this thief of my brain, my life is practically useless to me. What do you want me to do?"

"First," said the doctor, "I want you to obliterate from your mind the fact that you have seen me and that there is any possible solution of your trouble. Instead, I want you to think exclusively of the fact that you have suffered a great financial loss, that your mind is breaking down as the result of overstrain, and that you would rather be dead than mentally feeble, which is a condition you can feel approaching."

"But," protested the inventor, "I don't feel mentally feeble."

"You will," replied the doctor, "if you hold the idea constantly enough. As you know, it is a psychological fact that any man can eliminate pain from his brain by constant reiteration of the idea that there is no such thing as pain. In the same way, by constantly telling your mind that it is deranged, you could bring it to that condition in time."

The inventor deliberated this for a moment. "I see. Well, I'll try. What next?"

"That will be all for the present. I'm going to leave you, and will do a

little prowling around the village on my own account. You had better go home early in the day, and do most of your thinking on this subject there. Eat very little and appear nervous and irritable. At eleven o'clock come back here. I will leave a note for you in the letter box which I see you have outside. Open it, read it, and then do exactly what I tell you in the letter."

True to his orders, Thomas Mercer banished from his brain the thousand ideas for patents which assailed it, and devoted himself to morose contemplation of his recent failures.

He was so successful that when he went home his depression attracted the attention of his wife and family. Even the butler, who met him at the door, was struck by something different in his demeanor.

"No bad news, sir, I hope," he inquired solicitously.

"Nothing particular, Carter," his master returned, with a sigh. "You may bring me a drink in my study."

The butler eyed him keenly. He had never known Mercer to ask for liquor of any sort before.

"Yes, sir. What kind?"

"Anything," returned Mercer, slightly overdoing his part. "Bring several kinds."

All that day he was lost in gloomy abstraction. At dinner he ate practically nothing, and scarcely spoke to his wife or his twelve-year-old daughter who was the idol of his heart.

During the evening the butler offered him food on several occasions, but Mercer refused, and ordered drinks instead.

The potted palm in his study died of alcoholism the next morning.

At eleven Mercer aroused himself from his abstraction sufficiently to ask for his hat and coat.

The butler inquired anxiously if he might accompany him, but Mercer declined.

"Why should you go with me? There is no one here who could hurt me; at least no one whom you could protect me from." He started down the walk, then turned and added: "Don't sit up for me, Carter. I may not come back to-night."

Mercer was beginning to be a living example of the truth of Doctor Vanderlinde's theory. Never before in his life had he felt so utterly depressed. After all, there was little to live for, and the achievements of man were petty indeed compared to the vastness of the universe. The stars overhead and the space that lay between them mocked at his insignificance and reminded him of how little consequence was the importance he had recently assigned to his own rôle in the affairs of the Almighty.

In this mood he reached the workshop, and unlocked the letter box. As Doctor Vanderlinde had promised, there was a note inside.

Mercer went into the workshop, and turned on the light.

He opened the note listlessly, and read:

DEAR TOM: You will walk in a roundabout fashion to the bridge over the river above the power house, thinking continuously of your recent discouragements. Arrived at the bridge you will stand for five minutes in the middle of the center span while you review mentally the events of this, your most unsuccessful year.

Then jump off the bridge.

HOMER VANDERLINDE.

P. S.—You will be rescued.

Slightly dazed, the inventor read it over several times. Then the groove in which his mind had been running reasserted itself, and he began to wonder why he had not thought of jumping off that bridge himself. It was quite the logical thing to do.

In that frame of mind he followed his instructions, and, taking a circuitous path through the back streets, he walked slowly to the bank of the river, which he followed upstream until he

came to the bridge, the only one in the village. There was no one about. Nearly every one in Marsden was in his employ, and the home life of his men was quite as ideal as the model set them in his shops. There were no saloons in the town, and the community club which he had founded and supported himself rarely had occasion to keep its doors open after ten-thirty, except on Saturdays and holidays. Therefore, there was no one on the streets except a couple of policemen, and Mercer had met them both some time before at the other end of town.

There seemed no obstacle to Doctor Vanderlinde's plan meeting with even more success than his postscript seemed to forecast.

Mercer took his stand on the bridge, and gazed over into the water below. It looked rather black and far away. It would be easier to jump if it had been only a few feet. The night wind was a little cold, too.

The tremendous mind of the inventor, however, asserted itself and banished the tremors of instinct to a far cell in his brain. His thoughts swung back to the path of gloom and despair. He reviewed the failures he had recently experienced and the little hope he had for success in the future. Truly it was a dark world.

He removed his coat and hat, climbed over the rail, hesitated a second, and jumped.

When Mercer came up after his cold, dark plunge, he heard another splash near by, and as he started to go down for the second time he felt himself grasped firmly by the neck and buoyed up.

"Don't struggle," said a voice in his ear. "If you do, I shall be obliged to choke you."

The mind of the inventor, docile enough in fields of which it was not the master, readily submitted to the command of the rescuer.

That person, whoever he was, was a strong swimmer. It was only a matter of a few minutes before he had reached a shoal where they could both stand upright.

On the bank, the inventor turned to thank his rescuer.

"Who are you?" he asked, peering closely into the face of the dripping man beside him.

"It's Carter," the other panted, "your butler."

"Bless my soul, so it is!"

Before they could indulge in further conversation, an automobile drew up silently in the road near by, and a man alighted from it and came toward them hastily.

"Rather late for a bath, isn't it?" was the cheerful hail with which he greeted them. "Hop into the car and I'll take you home."

"Hello, doctor," said the inventor. "I thought you were going to——"

The doctor hastened to interrupt him. "I was just driving by on my way to your place when I saw you fall off the bridge and this man jump after you. Lucky he was there."

"Wasn't it?" Mercer echoed. "Funny you happened to be there, Carter. Doctor Vanderlinde, this is Mr. Carter. He works for me. I believe he is the best butler ever invented besides being a life-saver. If it wasn't for him I'd be drowned now," he declared as they climbed into the car. "I don't know how I can ever repay him."

"That's all right," replied Carter. "I owe a great deal to you."

The car drew up, not at Mercer's house, but at the workshop.

"Hadn't we better go home," suggested Mercer, "and get a change of clothes? It isn't very cold, but we might get chilled sitting around in wet garments."

