TWICE - A - MONTH

20 CTS.

REG. U.S. PAT. OFF.

The Popular Magazine

MAR. 7
1922

TYNG

Let $12.00 to $30.00 a Day Be Your Goal

Let ELECTRICITY Be Your Route

LET ME BE YOUR GUIDE

A Big-Pay Job is Waiting for You

Don't wish any longer, BE a success! I'll show you how!

ELECTRICITY IS THE ROAD TO SUCCESS

If you are ready, I am. You don't have to know the first thing about Electricity **right now.** I will train you in a few short months so that you can step right into that big pay business—the job you have always wanted.

Be An "Electrical Expert"

You want to get ahead—you want to make more money — big money—Electricity is the field for you! It is the big pay profession of today; **but you must be trained;** you **must know** Electricity from every angle to hold down a big-pay job—the job that pays.

"Electrical Experts" are in big demand—more jobs than men to fill them. It doesn't make any difference what you are doing, or what you have been doing, if you want to succeed—if you want big pay—I'll show you how because **I know I can teach you Electricity.** Opportunities in Electricity, great as they are today, are nothing as compared to what they will be tomorrow. Get ready for tomorrow! Get started now! Get in on the ground floor—ahead of the other fellow—jump from a "bossed" into a "bossing" job—jump from $3 to $5 a day to $12 or $30 a day. I know you can succeed once you're a "Cooke-trained man."

Earn $12 to $30 a Day

Compare your present salary with these big pay figures. How does your pay envelope "stack up" with that of the trained "Electrical Expert?" Is his pay twice, three or four times as much as you now earn? Don't envy him, don't just wish for pay like his — go after it yourself! You can get it because

I Will Show You How

Yes sir—right in your own home in your spare time I will make you a Certificated "Electrical Expert"—a "Cooke-trained man." As Chief Engineer of the Chicago Engineering Works I know exactly the kind of training you need and I will give you that training. My system is simple, thorough, complete—no big words, no useless theory, no higher mathematics, just compact common sense written in plain English.

I Guarantee Satisfaction

There's no chance for failure with me. I train you RIGHT and furthermore I agree, if you're not entirely satisfied, to return every penny you have paid me. No other school will do this for you.

FREE Electrical Outfit

To make your success still more certain I give you free a splendid outfit of tools, materials and supplies—you do practical work right from the start and pick up extra money doing spare-time work.

L. L. COOKE, Chief Engineer,
Chicago Engineering Works, Dept 432
2154 Lawrence Ave., Chicago, Ill.

Dear Sir: Send me at once your Big Free Book, "How to Become an Electrical Expert," and full particulars of your Free Outfit and Home Study Course — all fully prepaid, without obligation on my part.

Name.....

Address.....130

Mail This Coupon Today

Save $45.50 by Enrolling Now

If you will send this coupon today, I'll show you how to save $45.50. Write today for full particulars—also my big FREE book, "How to Become an Electrical Expert." It's the first step towards that big pay job of yours.

L. L. COOKE, CHIEF ENGINEER
CHICAGO ENGINEERING WORKS
INCORPORATED
Dept. 432 2154 Lawrence Avenue

THE "COOKE" TRAINED MAN IS THE "BIG-PAY MAN"

SIX AMAZING FACTS

About the Oliver Typewriter Offer

1 Half Price

2 $100 Value

3 Free Trial

4 No Money in Advance

5 Easy Terms

6 Brand New

Now Priced at $49.50

The Oliver would still be selling at $100, as it is a standard $100 typewriter in every way, were it not for our new selling method and the resulting increase in production.

We subtract $50.50 from the usual price because we have found it unnecessary to spend that amount per machine to maintain an enormous force of salesmen and agents, costly branch houses in over 50 cities and other extravagances.

We now deal direct with the buyer, saving you the selling cost. You get the identical $100 Oliver, our finest and latest model, brand new, and you become your own salesman. This simple way saves you $50.50.

Over 900,000 Olivers Sold

Direct From the Factory

Here is our plan. We ship the Oliver direct from the factory to you, for Free Trial. Use it 5 days as if it were your own. Compare it with any standard $100 typewriter. Note its simplicity, fine work and speed.

If you agree that it is the finest typewriter regardless of price and desire to buy it, send us $49.50 cash. Or if you wish to buy on easy installments, the price is $55, payable as follows: $3 after trial, then $4 per month.

If the Oliver does not sell itself, ship it back at our expense. We even refund the outgoing transportation charges, so that the FREE TRIAL does not cost you a penny.

This is the most liberal typewriter offer ever made—and all due to co-operation between maker and buyer. Over 900,000 Olivers have been sold.

Save $50.50

There's no need now to pay $100 for a new typewriter when you can get the Oliver for half. Nor no need to buy any rebuilt machine, costing even more than a new Oliver.

Our offer is being accepted by thousands. The very liberality of the offer proves the ability of the Oliver to sell itself. Were it not such a superior typewriter this offer would be impossible.

The coupon brings you EITHER a Free Trial Oliver or Further Information. Neither obligates you in the slightest. Check the coupon now and take advantage of this remarkable saving.

Canadian Price, $79

The OLIVER Typewriter Company

733 Oliver Typewriter Bldg., Chicago, Ill.

THE OLIVER TYPEWRITER COMPANY,
733 Oliver Typewriter Bldg., Chicago, Ill.

☐ Ship me a new Oliver No. 9 Typewriter for five days' free inspection. If I keep it I will pay $55 as follows: $3 at the end of trial period and then at the rate of $4 per month. The title to remain in you until fully paid for. If I make cash settlement at end of trial period I am to deduct ten per cent and remit to you $49.50.
If I decide not to keep it, I will ship it back at your expense at the end of five days.

My shipping point is.....

☐ Do not send a machine until I order it. Mail me your book—"The High Cost of Typewriters—The Reason and the Remedy," your de luxe catalog and further information.