"I thought of that," replied the doctor, taking his suit case from the front seat beside the driver, "but I was afraid

that if you went home this way your wife would be frightened. I have plenty of dry clothes with me, so wouldn't it be wise to make yourself a trifle more presentable before you report home?"

The inventor unlocked the door of the workshop, and led the way in, turning on the lights as he did so. Vanderlinde dismissed the automobile.

The two men who had recently taken a river bath exchanged their wet clothing for other garments supplied from Doctor Vanderlinde's suit case and from Mr. Mercer's own closet, which contained several suits of working clothes. The doctor improved the interval by examining with apparent carelessness the features of his friend's butler. Carter was taller than his employer and not so stocky. His movements were quick, without seeming to be so, a characteristic carried out by his face, which seemed stolid, but on analysis proved to have keen, searching eyes and an alert, sympathetic mouth. He wore a well-trimmed mustache and imperial, light, reddish brown in color. His hair, of the same shade, retreated from a wide forehead, and was brushed straight back.

While the two men finished dressing, Doctor Vanderlinde opened the outer door, took the key from the outside keyhole, placed it in the inside one, and locked the door.

"What's that for?" demanded the inventor.

"Just a necessary precaution," explained the doctor, withdrawing the key and putting it in his pocket. "May I use the telephone?"

"Certainly."

The doctor went to the desk where the telephone was, and asked the operator to give him the police station. In a few moments he was apparently connected with the desk sergeant at the local headquarters.

"Is that you, Harrigan?" spoke the doctor over the instrument. "This is Doctor Vanderlinde. That party I spoke to you about this morning is where I told you he would be. Will you send the wagon over after him?" There was a pause. "All right, twenty minutes will be time enough. He's under lock and key."

"What party are you talking about?" inquired Mr. Mercer mildly.

"The man who has been stealing all your ideas before you could get them patented."

"You mean——"

"Carter, the perfect servant!"

Mercer turned an unbelieving eye on the bland features of the butler.

"Impossible!" declared the master positively. "Carter has had nothing to do with the mechanical side of my life whatever. His duties confined him pretty closely to the house, and even if I doubted his integrity he would have no opportunity to gain access to my plans and models."

"Nevertheless," insisted the doctor, "I am right." He turned swiftly on the other man. "Am I not—Mr. Carter?"

Carter searched the physician's face a full minute. "Yes," he admitted, "you are." Vanderlinde noticed that he had dropped the manners of a servant and had ceased to say "Sir."

The inventor gazed in bewilderment from his friend to his servant. "I don't understand," he began.

"Will you explain it to him—Mr. Carter?" asked Doctor Vanderlinde courteously.

Carter looked at him good-humoredly, and smiled. "You can explain it as well as I can. No man who couldn't explain it could ever have caught me. Besides, I should like to know myself how you worked it out to discover me."

The doctor sat down on the high working bench, and motioned the others to make themselves comfortable.

"It happens," he began, "that my education and training have been along

the lines of mental phenomena. When my friend, Tom Mercer, told me that he had been robbed of ideas of which no drawings or descriptions existed except under lock and key in this room, I naturally turned to look for some solution along the lines of mental wireless telegraphy.

"You know there is a saying to the effect that great minds run in the same channel. Has it ever occurred to you that, even if they do, it must be true that one mind goes ahead breaking the trail and that the reason other minds of the same general capacity very frequently hit upon the same inventions, plots, poems, et cetera, is because they follow the path of the least resistance?

"It is quite possible for Tom Mercer here to spend days and weeks in arriving at the solution of a problem which another mind, perfectly attuned to his, may photograph from his brain in a flash. That is the explanation which occurred to me when my friend told me how careful were the physical precautions he had taken to safeguard himself from robbery. The loss had to be laid to something more subtle than physical theft; therefore, probably mind reading."

The inventor followed the doctor's dissertation with the close attention which one scientific mind accords to another.

"Very plausible," he conceded, "but what made you think that it was Carter, and why should you pick on him just after he had saved my life?"

"It's because he had saved your life that I knew he was the thief," explained the doctor patiently.

Carter laughed.

"You will remember," continued the doctor, "that I told you to confine yourself to gloomy thoughts all day to-day, and to seriously contemplate death. I knew that whoever was reading your mind to steal your inventions would also be able to interpret your despair. Now, frankly speaking, you have been a good thing for this thief, and he naturally would not want to see you cease to turn out profitable inventions; therefore, he, more than almost any one else in the world, would be interested in saving you from death. Am I not right, Carter?"

"Partly," admitted the man, with a smile, "but I didn't want to save him for financial reasons alone. He has been very good to me, and I admire him as a man."

The doctor went on: "I knew, Tom, that if you contemplated suicide the enemy would probably betray himself by reading your mind and preventing you from carrying out your intentions. For that reason I left word here for you to jump off the bridge, taking the precaution of being there myself to save you, provided my theory proved wrong. I think that's all. I believe the phenomenon of mind reading is common enough to need little explanation. I imagine our friend Carter here happens to be especially clever at it, and if there is anything you want to ask him he will have time to answer a few questions before the patrol wagon gets here."

The inventor was genuinely interested. "I would like to ask some questions," he began. "Psychological phenomena are a little outside the realm of my activities, and I have not had time to follow the developments as much as I should like. How do you do it? What especial training have you had?"

Carter answered cheerfully: "It's something that is common to all human beings. Some possess it in a more marked degree than others, women more than men, although in women it is usually called intuition. It is the faculty, if I may so call it, of making the mind an absolute blank, an impressionable negative, so to speak, and then registering the first picture that comes across it. The main difference between

telepathy and independent thinking is this: In telepathy the brain accepts the first idea that strikes it, regardless of plausibility or previously conceived theories; in the ordinary mental process it registers a number of ideas one after the other, coördinates them, discards some of them, elevates certain others to a position of prominence, and then draws its own conclusion therefrom, which may be entirely different from the original flash impression. I'll show you what I mean."

The man, enthusiastic about a subject of which he was a master, arose and picked up three strips of paper from the inventor's workbench. They happened to be three different colors—white, red, and green.

He tore them off so that they were about one-half an inch wide and four inches long. He placed them in his closed hand, so that the ends of the papers spread out at the top, fanwise.

"To prove to you how telepathy works, I'm going to ask Mr. Mercer to pick out mentally one color from these in my hand, and then I shall pass the three strips of paper to Doctor Vanderlinde and let him place his finger on the first one that he has an impulse to touch. I shall ask Doctor Vanderlinde not to stop to think, but to touch one immediately. Now, Mr. Mercer, choose your color, one of these three, without making any motion toward any of them, and think of it steadily, and you"—he extended the strips of paper toward the doctor—"choose one quickly."

The doctor put his finger on the green paper, the middle one.

"Is that right? Is that the one you had picked out?" asked Carter.

"Yes," admitted the inventor.

"Now reverse it," continued Carter. "This time Doctor Vanderlinde will please choose a color and Mr. Mercer pick out the one he thinks the doctor has chosen."

The experiment was as successful as before, and was repeated several times in order to convince the two scientists that it was not a coincidence.

"That, of course," explained the mind reader, "is probably the simplest experiment in telepathy. Practically any one can do that. I suppose that originally I was endowed with a slightly more susceptible mind than the average. I remember that when I was a boy at school I seldom had to study any lessons, especially for oral work. Whatever questions the teacher asked me I seemed to be able to give the correct answer to if I said the first thing that came into my head. I remember I used to surprise them by my cleverness, and was regarded as a prodigy in the neighborhood. As I grew up my facility in reading minds increased, and, as you may believe, I picked up a number of curious ideas and had many surprising adventures.

"The masks that men ordinarily wear for each other conceal nothing from me. I early lost my ideals of what constituted moral conduct. Women I have avoided since I looked into the minds of a few. I put my trust in no member of the human race. Why should I? You may think that I am pessimistic. I am not. I merely see more clearly than you do, and I guide my life by actualities and not by the spoken words of hypocrites. You see, I know that my impulses, even though they be to steal, are no worse than nine-tenths of the men who would condemn me if I were caught at it.

"It is only recently that I have thought of turning my ability into profitable channels, and even then I doubt very much if I should ever have plotted deliberately to steal a man's ideas if I had not happened to read the mind of President Iverson, of the Universal Electric Company, which, I believe, is a rival concern of yours, Mr. Mercer. He was then scheming how to get a

spy into your shops, or, failing in that, to buy up one of your men. He seemed to be having trouble, and it occurred to me how absurdly easy it would be for me to do the thing he wanted and then sell your ideas to him and other rivals. The details of seeking a position in Mr. Mercer's household are, of course, simple and obvious. It was easy for me to become a good servant because I knew exactly what he wanted before he told it to me, and I think I may safely say that Mr. Mercer has never been so carefully or attentively served before in his experience."

"That is true," exclaimed his employer enthusiastically. "I shall miss you, Carter."

Even the psychologist evinced extraordinary interest in the mind reader's narrative.

"Mr. Carter," he said, producing a card from his case, "here is my New York address. I wish you would be kind enough to come and see me as soon as"—he hesitated a moment and smiled—"as soon as you get out of jail."

Carter smiled back at him, and returned: "As I don't intend to go to jail, I'll be in to see you in a week or so."

"I'm afraid," said Doctor Vanderlinde, "that I shall have to insist on a slight sojourn in the penitentiary."

"You can't," replied the other. "There is no law in the State of New Jersey against reading a man's mind and stealing his ideas before they are patented or copyrighted. You see, I have looked up the legal end of this thing before beginning operations. Now, while we're waiting for the police to come and verify my statement, I will conduct an experiment for you of a slightly more advanced nature than the one with the three strips of paper. As Mr. Mercer will testify, I've never been inside this room before, have never seen any of its furnishings or equipment, therefore I could not possibly know anything about that safe which, I believe, Mr. Mercer built himself. Nevertheless, if Mr. Mercer will kindly think of the combination, I will agree to open it inside of one minute."

Doctor Vanderlinde turned to his friend. "Do you wish to do it?" he inquired.

"Surely. I'll be glad to have the safe tested."

"All right," assented the doctor. "Personally, I should like very much to see it."

"Are you thinking of the combination?" asked Carter.

"Yes," returned Mercer simply.

Carter walked quickly to the safe, twirled the dial in his fingers to the right, to the left, to the right again, and back. There was a click. He was about to touch the handle and open the door when there was a slight exclamation from Mercer.

Carter arrested his hand in mid-air.

"Thank you, Mr. Mercer," he said, "for thinking of that electric current in time, otherwise you would have had me. Also, thank you for thinking of the location of that spring which cuts off the current." He reached to the left of the safe, pressed a tiny spring concealed in the paneling, and, with the other hand, grasped the handle of the safe, turned it, and opened the door.

"By George," murmured the inventor, "that's wonderful! I'm convinced."

Carter was rapidly examining the contents of the safe.

"Gee, you've got some radium, haven't you?" he exclaimed. "And this platinum must be quite valuable. You won't mind if I take these along, will you? We might never meet again, and I would like some souvenir of a pleasant year." He carelessly pocketed many thousand dollars' worth of valuable metals.

"Thank you for doing that," ex-

claimed the doctor. "There may not be any law against stealing ideas; I'm not sure of that, but I do know that you can't break into a man's safe in the presence of witnesses without serving time."

Carter straightened up from his task, and confronted his accuser pleasantly.

"No," he admitted, "not if you get caught."

"But you are caught," insisted the doctor. "You are locked in, and the police are on their way here. Of course you're caught."

"No," debated the thief, "not yet. I have an idea that I am in better physical condition than you are, and I shall ask you to give me the key to that door before I take it away from you by force."

He advanced upon the doctor with a cool, steely light in his eye. The doctor placed the workbench between them, and drew a revolver, which he leveled at the breast of his assailant.

"Throw up your hands, Carter!"

Carter laughed, and stopped in his advance.

"Right here is another demonstration of the advantage of being a mind reader. Now I know that you will not kill me. I don't believe that you would even fire that gun in the air to frighten me. Firearms are not your profession; in fact, you are a trifle afraid of them. It is mean to take advantage of you in this way; but, you see, I know that you won't shoot to kill"—he reached over easily, and took the revolver from the doctor's fingers—"while you have no idea whether I will shoot to kill or not, but you rather suspect that I will. It is this suspicion or doubt in your mind which forces you to hand over the key to that door."