Name .....

Street Address.....

City..... State.....

Occupation or Business.....

"THE LOST MINE OF MORGAN LE FAY," a complete Western novel by William Winter, in the next issue. Witwer, Stacpoole, Greene, Banning and Paine are among the other writers represented.

TWICE-A-MONTH

The Popular Magazine

Vol. LXIII. No. 4 — March 7, 1922

CONTENTS

Twice-a-month publication issued by Street & Smith Corporation, 79-89 Seventh Avenue, New York. ORMOND G. SMITH, President; GEORGE C. SMITH, Treasurer; GEORGE C. SMITH, JR., Secretary. Entered as Second-class Matter, September 20, 1909, at the Post Office at New York, N. Y., under Act of Congress of March 3, 1879. Canadian Subscription, $4.72. Foreign, $5.44.

NEW YEARLY SUBSCRIPTION $4.00 — SINGLE COPIES 20 Cents

The next POPULAR will be on the news stands March 20th

12 WAYS to Earn Bigger Pay

Look over the twelve wonderful home-study sets listed below. One of the twelve is YOUR BIG OPPORTUNITY FOR SUCCESS! Each set was prepared by the country's foremost authorities, written especially for you in the kind of language that you best understand. The first idea in the minds of the men who prepared these books was to help you make MORE MONEY. So they put into them everything that would help you, photographs, diagrams, complete descriptions; all the knowledge that you need to give you surest success.

The books are handsomely bound, some in half Morocco, library style; others in American Morocco, flexible handy style. All stamped in gold. Pick out the set that is meant for you; examine it FREE. If you are satisfied pay the special bargain price, on terms of less than 10c a day. If not satisfied, return the books.

Invest 10c a Day in Your Brain

Jump at this big opportunity. You will never miss the 10c a day, (less than cigar money). These volumes bring you the greatest opportunity to invest in your brain—in knowledge that will double or triple your earning power. If you expect to make bigger money, you must **feed your brain**, give it a chance to grow. These great volumes are **brain food for you.** Pick your set now and examine it free.

Send No Money

Don't send any money. Examine the books first. If satisfied pay for them on terms so easy that you will never miss the money. You take no risk. The books must show that they will work for you, train you for a better, bigger-pay job. Fill out the coupon now. Pay only the very small shipping charges when the books arrive. If you mail the coupon at once we will give you FREE a year's Consulting Membership in the American Technical Society. This allows you to consult our corps of experts on any problem you may have. Ordinarily this membership costs $12. It is yours free if you act promptly. Mail the coupon before you turn the pages—before you can forget.

American Technical Society Dept. X-593 Chicago, U.S.A.

Carpentry and Contracting

Five volumes, 2138 pages and more than 400 illustrations. Prepares for Contractor, Building Superintendent and Carpenter Foreman. Regular price, $37.50. Special price, $24.80.

Civil Engineering

Nine volumes, 3900 pages and 3000 illustrations, plates and diagrams. Prepares for Civil or Structural Engineer, Transitman, Estimator, Designer or Chief Draftsman. Regular price, $67.50. Special price, $39.80.

Telephony and Telegraphy

Four volumes, 1728 pages and 2000 illustrations, plates and diagrams. Prepares for Telephone Engineer, Wire Chief, Exchange Manager, Trouble Man or Telegrapher. Regular price, $30.00. Special price, $19.80.

Mechanical and Architectural Drawing

Four volumes, 1578 pages and more than one thousand illustrations. Prepares for Architectural or Mechanical Draftsman. Regular price, $30.00. Special price, only $19.80.

Electrical Engineering

Eight volumes, 4100 pages and 3300 illustrations, plates and diagrams. Prepares for Electrical Engineer, Power Plant Superintendent, Substation Operator or Electrician. Regular price, $52.50. Special price, $31.80.

Fire Prevention & Insurance

Four volumes, 1500 pages and 600 illustrations, diagrams, forms, etc. Prepares for Counterman, Rate Clerk, Inspector or Agent. Regular price, $30.00. Special price, $19.80.

Automobile Engineering

Five volumes, 2400 pages and 2000 illustrations. Prepares for Garage Foreman, Automobile Mechanic or Chauffeur. Invaluable to car owners. Regular price, $45.00. Special price, $24.80.

Machine Shop Practice

Six volumes, 2300 pages and 2500 illustrations. Prepares for Machine Shop Superintendent or Foreman, Foundryman, Pattern Maker, Tool Designer or Tool Maker. Regular price, $45.00. Special price, $24.80.

Sanitary, Heating and Ventilating Engineering

Four volumes, 1451 pages and more than 1400 illustrations, etc. Prepares for Sanitary Engineer, Heating and Ventilating Engineer, Master Plumber or Plumber. Regular price, $30.00. Special price, $18.80.

Steam and Gas Engineering

Seven volumes, 3300 pages and 2500 illustrations, plates, diagrams, etc. Prepares for Stationary, Marine or Locomotive Engineer or Fireman. Regular price, $52.50. Special price, $29.80.

Law and Practice

(with Reading Course in 25 bound pamphlets). Twelve volumes, 6000 pages and 24 illustrations. Prepares for all Bar Examinations. A wonderful aid to business men. Regular price, $90.00. Special price, $19.80.

Accountancy and Business Management

Seven volumes, 2700 pages and 2000 illustrations, forms, etc. Prepares for Certified Public Accountant, Auditor, Office Manager, Accountant, Credit Man or Bookkeeper. Regular price, $52.50. Special price, $29.80.

American Technical Society,
Dept. X-593, Chicago, U. S. A.

Please send me set of ..... for 7 days' examination, shipping charges collect. I will examine the books thoroughly and, if satisfied, will send $2.80 within 7 days and $3.00 each month, until I have paid the special price of $..... If I decide not to keep the books, I will return them by express at your expense. Title not to pass to me until the set is fully paid for.