The thief did not raise his voice from an ordinary conversational tone, but his words had a thrill in them that was not lost upon the doctor. After a few seconds' hesitation, Vanderlinde placed his hand in his pocket and laid the key on the bench between them.

"Thanks!" said Carter. "I think I just have time to catch the express to New York."

There was a patter of blows upon the outside door.

Doctor Vanderlinde shouted triumphantly: "The police!"

"You are right," conceded the psychological criminal. "I was waiting for them. I feared I would have to walk to the depot."

He unlocked the door, and opened it.

Several blue-coated officers stood outside.

"Come in, men!" invited the ex-butler cordially. "Hurry! He's getting violent."

Doctor Vanderlinde was shouting: "Seize that man! Don't let him get away," at the top of his voice, but his excitement only added to the impression firmly imbedded in the official ivory that he was the offender they were in search of.

All the policemen piled into the workroom.

"Well, I must be going," announced Carter. "I'll send this key back from the railroad station with the patrol wagon. Good night, all."

The astonished group in the workshop heard the door slammed and locked.

Then everybody came to life suddenly and began to shout and yell at the top of their lungs.

All but the man who had planned the building. He knew it was soundproof.

Marriott Watson, the English author, tells a war story in the next number. The scenes are in England, and Mr. Watson shows how the great conflict affects the Britisher in his home.

It Can't Be Done

IN WHICH MRS. SWEENEY RECOUNTS HER EXPERIENCE WITH AN AUTOMOBILE SALESMAN

By Charles R. Barnes

Author of "The Car Behind," "The Distress Signal," Etc.

THE Boarder had come to pay his rent. He found Mrs. Sweeney in her living room, contemplating a letter.

"Say," she impulsively exclaimed, "please feed me two dollars' worth of ninety-horse-power poison right away!"

The Boarder stared.

"Why?" he presently managed to inquire.

"For having a solid-ivory head," was the swift reply. "Here, read this line!" She indicated some scribbling at the bottom of her letter. It read:

This is just to prove that all is forgiven.

"What does it mean?" the Boarder asked.

"I've been butting in," was the ready answer. Then she rapidly counted the money he had given her, laughed, tapped her forehead, and returned one of the bank notes.

"Nobody home, nobody home!" she chuckled. "You're paying me for one week too many. You're the walking pyromaniac—or w'at is it you call them parties that walks in their sleep?"

"Somnambulist," supplied the Boarder.

"I'd forgot," said Mrs. Sweeney, unabashed. "My mind was all busy thinking you ought to wear a pedometer to see how far you sleep." A look of motherly concern replaced the merriment in her face. "Still," she remarked, "mebby it's better to be a honust boob like you than alwus trying to put it over folks like Herman D. Martin, that was a pal of my poor dead husband, kept doing. This here invitation has got me thinking hard about Herman and meddling with people's affairs and everything. I guess you know that there ain't anything ladies like to do more than to can-open a love affair and tinker with the works. W'at?"

The Boarder pocketed his bank note and nodded.

"Set down," invited his landlady, "and I'll spill a little speech." She sighed, and a reminiscent expression came into her world-wise but still comely features. "I wouldn't of dared to let my Danny know this story. He was a race-track gambler, you know, and he'd of figured that Herman D. Martin's work was coarse and that it could of been did classier. My husband was a grand man, mister, but sometimes I usta think that he'd almost rather fool with skin games than be put to bed soused. There was occasions w'en he distressed me so I could of dropped our piano on him. But I can sure say that swindling wasn't a gift with him like it was with Herman D. Martin. Herman sells automobiles. You heard of the Speedmore Special Six, ain't you?"

"I've heard that the car isn't much good," replied the Boarder.

"That's w'y Herman is agent for it," confidently explained Mrs. Sweeney.

"Young Ralph Nash says that it has a differential gear hewed out of solid cheese and a motor that's as silent as 'lection night."

"I don't recall," the Boarder reminded her, "that I ever heard you mention this Mr. Nash."

"He starts out," she explained, "by being the fall guy—the boob, seeing you don't approve of slang—in this story. His father is G. W. Nash, president of the Manufacturers Motors Association. The boy is about twenty-five, and as long as a year ago he was a awful nut on the subject of Helene Rodman, which is as pretty a girl as ever you wanted to see and the niece of Herman D. Martin. Herman says to me about the young feller once, he says:

"'Belle Sweeney,' he says, 'that there Ralphy has got just enough brains to holler raw-raw-raw at a feetball game,' he says, 'if there's a good yelp leader over him,' he says. 'If idees was dum-dum bullets,' he says, 'and was shot at his head, they'd bounce off and make smart guys out of all the innocent bystanders. That classy little niece of mine is going to marry him w'en it's appul-blossom time in upper Siberia,' he says.

"And, mister, it looked to me as if Herman D. Martin was right about the kid not having no brains. He never seemed no good at nothing but smoking cigarettes and being brave enough to wear one of them ear-muff hats and driving a real good-looking six-cylinder car. No one felt sorry for him, b'cause his father was so rich that it seemed natural for him to be that way. Me, I got to looking at him as a social crime, owing to him pestering Helene. You see, I grew awful fond of that girl. She usta come to see me a lot in the aft'noons; and, believe me, she was sweet enough to be queen of the movie actrusses. She was one of them blondes that ain't nature-faked and real trim and clean cut. W'enever I tried to figure that Ralph in her class, I'd get good and mad."

"I believe I understand," observed the Boarder.

"Anybody could," said Mrs. Sweeney, "by imagining a little. She was such a real girl and he was such a plain case of nobody home. W'en I got deeper into the situation, I kept getting madder and madder. People, mister, has got a way of picking me out to confide in, and one day Helene done that very thing.

"'Mis' Sweeney,' she busts out, all of a sudden, 'w'y, oh w'y has Ralph got to go and be such an incurable mutt?' she says.

"'Dearie,' I says, 'w'at's all this here?' I says, startleder than I usta be w'en I woke up from dreaming my husband had come home sober.

"'Ralph,' she says, 'is so good-hearted he can't keep no money in his pocket,' she says. 'He told me so hisself,' she says.

"'Yes, dearie,' I says, 'he wasn't lying,' I says.

"'And, Mis' Sweeney,' she says, 'you can't help liking a good-hearted person,' she says, 'can you?'