NAME .....

ADDRESS .....

REFERENCE .....

Classified Advertising

Agents and Help Wanted

BE A DETECTIVE. Excellent opportunity, good pay, travel. Write C. T. Ludwig, 436 Westover Building, Kansas City, Mo.

MEN—Age 17 to 55. Experience unnecessary. Travel; make secret investigations, reports. Salaries; expenses. American Foreign Detective Agency, 114, St. Louis.

$10.00 WORTH of finest toilet soaps, perfumes, toilet waters, spices, etc., absolutely free to agents on our refund plan. Lacasgian Co., Dept. 427, St. Louis, Mo.

SHIRT MANUFACTURER wants agents to sell work and dress shirts direct to wearer. Big values. Exclusive patterns. Free samples. Madison Mills, 503 Broadway, New York.

YOUR name on 35 linen cards and case 20 cents. Agents outfit free. Big profits. John W. Burt, Coshocton, Ohio.

DETECTIVES EARN BIG MONEY. Travel. Excellent opportunity. Experience unnecessary. Particulars free. Write, American Detective System, 1968 Broadway, N. Y.

MEN WANTED to make Secret Investigations and reports. Experience unnecessary. Write J. Ganor, Former Gov't Detective, 120, St. Louis.

WE START YOU IN BUSINESS, furnishing everything; men and women $30 to $100 weekly operating our "Specialty Candy Factories" anywhere. Booklet free. W. Hillyer Ragsdale, Drawer 29, East Orange, N. J.

BIG MONEY AND FAST SALES. Every owner buys gold initials for his auto. You charge $1.50, make $1.35. Ten orders daily easy. Write for particulars and free samples. American Monogram Co., Dept. 170, East Orange, N. J.

WE pay $200 monthly salary, furnish rig and expenses to all who qualify introducing guaranteed poultry and stock powders. Bigler Company, X 380, Springfield, Illinois.

GOVERNMENT needs Railway Mail Clerks, $133 to $192 month. Write for free specimen questions. Columbus Institute, B-3, Columbus, Ohio.

AGENTS—200% profit. Wonderful little article; something new; sells like wildfire; carry in pocket; write at once for free Sample. Albert Mills, Gen. Mgr., 5728 American Bldg., Cincinnati, Ohio.

AGENTS—Make $75.00 a week easy, selling our strictly All-Wool made-to-measure suits at $26.50. You collect profits in advance and keep them. We supply finest selling outfit in America. Many exclusive money-making features. Tailoring, Raincoat and Side-Line Men, part or full time, get in touch with us immediately. Address Dept. M. C. 203, Goodwear, Incorporated, Chicago.

AGENTS, $60 to $200 a Week. Free Samples. Gold Sign Letters for Store and Office Windows. Any one can do it. Big demand. Liberal offer to general agents. Metallic Letter Co., 431T N. Clark St., Chicago.

AGENTS MAKE SIXTY DOLLARS Per Week selling new Sallie May "Dressup" Aprons. Write and learn how to obtain samples without cost. Moss Apron Co., 60 Searle Bldg., Rochester, N. Y.

$135 MONTH COMMENCE. U. S. Government Railway Mail Clerks. Men, Boys over 17. Steady. Vacations. List positions free. Write today sure. Franklin Institute, Dept. A2, Rochester, N. Y.

SELL vest-pocket windshield cleaner; chemical-felt works wonders; one rub keeps glass clear 24 hours. Smoote sold 2000 in 4 days. Security Mfg. Co., Dept. 564, Toledo, Ohio.

THOSE OUT OF EMPLOYMENT or wishing to increase present income, communicate with Chautauqua Commercial Agency, Jamestown, N. Y.

BE A RAILWAY TRAFFIC INSPECTOR! $110 to $250 monthly, expenses paid after 3 months' spare-time study. Splendid opportunities. Position guaranteed or money refunded. Write for Free Booklet CN-28, Stand. Business Training Inst., Buffalo, N. Y.

BE A DETECTIVE or Finger Print Expert. Excellent opportunities. Write Wagner, 186 East 79th, New York.

Patents and Lawyers

INVENTORS desiring to secure patents should write for our guide-book "How To Get Your Patent." Send sketch or description for our opinion of its patentable nature. Randolph & Co., Dept. 412, Washington, D. C.

PATENTS. Highest references. Rates reasonable. Best results. Promptness assured. Booklet free. Watson E. Coleman, Patent Lawyer, 624 F Street, Washington, D. C.

PATENTS, Trademark, Copyright, foremost word free. Correspondence solicited. Results procured. Charges reasonable. Write Metzger, Washington.

INVENTIONS WANTED. Cash or Royalty for ideas. Adam Fisher Mfg. Co., 223, St. Louis, Mo.

INVENTORS: If you have an invention and don't want to spend unnecessary money in securing a patent, write to Inventors & Engineers Consulting Co., P. O. Box 344, Washington, D. C.

PATENTS. Write for Record of Invention Blank and free guide book. Send model or sketch and description for free opinion of its patentable nature. Highest references. Prompt Attention. Reasonable Terms. Victor J. Evans & Co., 767 Ninth, Washington, D. C.

PATENTS SECURED. Submit sketch or model of your invention for examination. Write for Record of Invention blank and valuable book Free. J. L. Jackson & Co., 305 Ouray Building, Washington, D. C.

Short Stories and Photoplays

WRITE NEWS ITEMS and Short Stories for pay in spare time. Copyright Book and plans free. Press Reporting Syndicate (406), St. Louis, Mo.

WRITE PHOTOPLAYS: $25—$300 paid any one for suitable ideas. Experience unnecessary; complete outline Free. Producers League, 439 St. Louis.

FREE to writers—A wonderful little book of money-making hints, suggestions, ideas; the A B C of successful Story and Movie writing. Absolutely Free. Just address Authors' Press, Dept. 89, Auburn, N. Y.