"'Not very easily,' I says. 'My husband was like that,' I says. 'But most always them good-hearted men is so good-hearted that they can't keep no money in their pockets—or yours, neither,' I says.

"She didn't take no notice of that, mister, but went on talking about the fool kid till I seen just how things was. She was crazier about him than if he was a platinum wrist watch. It seemed that he'd been sort of talking about making good, like so many young fellers does these days. Most of 'em ends up in such highbrow jobs as clerking at a soda fountain or something, but the talk goes strong with almost any nineteen-year-old girl. It had went big with Helene, and, mister, I got so wroughted up at that no-'count Ralph

for w'at he'd did that right then and there I gets a idee of calling his bluff and saving that beautiful little Helene from hurling herself away on a human vacuum bottle.

"'Dearie,' I says, 'leave it to me. I'm going to get him a job,' I says.

"'Mis' Sweeney!' she hollers, happy as three or four larks.

"'I mean just that,' I says.

"And, mister, the girl hadn't went away more'n a hour b'fore I was up to Herman D. Martin's auto store.

"'Now,' I says, 'is your time, Herman, to show that there young sport,' I says, 'up,' I says.

"'How?' he says.

"'Set him,' I says, 'to work,' I says.

"'Work!' he says.

"'Yes,' I says, 'selling autos,' I says.

"Herman he just roared w'en I said that.

"'W'y, Belle,' he says, 'Ralph couldn't even sell gas to a man with a empty tank,' he says. 'The inside of his head has been real thorough went over with a 'lectric suction cleaner,' he says.

"'That,' I says, 'is just it, Herman,' I says.

"Then I told him about how Helene felt, and suggested that it was a mighty good chance to throw the spotlight on her little tin god with the paint worn off.

"'We'll bust up her notion that Ralph is a regular feller,' I says, 'and sort of put the "mar" into that marriage. Then she'll be free to marry one of these brainy, successful, hard-drinking young fellers, and she'll be able to get her divorce later, for a cause that goes swell in p'lite society.'

"Mister, you'd ought to of saw Herman tumble for that idee!

"'Gee, Belle,' he says, 'you sure got some bean on you. I'll give the kid a place and let him fall down so hard that he'll echo. It won't be no trick to tie him up to a job, tooth and nail, as the saying is, b'cause it's considered real classy for rich young simps to get in the automobile game,' he says. 'The kids all think it's great to go shooting 'round the town and giving demonstrations to all the pretty dolls. And,' he says, looking up real quick, 'I'll make a bunch of money out of Ralph, Belle.'

"'How?' I says.

'Well,' he says, 'Ralph has got a big acquaintance among the car-buying class,' he says. 'I bet I'll get as many as fifty gilt-edged prospective customers out of that kid,' he says. 'And me or one of my high-power salesmen, with a self-starting line of motor bunk, will sell half of 'em,' he says. 'W'y, Belle, this here idee of yours is a world-beater! It works both ways. First it shows up that kid, and Helene ties a tin can on him. Then it makes money for me. Thanks, Belle,' he says. 'If I make good on this, I'll take you a ride through Central Park and back twice. There ain't nothing small about me—you know me, Belle!' he says.

"Of course, mister, I knowed w'at a two-by-twice sort of a party Herman was, so I didn't stop to haggle and claim I was entitled to as much as a couple sacks of peanuts besides them two rides. Not me. I was only too glad to have that Herman with me in trying to bust up the foolishness b'tween Helene and her mutt.

"The next aft'noon I seen that my scheme was working as beautiful as a bran'-new cheap car. Helene come dashing in on me, all excited.

"'Mis' Sweeney,' she says, 'how am I going to thank you?' she says. 'Ralph has got work selling autos,' she says, 'and Uncle Hermie says you suggested it.'

"Gee, mister, but that girl was happy. Her face was all lit up like the inside of a saloon.

"'Ralph,' she says, 'is to get two and a half per cent on every car he sells. Just think of it, Mis' Sweeney! He'll

get it in real money; and then I guess folks will quit saying things about him. I guess they will! He's just going to show them all what kind of stuff is in him. He told me that himself!'

"My, but she was enthusiastic. Her pretty eyes was flashing and there was two perfec'ly lovely pink spots in her cheeks. It seemed to me that two and a half per cent was mighty little for selling one of Herman's tin cars, which come to thirty-two hundred dollars apiece, and I sensed right off that Ralph was being trimmed. Since then I've found I was right. At the time, though, I didn't do so much thinking that way, b'cause I was beginning to feel awful mean and terrible sorry for Helene. I says to myself, I says:

"'Belle Sweeney,' I says, 'have a heart.'

"You see, the girl was so happy and I knowed it was all going to smash. I felt I ought to tell her w'at was up, so she'd quit betting on a sure loser and there wouldn't be such a big hurt to get over. W'ile I was pondering, she rattled on with what had happened.

"'Ralph,' she says, 'knows just loads of people who will sure get cars. He intends to use his own car—it's one of those sixteen-hundred-dollar Gotham Light Sixes—to call on the people in. Uncle Hermie wants him to do that to save wear and tear on the Speedmore demonstrators. Then w'en Ralph finds a man who really looks like a buyer, he'll take a Speedmore out and show it. He begins to-morrow, Mrs. Sweeney, and I'm so happy about it all—just too happy for words!' she says.

"For a minute, mister, I couldn't do nothing but set and stare at her. I felt so sorry! It didn't take much of a mind to see that Herman had begun proper with that Ralph. He'd skinned him down on the percentage and he'd had the nerve to get the kid to put his own car in the business free. The idea! Ralph running the tires off his machine to save Herman's demonstrators. Can you beat it?"

The Boarder grinned and remarked:

"Mr. Nash seems to have been all that was claimed for him."

"He was," Mrs. Sweeney agreed; "he sure was. And the way he'd went and let Herman swindle him got me more against him than ever. I come awful near letting everything out, right there, and getting down on my knees and begging Helene to please see w'y she ought to get off of that Ralph stuff for life. But I managed to hold in.

"'Dearie,' I says, 'there really ain't no help for your steady. He's just a natural-born mutt, and he'll never be nothing else. He won't make good,' I says, 'so don't build no hopes on him.'

"The girl fired up right away.