WRITERS! Stories, Poems, Plays, etc., are wanted for publication. Literary Bureau, 175, Hannibal, Mo.

PHOTOPLAYS WANTED for California Producers; also stories. Submit manuscripts, or, if a beginner, write for Free Plot Chart and Details. Harvard Company, 560, San Francisco.

SELL YOUR STORIES. We will help you. Stories, scenarios, plays, promptly edited; advice on plot construction. 14 years' editorial experience. The Publishers Agency of New York, 500 Fifth Avenue.

AUTHORS—New York Publisher handles stories of new authors; manuscripts given careful editorial attention; young authors advised. Have own printing plant. Peter G. Boyle, Publisher and Book Manufacturer, 267-275 W. 17th St., New York City.

AMBITIOUS WRITERS of Photoplays, Short Stories, songs, poems, newspaper articles, send today for Free helpful booklet. "Successful Writing," Writer's Digest, S 605 Butler Bldg., Cincinnati.

Help Wanted—Female

BECOME EXPERT MILLINERS. $125 month. Learn while earning. Sample lessons free. Write immediately. Franklin Institute, Dept. W 822, Rochester, N. Y.

$6—$18 a dozen decorating pillow tops at home, experience unnecessary; particulars for stamp. Tapestry Paint Co., 110 LaGrange, Ind.

WANTED WOMEN, $35 week. Earn while learning. Become Dress Designers. Sample lessons free. Franklin Institute, Dept. A, 562, Rochester, N. Y.

Songs, Poems, etc.

WRITE A SONG POEM, Love, Mother, Home, Comic or any subject. I compose music and guarantee publication. Send words to-day. Edward Trent, 625 Reaper Block, Chicago.

HAVE YOU SONG POEMS? I have best proposition. Ray Hibbeler, D102, 4040 Dickens Ave., Chicago.

SONGWRITERS! Learn of the public's demand for songs suitable for dancing and the opportunities greatly changed conditions offer new writers, obtainable only in our "Songwriters Manual & Guide" sent free. Submit your ideas for songs at once for free criticism and advice. We revise poems, compose music, secure copyright and facilitate free publication or outright sale of songs. Knickerbocker Studios, 304 Gaiety Bldg., New York.

WRITE THE WORDS FOR A SONG—We revise poems, compose music and guarantee to secure publication on royalty basis by a New York music publisher. Our Chief Composer and Lyric Editor is a songwriter of national reputation and has written many big song-hits. Millions of copies of his songs have been sold. You can write the words for a song if you try. Do so now. Submit poems to us on any subject. Send today. Do not delay. Broadway Composing Studios, 159C Fitzgerald Building, New York City.

WRITE the words for a song. Submit your song-poems to us. We have the best proposition. Investigate our plan before you sign a contract. Our Chief of Staff wrote the Greatest Ballad Success of All Time. Millions of copies of his songs have been sold. Bell Studios, 1490 Broadway, Dept. 706, New York.

WANTED—Original Ideas for songs. Send for our free booklet, "How You Can Write The Words For a Song." Leo Friedman, "Composer To The American People," composer of such songs as "Meet Me Tonight in Dreamland," "Let Me Call You Sweetheart," "Dreaming of Old Erin," etc., is our chief composer. The sales of his songs have run into the millions. Submit ideas or song poems for free criticism and advice, on any subject. We compose music, secure copyright, and print. The Seton Music Company, Suite 109, 920 S. Michigan Ave., Chicago, Illinois.

YOU WRITE the words for a song. We'll compose the music free and publish same. Send song poem today. B. Lenox Co., 271 W. 125th St., New York.

SONG WRITERS, Write for my proposition today. Howard Simon, 22 West Adams Ave., Detroit, Mich.

Personal

DO You want success? To win friends and be happy? Wonderful results. "Success" key and Personality sketch for 10c and birthdate. Thomson-Heywood, 300 Chronicle Bldg., San Francisco.

ASTROLOGY—Stars tell Life's Story. Send birth date and dime for trial reading. Eddy, Westport St., 33—74 Kansas City, Missouri.

WRITE THE WORDS FOR A SONG. We compose music and guarantee to secure publication on royalty basis by New York publisher. Our Chief Composer and Lyric Editor is a song-writer of national reputation and has written many big song-hits. Submit poems on any subject. Broadway Studios, 275 Fitzgerald Bldg., New York.

ZEE Beautiful girl pictures. 10 wonderful poses $1.00; 18 specials $2.00. Bairart Co., 125, St. Louis, Mo.

ARE YOU INTERESTED in your future? Trial reading for birthdate and 10c. F. Crane, 840 Advertising Bldg., Chicago.

ASTROLOGY. Send dime and birth information for reliable scientific test to Plato, oldest astrologer, Box 102, Buffalo, N. Y. One year's future one dollar.

Stammering

ST-STU-T-T-TERING And Stammering Cured At Home. Instructive booklet free. Walter McDonnell, 80 Potomac Bank Building, Washington, D. C.

Continued on Second page Following

It's a Shame for *You* Not to Earn $10,000 a Year

—When Others Do It So Easily

He Does It.
"Last week my earnings amounted to $554.37; this week will go over $100."—F. Wynn, Portland, Oregon.

WHEN a farmhand steps from $50 to $1,000 a month—when a fireman jumps from $60 a month to a job paying him $500 for two weeks' work—when a former railway mail clerk at a yearly salary of $1,600 changes his job and earns $1,000 in thirty days—and when hundreds of others quickly jump from small pay to magnificent earnings in the same way—then it's a shame for you not to earn *your* $10,000 a Year!

There is nothing exceptional about these men. They'd tell you that themselves. Many had been clerks, bookkeepers, mechanics. Some had been policemen, farmhands, firemen. And then in one swift stroke, they found themselves making more money than they had ever dreamed possible. The grind of routine work—the constant struggle to obtain even a small increase—all this was left behind. Today they know the thrill of making big money; they are no longer ruled by an office clock. There is genuine enjoyment in every hour of the day, for their work is filled with real fascination. They have found not only the most interesting, but the best paying branch of all business.

A field that they had never dreamed of as theirs they found to be easy and uncrowded. Earnings that they had always *hoped* to reach and that their old jobs could *never* have paid, were right there in this new field waiting for them. Hundreds of others have found success the same way. You can too—let us tell you how.

So Does He.
"I had never earned more than $60 a month. Last week I cleared $306 and this week $218."—George W. Kearns, Oklahoma City, Okla.

How You Can Do It Too

What these men have done, hundreds of others have done, hundreds are doing today, hundreds will do tomorrow. And *you* can be one of them! For now the same opportunity that put these men into the big money class is open to you!

In the first place they discovered a vital fact about business. They discovered that the big money is in the Selling end of business. In the second place they discovered a new and amazingly easy way that will make *any* man a salesman, no matter what job he held before.

Salesmen are the very life blood of any concern—upon them depends the amount of profits made. The men who can put a product on the market and boost its sales are absolutely indispensable. No wonder that man for man Salesmen receive the highest pay. For the men who are Masters of Salesmanship—there is practically no limit to their earnings. Some receive almost fabulous amounts. And that is how these men and hundreds of others like them found the way to their present handsome incomes. They are all Master Salesmen now!

Yet previously they had no idea of becoming Salesmen. If you had told them success awaited them in the field of Selling, they would have laughed at you. They would have told you that it was absurd to think of it—for they had never sold a dime's worth of goods in their lives! Then they learned of a great organization of top-notch Salesmen and Sales Managers formed for the great opportunities in the field of Salesmanship and to help them to positions in the lines that most appeal to them. Step by step—in their spare time at home—this great organization, The National Salesmen's Training Association, took them through every phase of selling. Every underlying principle of salesmanship was made as simple as A-B-C. Then as soon as they were qualified and ready, the Free Employment Service of this Association helped them secure good Selling positions. Almost before they realized it they were in the big money class.

And He—
"The very first month I earned $1,000. I was formerly a farmhand."—Charles Beery, Winterset, Iowa.

And He—
"After spending ten years in the railway mail service at salaries ranging from $900 to $1,600 a year I decided it was necessary for me to make a change.... My earnings during the past thirty days were more than $1,000."—W. Hartle, Chicago, Ill.

FREE BOOK

Starts You for Your $10,000 a Year

The same opportunity that has brought hundreds of others their good fortune is open to you. Whether or not you have ever thought of becoming a Salesman, you should examine the facts about the tremendous possibilities for big earnings in this fascinating field. Mail the coupon below. This will place you under no obligation. It simply means that you will receive, **entirely free**, a remarkable illustrated book, "The Knight of the Grip," and the personal stories of men in every part of the country who today are enjoying splendid success and earning five, ten and fifteen times as much money as ever before. It's a shame for **you** not to make big money when others do it so easily! Make a start now for **your $10,000 a Year**. Mail coupon at once to the National Salesmen's Training Association, Dept. 4-C, Chicago, Ill.

National Salesmen's Training Association,
Dept. 4-C, Chicago, Ill.

I simply want to see the facts. Send me FREE your Book on Salesmanship and Proof that I can become a Master Salesman. Also send list of lines with openings for Salesmen.

Name .....

Address .....

City ..... State .....

High School Course in Two Years!

You Want to Earn Big Money!

And you will not be satisfied unless you earn steady promotion. But are you prepared for the job ahead of you? Do you measure up to the standard that insures success? For a more responsible position a fairly good education is necessary. To write a sensible business letter, to prepare estimates, to figure cost and to compute interest, you must have a certain amount of preparation. All this you must be able to do before you will earn promotion.

Many business houses hire no men whose general knowledge is not equal to a high school course. Why? Because big business refuses to burden itself with men who are barred from promotion by the lack of elementary education.

Can You Qualify for a Better Position

We have a plan whereby you can. We can give you a complete but simplified high school course in two years, giving you all the essentials that form the foundation of practical business. It will prepare you to hold your own where competition is keen and exacting. Do not doubt your ability, but make up your mind to it and you will soon have the requirements that will bring you success and big money. YOU CAN DO IT.

Let us show you how to get on the road to success. It will not cost you a single working hour. We are so sure of being able to help you that we will cheerfully return to you, at the end of ten lessons, every cent you sent us if you are not absolutely satisfied. What fairer offer can we make you? Write today. It costs you nothing but a stamp.

AMERICAN SCHOOL
Dept. H-3192, Drexel Ave. and 58th St., Chicago

AMERICAN SCHOOL

AMERICAN SCHOOL
Dept. H-3192, Drexel Ave. and 58th St., Chicago
Explain how I can qualify for position checked:

...Architect $5,000 to $15,000	...Lawyer $5,000 to $15,000
...Building Contractor $5,000 to $10,000	...Mechanical Engineer $4,000 to $10,000
...Automobile Engineer $4,000 to $10,000	...Shop Superintendent $3,000 to $7,000
...Automobile Repairman $2,500 to $4,000	...Employment Manager $4,000 to $10,000
...Civil Engineer $5,000 to $15,000	...Steam Engineer $2,000 to $4,000
...Structural Engineer $4,000 to $10,000	...Foreman's Course $2,000 to $4,000
...Business Manager $5,000 to $15,000	...Sanitary Engineer $2,000 to $5,000
...Certified Public Accountant $7,000 to $15,000	...Telephone Engineer $2,500 to $5,000
...Accountant and Auditor $2,500 to $7,000	...Telegraph Engineer $2,500 to $5,000
...Draftsman and Designer $2,500 to $4,000	...High School Graduate In two years
...Electrical Engineer $4,000 to $10,000	...Fire Insurance Expert $3,000 to $10,000
...General Education In one year.	