"'Mis' Sweeney,' she says, 'he will, too. He'll sell so many cars that Uncle Hermie will take him in the business. And then,' she says, dreamylike, 'and then——'

"Her voice trailed away into a whisper, and I seen e-zac'ly w'at was going on under her pretty blond hair. There was to be a happy ending to that romance, the same being mighty clear, as she seen it. To me it was pitiful, mister. I never felt so sorry for anybody in all my life as I did for Helene then. W'y I didn't jump up and yell the whole story at her, I don't know. But I didn't. Instead, I kinda slammed at her, sarcastic:

"'Dream on, pleasant person,' I says; 'dream on. The 'larm clock's going off soon,' I says. 'But if you're wise,' I says, 'you'll take it from me that your Ralph ain't got the sense even to sell pig iron to the pigs. H'd just gawk at 'em w'ile they starved to death. Take it from me,' I says, 'and lose him w'ile the losing is good,' I says.

"Right here, mister, the little party begins to cry. She says to me, in b'tween sobs, she says:

"'Mis' Sweeney,' she says, 'you're a

wicked lady,' she says. 'You're trying to knock my happiness on the bean,' she says. 'I'm going away from here and I'm never coming back no more!'

"And, mister, b'fore I could stop her she'd ran past me and was out of my door, slamming it behind her so hard you'd of thought another bottle of this here pure-food chemical ketsup had blowed up. You couldn't blame me for warning her, could you?"

"No, indeed," responded the Boarder. "You acted quite right."

Mrs. Sweeney eyed him narrowly.

"Did I?" she queried. "Well, I'm glad somebody thinks so. I don't—now."

"You don't?"

"Nope. And I'm through butting in. Most ladies, as I said b'fore, is dreadful fond of mixing in people's affairs, especially if them affairs is love affairs. But I've had my lesson. I keep right here, on my own side of the street, as you might say. This is the life!"

"You must have a pretty good reason," suggested the Boarder.

"I have," was Mrs. Sweeney's prompt response, "and it's just this: About a week after Helene slammed out of my flat, my doorbell rings one day, and Herman D. Martin is calling. W'en he got inside, he drops real limp into a chair and he says:

"'Belle,' he says, 'I been played for a good thing.'

"'That,' I says, 'ain't so; for it can't be did,' I says.

"'It can't be, but it was,' he says.

"'Ain't you the comic kidder, though!' I says.

"You see, mister, I thought that there must be some joke about w'at Herman was saying, b'cause w'en a man is so crooked he can rent hisself out as a cane handle, it's hard to believe that anybody can get the best of him. But the feller was serious, as I soon seen.

"'Belle,' he says, solemnlike, 'a party has made me look real brainy, like a scissors grinder,' he says.

"'Who,' says I, 'went and done it?' I says.

"'Guess,' he says.

"'Some one,' I says, 'just out of Sing Sing?'

"'Nope,' he says; 'that there is outright flattery in this case. The party,' he says, 'is not no one else but that Ralphy boy. He's went to work and put it all over little Helene's Uncle Hermie. Gosh!' he says.

"'See here,' I says, real sharp, 'don't you try to tell me——' But Herman put his hand up for peace and silence.

"'It was this way,' he says. 'I got him to come and work for almost nothing, Belle, and coaxed him into using his sixteen-hundred-dollar Gotham Six for running round in. You see, I saved on tires and gas and oil, let alone wear and tear on my demonstrators. But that's w'ere I overplayed my hand. Ralphy showed up real keen for the job, and he run around and around and around. All the time he kept running around and around and around—till yesterday. Then he quit. Such a darn' man!'

"Herman seemed near crying, mister, as if he was up against some crool memory.

"'Well,' I says, after he'd muttered to hisself for about a minute, 'tot up the column. W'at's the answer?' I says.

"'That kid,' he says, 'come into the shop yesterday, and he done two things.'

"'Which was?' I says.

"'First he resigned. Second, he bawled me out something fierce, Belle,' he says. 'I ain't over it yet. Do I seem to be getting old?' he says.

"'Only in sin,' I says. But Herman didn't see any laugh in that. He muttered to hisself a while, then he speaks out about Ralph.

"'As near as I can remember it,' he says, 'the sketch was put on like this: That Ralphy came strutting in, puffing

at a seegar. He says he's laid off of cigarettes for always. And he slammed that seegar butt into a corner so's the sparks flew like fireworks, and he says something like this here:

"'"Mr. Martin," he says, "a week ago I come to work for you, green as a pickle. To-day I'm the wisest little rascal you ever seen. I've just closed a deal with the Gotham Motor Company to sell cars for 'em on a blame sight better commish than two and a half, and a weekly drawing account. I'm a real automobile guy now, and if you want my notion of you, I'll give it. You strike me as being about as straight as the letter Z, speaking as man to man," he says.

"'Ralphy was starting in on another lap w'en I horned in long enough to ast him what had been happening.

"'"Ralphy," I says, "lay off that rough stuff for a minute."

"'"You're on," he says; "I forgot that it don't never do much good to use high-class sarcasm on thick-hided parties like you are. So just listen in on this conversation of mine, and you'll hear something that will make you wince where delicate-shaded talk would bounce off of your head. I've took a wallop at your treasury."

"'"You ain't forged no checks on me, Ralphy!" I hollers, jumping up.

"'"No," he says. "It was like this: You went and fixed up a arrangement with a child, which stole the pennies away from him. You told me I might go out and find people to sell Speedmore cars to, and that I might use my own car to get around in, so's your demonstrators wouldn't get no wear. No one ever is going to make such a simp out of me again, but that ain't neither here or there. You ast w'at happened and this is w'at:

"'"The first man I went to see," he says, "was Ashbury Clarke, that lives in the seventies, near the park, and has one dead swell daughter. He says he never was in a six-cylinder car, and ast me to take him a spin in mine. After I got him back, he says w'at is the use of paying three thousand for a car w'en you can get such a efficient rig as mine for sixteen hundred.

"'"Of course, I talked about the Speedmore, but it didn't do no good. So I went round to see Joey Hayden's dad. Joey had told me," he says, "that his dad was going to get him a car for his birthday, so that situation looked good to me. I begun to talk up the Speedmore, but Joey's dad said he thought, with all the joy riding that's going on, mebby it would be just as well to get a car that wouldn't leave such a big hole in a bank account if it got wound around a telegraph pole or something. He went and looked my car over and says it's just about Joey's speed, he guessed. That, Mr. Martin, was two Speedmore prospects kicked into the Gotham people's laps, all in one day. They got me thinking a little," he says.