Name..... Address.....

CLASSIFIED ADVERTISING—*Continued.*

Firearms

AUTOMATIC PISTOLS at ridiculously low prices. No. 112, 25 cal. 7 shot automatic $9.75. No. 512, 32 cal. Blue steel Military Model, 10 shot automatic $12. Extra Magazine free. All goods sold by us are brand new and guaranteed to be absolutely satisfactory after examination or money back. Send no money. Just send your name, address and number of pistol you want. Pay Postman our price and postage on arrival. Send for Free catalog. Paramount Trading Company, Dept. 112, 31 West 28th St., New York.

Automobiles

AUTOMOBILE Owners, Garagemen, Mechanics, Repairmen, send for free copy of our current issue. It contains helpful, instructive information on overhauling, ignition troubles, wiring, carburetors, storage batteries, etc. Over 120 pages, Illustrated. Send for free copy today. Automobile Digest, 530 Butler Bldg., Cincinnati.

Farm Lands

LAND OPPORTUNITY! 20, 40, 80 acre tracts in Michigan only $15 to $35 per acre. Very easy terms. Investigate this opportunity. Get started toward farm ownership. Write for Free booklet today. Swigart Land Co., X-1265, First Nat'l Bank Bldg., Chicago.

OWN YOUR OWN ORANGE GROVE in beautiful Fruitland Park. Write today for information how you can own it on easy terms. Lake County Land Owners' Association, 321 Beauty Street, Fruitland Park, Florida.

Shorthand

SHORTHAND—Best practical system, learn in 5 hours; speed with easy practice. Proof lessons, brochure free. King Institute, EB-26, Station F, New York.

Exchange

LET'S SWAP! BUY! SELL! What'd'ye got? What'd'ye want? 20,000 readers. Dime trial. Swap Bulletin, Detroit.

Wanted to Buy

MAIL US YOUR DISCARDED JEWELRY. Gold Crowns and Bridges, Watches, Diamonds, Silver, Platinum & Old False Teeth. Highest prices paid at once. Packages held 4 to 12 days and returned at our expense if our offer is refused. United States Smelting Works (The Old Reliable) Dept. 65, Chicago, Ill.

MAIL old gold, unused postage, war and thrift stamps, Liberty Bonds, silver, platinum, diamonds, jewelry, watches, false teeth, magneto points, etc., new or broken. Cash immediately. Held ten days, returned if unsatisfactory. Ohio Smelting Co., 253 Lennox Building, Cleveland, Ohio.

Factory to Rider

Saves $15 to $25 on the model you select from **44 Styles,** colors and sizes of **Ranger** bicycles. Delivered free on approval, *express prepaid,* direct from the makers for **30 Days' Free Trial.** We pay return charges if not satisfactory.

12 Months to Pay Possession at once on our liberal year-to-pay plan. Any boy or girl can save the small monthly payments.

Tires wheels, chains, parts and equipment at half usual prices. **Big Ranger Catalog** *FREE* with marvelous new prices, 30 day trial offer and terms.

MEAD CYCLE COMPANY Dept. H-4 Chicago, Ill. Ask for Special Rider Agent plan to earn money.

LAW

STUDY AT HOME

Become a lawyer. Legally trained men win high positions and big success in business and public life. Greater opportunities now than ever before. Lawyers earn

$3,000 to $10,000 Annually

We guide you step by step. You can train at home during spare time. Let us send you records and letters from LaSalle students admitted to the bar in various states. Money refunded according to our Guarantee Bond if dissatisfied. Degree of LL.B. conferred. Thousands of successful students enrolled. Low cost, easy terms. We furnish all text material, including fourteen-volume Law Library. Get our valuable 120-page "Law Guide" and "Evidence" books FREE. Send for them—NOW.

LaSalle Extension University, Dept. 365-L Chicago, Ill.

SELL US YOUR SPARE TIME

We will train you to write show cards for us. No canvassing or soliciting; we supply you with steady work; distance no object; will pay you from $15 to $50 a week.

WILSON METHODS, LIMITED.
Dept. H, 64 East Richmond, Toronto, Canada

THE POPULAR MAGAZINE

VOL. LXIII. MARCH 7, 1922. No. 4

Vanderdecken

By H. de Vere Stacpoole

Author of "Picaroons," "Luck," Etc.

Setting out to catch that curious marine Robin Hood of southern California waters, "Vanderdecken," whose specialty was yacht rifling, promised action a plenty in itself. Doing it in the *Wear Jack* with Hank Fisher wasn't likely to lessen excitement. The best description of the latter individual was "you can't tell what he'll do next." Neither could Hank. And besides, there was "B.C." who contracted to lead them straight to Vanderdecken and his hidden loot. It only needed the injection of tiny "Tommie" Coulthurst into the doings, off San Nicolas Island, to make the complications complete!

(A Two-Part Story—Part I.)

CHAPTER I.

THE FLYING DUTCHMAN.

GEORGE DU CANE was writing a letter in the smoking room of the Bohemian Club, San Francisco.

George was an orphan with guardians. Twenty-four years and five months of age, his property would not be decontrolled for another seven months when on his twenty-fifth birthday he would find himself the actual possessor of something over two million five hundred thousand dollars.

Old Harley du Cane, George's father, had made his money speculating. He had no healthy business to leave to his son and no very healthy reputation. He had ruined thousands of men whom he had never seen and never heard of; he had escaped ruin countless times by the skin of his teeth; he had wrecked railways; his life was, if logic counts, a long disgrace and, in a perfect civilization, he would have been hanged. All the same he was a most lovable old man, generous, warm-hearted, hot-tempered, high-colored; beautifully dressed; always with a cigar in his mouth and a flower in his buttonhole, his hat tilted on one side and his hand in his pocket for any unfortunate. Only for his great battle with Jay Gould he might have died worth ten million. He reckoned that he died poor and, dying, he tied up his property in the hands of two trustees as I have hinted—"To keep you from the sharks, George."