"'"But, Ralphy," I says, "w'y didn't you tell me about them?" I says.

"'"My mind," he says, kinda grinning, "was all on protecting them demonstrating cars of yours," he says.

"'"But," I says, "one of my experienced salesmen could of went to see them folks, and probably sold 'em. You ought to of told 'em that the Gotham was weak in the rear axle and was always breaking shafts," I says, "like any of my salesmen would of did. That's part of the auto game," I says, "lying about the other feller's car."

"'"I know that now," he says, "but I didn't then. So I went right on bumping into friends of mine and boosting the Speedmore. Most of 'em wanted to ride in my little six, and after they'd saw how she worked, I just couldn't shoo 'em away from it. Those that didn't ride liked the car's looks and got real interested. They was mostly ladies, though. I've found out, Mr. Martin,"

he says, grinning again, "that if a car has got pretty lines and nice, shiny paint, it can have a grandfather's clock in it for a motor, for all the ladies care. They don't understand machinery, and it's all a waste of time talking mechanical points to 'em. Ain't I right?" he says.

"'"You sure are the wise kid," I says.

"'"That," he says, "is w'at I told you w'en I come in here. And I kept getting wiser, Mr. Martin, as I traveled around and around and seen the folks that was willing to pull check books for Gotham cars. After I'd ran across about twenty, I added it up that your shop was no good place for me. So I run in on the Gotham folks, slammed a deliver-the-goods argument at 'em, and says I'm ready to be the high-speed little salesman for 'em as soon as they come across with terms that wouldn't make me go jump off a dock for shame. It took them people about seven minutes to see my talk and take me on." Now what d'you think of that, Mrs. Sweeney?' Herman fires at me.

"'I don't believe it,' I says. 'Ralph never had that much brains.'

"'Them ain't brains,' says Herman; 'them's—it's genius. Their sales manager has told Ralphy he's got a swell nose for digging up business and that he'll make a three-star salesman. Belle, he'll sell them cars faster'n the hot-dog parties at Coney hands out their nickel stomach wreckers. Say, w'at do you s'pose I done, Belle?'

"'W'at—w'at did you done?' I kinda gasped, surprised clean off my feet.

"'I says he could have Helene if he could get her,' he says. 'You see, I'd rather have a sharp feller like him in the family than on the outside with a grouch. Competition's darn' fierce,' he says. 'If I'm real clever, mebby I can get him to see me as a partner, some of these days,' he says."

Mrs. Sweeney paused to give the Boarder the paper she had been holding.

"It's a wedding announcement of them two," she explained, "and it'll always be a nudge to me that if I ever ain't got enough business of my own to tend to, I better chase right out and get some."

"But," smiled the Boarder, "your meddling simply made that young man."

"Mebby," grudgingly assented Mrs. Sweeney, "but I feel just as guilty as I usta w'en I'd been sharpening lead pencils with my husband's razors!"

A Chat With You

THE things that look the simplest and easiest are often the hardest to do. The perfect golf drive that lands the ball nearly three hundred yards away, the swing of the baseball bat that lines out a home run, the six-inch flicker of the deadliest punch in the boxer's repertoire—they all look so simple! Raphael's paintings, the marbles of Praxiteles, the proud, still purity of the Parthenon—all obvious, lucid things, with such an absence of effort, it seems that any one might achieve them. Even getting out a magazine as good as THE POPULAR may, for all we know, seem easy to some, although we do not find it so.

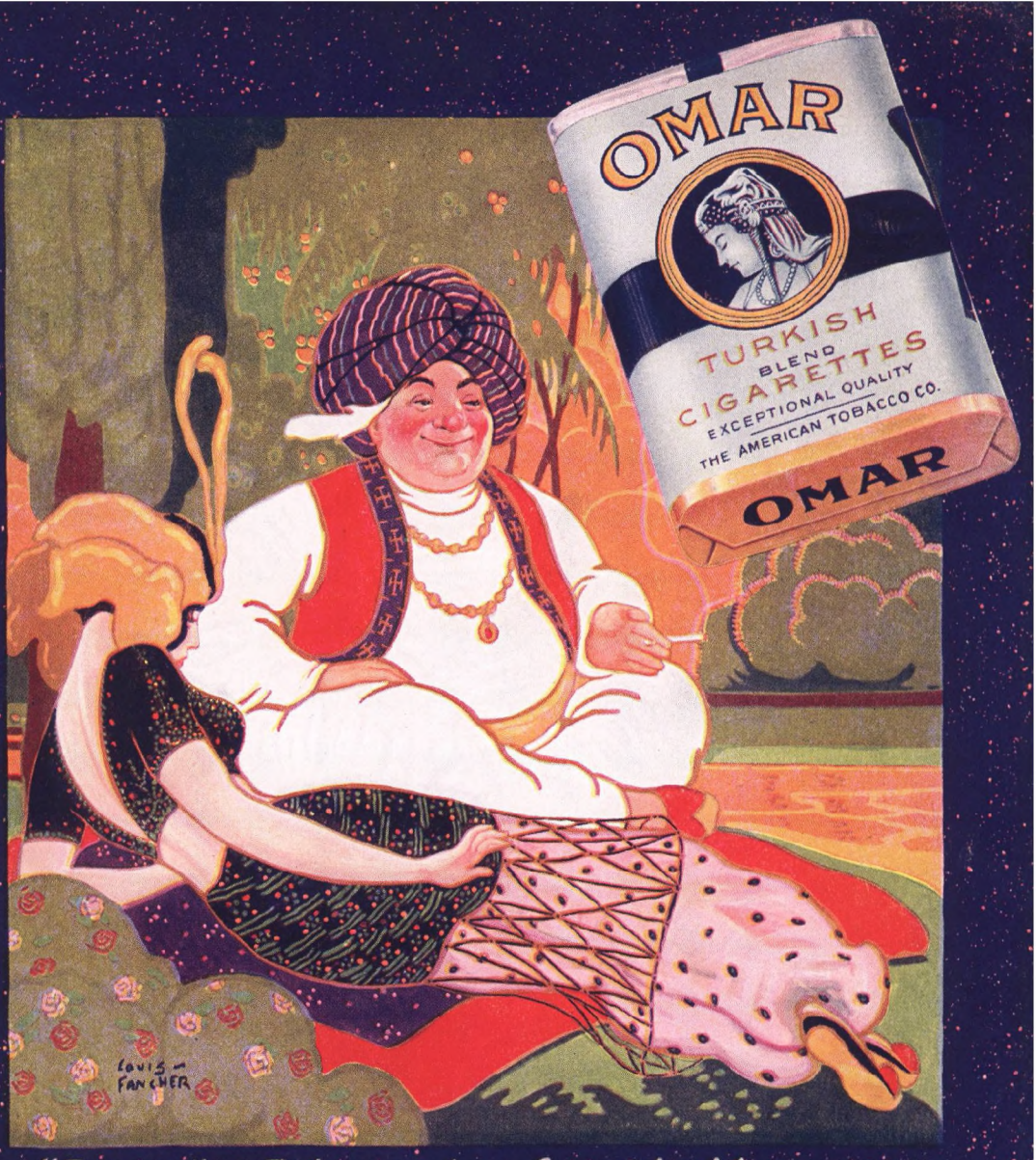
IN writing, as in other things, the rule holds good. Lord Byron said that easy writing made "—— hard reading," and it is just as true that the easiest reading is the hardest to produce. One might think that the plain, straightforward tale of adventure would be the least difficult form, but really it is one of the hardest. Any schoolboy knows what adventure is, and likes it; there are no problems to discuss, no ethics to preach, nothing to do but to spin your yarn. But the very simplicity of it is what makes it difficult. To breathe the breath of life into the tale, to leave upon it that touch of mystery and poetry and beauty that lingers in all great simplicity, to achieve that highest form of art that conceals itself in the thing portrayed, that can no more be described than the perfume of a rose or the glamour of moonlight—to be able to do this is so rare a gift that we have few "Robinson Crusoes" or "Treasure Islands" out of thousands of tales of the sea, that "Gil Blas" and "Don Quixote" have few companions in their wanderings, and that out of all the wealth of drama, but one adventure story—Shakespeare's "Tempest"—holds its place on the boards. The spirit of poetry, the spirit of adventure—these are two things that every one feels, and but one man in ten million can express even in a small degree. That is why we make a special announcement of what we regard as one of the best adventure stories written in many years.