George didn't bother. Wannamaker and Thelusson, the two trustees, gave him all the money he wanted—and the world all the fun. A juvenile replica of old Harley on the outside, he was not unlike him on the in. He had something better than wealth, than good looks, even than health, a radium quality inherited from his father that kept him far younger than his years. When Harley du Cane died at the age of seventy-six from a surfeit of ice cream following the excitement of a baseball match, Cazenove, the broker, while reading out the news to his family said the reporters had got the age wrong, for Harley wasn't more than nine. And he was right. The Great Bear, to give him his name on Change, in many respects wasn't more than nine.

George, having finished his letter, touched an electric bell. A waiter approached.

"Waiter," said George, "bring me an—

oh, damn it!" Egg flip had been on his tongue and Volstead had risen in his mind. The waiter waited. He was used to orders like this of late. "Lemon squash," said George.

He got up and moved to where some men were seated near one of the windows; Cyrus Reid, the poet; Carolus, the musician; Abrahams, the artist. A few months ago these three would have been fighting, no doubt, over the merits of Henri Matisse or the possibilities of Cubist music. To-day they were just talking about how dry they were and of the great drought that had struck San Francisco. Reid was mostly a coffee drinker, an occasional lager satisfied Carolus, and Abrahams was all but teetotal; yet they were filled with discontent. George sat down with them and listened to them and drank his lemon squash and absorbed their gloom. Prohibition may be good or it may be bad but there is one undoubted fact about it, it doesn't improve the social life of a club. While they were talking Hank Fisher came in. Hank was twenty-three or so; thin, tanned, hollow-cheeked, he looked like the mixture of a red Indian and an East Coast Yankee.

He had been born in New Hampshire, had served in a whaler, driven an engine, waited in a café, hoboed, stoked a Stockton river boat, canned in a cannery. He had educated himself in a wild sort of way that produced flowers of the mind of an extraordinary pattern. He was both a socialist and an individualist. There was nothing that the hands of men could do that the hands of Hank couldn't. He could make boots or a fishing net or mend a watch, he had invented and patented a rat trap that brought him in a small income and he had the specifications in hand of a clock that would go for forty-eight years without winding. He had also in the last year or two made quite a sum of money in town-lot speculating.

But the crowning point of Hank, and the thing that had secured his entry to the Bohemian Club and endeared him to all imaginative people, was the fact that he was a little bit mad. Not crazy mad, but pleasantly mad. A madness so mixed with cold sanity and streaks of genius that you could scarcely call it madness.

"You can't tell what he'll do next," was the best description of him, given by Cedarquist—barring Reid's, "He's an opal."

The opal sat down with scarcely a word and listened to Abrahams who was holding forth. Said Abrahams:

"Yes, sir, you may talk and talk, but you haven't got to the bed rock of the subject. The fact is the world never struck universal unrest till it struck universal lime juice. If you could dig up the czar and make him talk, I reckon he'd back me. Talk of crime waves! When has crime ever waved before as it's waving now? Look at the holdups, look at New York, look at Chicago, look at this town. Look at the things that are done in the broad light of day. Milligan's raided yesterday by two gunmen and the place cleared of fifty thousand dollars' worth of stuff in fifteen minutes. Look at this chap Vanderdecken."

"What's he been doing?" asked Carolus.

"Doing! Don't you read the papers?"

"No," said Carolus.

"Doing? Why this chap's been on the job for the last six months and there's twenty-five thousand dollars reward out for him. Yacht raiding, that's what he's been doing, down the coast. Holding up pleasure yachts. Comes along in a high-power motor boat sometimes and sometimes he uses a fishing boat and no one knows where he changes ship or how he does it or how many are working with him."

"Oh," said Carolus. "Well, he's doing nothing new. If you were as old as I am, you'd remember Mullins, away back in the middle nineties. He used to do the same thing—got caught and I forget what they gave him. There's nothing new under the sun."

"Well they hadn't wireless in the middle nineties," said Abrahams, "and wireless doesn't hold Vanderdecken. He skips over it or gets under it. 'Dutch Pete' is his real name they say, but some one labeled him Vanderdecken from 'The Flying Dutchman.' "

"I know all about the blighter," cut in Hank Fisher; "know him from his toe nails up. He's precious small beans, too. Lord, what a lot of misinformation manages to get about. Dutch Pete wasn't his name to start with, neither. 'Amsterdam Joe' was his name. He came from Hamburg and started here loading grain at Brookland Creek, then he got loose on the front—in with McKay and that lot; managed a whisky joint and got in trouble over something or 'nother and squared it and got into the Fish Patrol and

got fired for colluding with the Greeks in setting Chinese sturgeon lines.

"Then after the war he managed to get some sort of an old boat and cleared out of here and he's down South. I could put my finger on him if I wanted to. Shark fishing is what he started on and he's held up a two-cent yacht or two, there's no doubt about that. But as for motor boats and flying Dutchmen, that's all the newspaper boys' talk. They've embroidered on him till he looks like a king. Dutch Pete was a different chap altogether, but he's not about now. I saw him shot. It was in a dust-up at San Leandro."

"Have you seen the papers this morning?" asked Abrahams.

"Nope."

"Well, Vanderdecken or Amsterdam Joe or whatever you call him held up the *Satanita* as she was coming up from Avalon. She's no two-cent yacht. She's all eight hundred tons. He went through her and skipped with ten thousand dollars' worth of stuff."

"Give us the yarn," said Hank.