IF you have read the insert that you will find elsewhere in the pages of this magazine you know already that the story is "The Pearl Fishers," and that the author is H. de Vere Stacpoole. Stacpoole himself had some adventurings of his own in various ways of life before he wrote about them. He was first a doctor, then a writer, finally a traveler and a member of a number of expeditions organized for the purpose of studying the depths of the sea in various parts of the world. His monograph, "The Floor of the Sea," is of un-

usual value to the scientist. His novel, "The Blue Lagoon," published a number of years ago, was so good that it should have been in THE POPULAR. The reading of it decided us that some of his work would appear in this magazine later on. "The Pearl Fishers" will run in four parts in four numbers of THE POPULAR. The first part will appear in the issue out on the news stands two weeks from to-day. It is really a great story, but because it is great don't expect to be overawed by literary style, or jarred by anything in the least artificial or "highbrow." It is as simple as "Robinson Crusoe," and as free from literary affectation as the Bible. You will be too much interested in the story itself to know how it is written. It is told so well that you not only understand it at once, but *feel* it as well. You are not aware of the strokes of the brush, but only of the scene itself. You will travel a long way, and know strange things and strange excitements—the battering of the surges against the laboring vessel, the sentinel trees above the coral island alone in a vast ocean, the gaunt muscles of the pearl divers naked beneath the burning sun, the sweep and roar of the hurricane, and something stranger than all of these, the vivid interest of the story itself.

ONE might think that one feature like this was enough for any one issue of the magazine, but it isn't—for us. The next issue contains also a full book-length novel, worth a dollar and a half anywhere, by Bertrand W. Sinclair. Like "North of Fifty-three," it is a story of the Northwest, but this time it is the coast that Sinclair describes. It is called "Hidden Bay," and is a story of smuggling. We could tell you more about it now, but we won't. We don't want to spoil a wonderful story for you—and "Hidden Bay" is one of the best that Sinclair has written. It has adventure and mystery. In its own way it is quite as good as "The Pearl Fishers," but the way is different, and no two stories could offer greater variety in theme and treatment, although they are both stories of adventure. Sinclair has a way of calling into being characters who live for us and interest us for a long time. There are a number of them in "Hidden Bay." It is undoubtedly one of the best novels we have published in the magazine, and it goes in an unusually good number.

THERE is plenty to be said about the remarkable collection of short stories in the next issue, but there isn't space to say it. The names of the writers mean something, however—Emerson Hough, Ralph D. Paine, B. M. Bower, George C. Shedd, Vingie Roe, and others. If you know any one who doesn't read THE POPULAR, and who would like it, if you feel like doing a neighborly act and passing a good word along, if you want to be sure that some one will thank you for the advice—now is the time to talk about this magazine. You can be sure about the next number, sure that there will be no disagreements and no complaints. It is bound to make a lot of new friends for itself, and you can easily share some of your own enjoyment with others. The next issue will live up to anything you say about it. It is just THE POPULAR—at its best—and that's enough.



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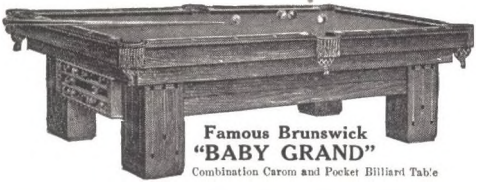

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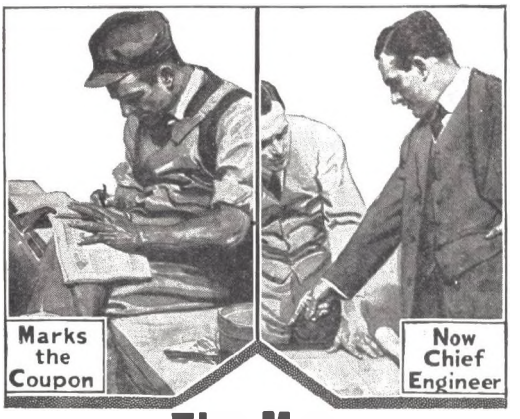

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