"Oh, it was as easy as pie. Connart was coming up in the *Satanita,* had his wife with him too, and somewhere off San Luis Obispo they sighted a yawl. She wasn't more than forty or fifty tons and she was lying hove to with her flag half masted. They stopped the engines, like fools, and the yawl sent a boat on board. Two fellows came over the side and one fellow put an automatic pistol to Connart's head and the other man with another automatic covered the officer on the bridge. There was nothing on board the *Satanita* but a duck gun and a nickel-plated revolver, so she was helpless. Then two more fellows came on board from the boat and went through her. They smashed up the wireless first. Then they skipped and that old broken-down-looking yawl went off to the south under an auxiliary engine."

"And why the blazes didn't they chase and ram her?" asked Hank.

"Couldn't. The rudder was jammed—the fellows in the boat had done some tinkering work to it. It took them two days to get it right. And they can't even give a full description of the chaps, for they wore caps with slits in them—pulled the caps over their faces as they came aboard and looked through the slits."

"I expect the navy will take it in hand," said George du Cane. "A couple of destroyers will soon run them down wherever they are hidden."

Hank Fisher laughed. "You might as well go hunting for an honest man in Market Street with a couple of rat terriers," said Hank. "First you wouldn't find him, second he wouldn't be a rat. Why that auxiliary yawl is either at the bottom by now or converted into something else—and the guys on board her, do you think they're traveling about the Pacific with their slit caps over their faces waiting for a destroyer to fetch them home? What did you say the reward was—twenty-five thousand? You wait one minute."

He rose up and left the room.

"What's the matter with Hank now?" asked George.

"Search me," replied Abrahams, "unless he's gone off to phone the police all about Vanderdecken being Amsterdam Joe and his description."

"He'd never do that," said Carolus. "He's too chivalrous. You fellows don't know Hank. I don't rightly know him myself. He's a contradiction, something as new as wireless and as old as *Don Quixote,* but the *Don's* there all the time. I saw him giving his arm to an old woman in Market Street the other day—she looked like a washerwoman. She'd tumbled down and hurt her leg or something and there was Hank handing her on to a car as if she were a duchess. He believes in the sanctity of womanhood—told me so once."

"And he believes in the rights of man," said Abrahams, "but he'd beat you out of your back teeth in one of his infernal land speculations."

"And then buy you a new set," said Carolus, "and diddle the dentist out of a commission on the deal. Not that he cares for money."

"Oh, no, he doesn't care for money," said Abrahams. "I'll admit that, but he's a pirate all the same. It's his romantic temperament, maybe, mixed up with his New England ancestry—here he is."

"Boys," said Hank, as he approached the group. "It's true enough. I've been on the phone and there's twenty-five thousand dollars reward out for the 'Dutchman,' half put up by the yacht clubs. I'm out."

"What do you mean?" asked Abrahams.

"To catch him," said Hank.

CHAPTER II.

THE PROPOSITION.

He sat down and lit a cigarette. The others showed little surprise or interest, with the exception of George du Cane. It seemed to George that this was a new kind of proposition coming in these dull times.

"Are you in earnest?" said he.

"I sure am," said Hank.

Abrahams, who was over forty with an expanding waistline, and Carolus, who was a creature dead when divorced from cities and the atmosphere of art, laughed.

Hank cocked his eye at them. Then he rose to his feet. "I was joking," said Hank. "Believe I could make you ginks swallow anything. Well, I'm off. See you to-morrow."

George du Cane followed him out. In the street he linked arms with him.

"Where are you going?" asked Hank.

"Wherever you are," said George.

"Well, I'm going to the office," said Hank.

"I'll go with you," said George. "I've got an idea."

"What's your idea?" asked Hank.

"I'll tell you when we get to your office," replied George.

Fisher & Co.'s offices were situated tolerably near heaven for a mortal institution, and an express elevator shot them out on a concrete-floored landing where the faint clacking of typewriters sounded from behind doors marked with the names of business firms—the Bolsover Trust Syndicate—Moss, Muriatti and Moscovitch—Fisher & Co. The Fisher offices consisted of two rooms, the outer room for a typewriter and an inner room for the company.

The company's room contained four chairs and a desk table, a roll-topped desk and a spittoon. The bare walls were hung with maps of towns and places. There was a map of San Francisco and its environments reaching from Valego to Santa Clara. There were maps of Redwood and San José, Belmont and San Mateo, Oakland and San Rafael—and others.

George looked at the maps while Hank sat down and looked at the morning's correspondence spread on the table by the office boy.

These maps and town plans, marked here and there with red ink, spoke of big dealings and a prosperous business. The trail of Fisher & Co. was over them all. They interested George vastly. It was the first time he had been in the office.

"I say, old chap," said George, suddenly breaking silence and detaching himself from the maps. "I didn't know you had a company attached to you. Where's the company?"

"Well, I expect it's in Europe by this," said Hank, laying down the last of his letters. "Or sunning itself on Palm Beach or listening to the band somewhere. It bolted with the cash box three weeks ago, leaving me a thousand dollars to carry on with."

"Good Lord," said George, horror-stricken yet amazed at the coolness of the other and the way he had managed to keep his disaster concealed from all and sundry. For at the club Hank was considered a man of substance, almost too much substance for a Bohemian.

"It's true," said Hank.

"How many men were in it?"

"No men; it was a woman."

"You were in partnership with a woman?"

"Yep."

"Well, she might have done worse," said George. "She might have married you."

Hank, by way of reply, took a photograph from a drawer in the table and handed it to George who gazed at it for half a minute and handed it back.

"I see," said he, "but what made you have anything to do with her?"

The town-lot speculator tilted back in his chair and lit a cigarette.

"Driscoll was her name," said he, "and she didn't care about her looks—she used to boast she could put a whole potato in her mouth. She was my landlady when I lived in Polk Street and she ran a laundry and had a hand in ward politics and the whole of the Irish contingent at her back. She had a better business head on her than any man in San Francisco and when I made some money over that rat trap of mine she started me on the town-lot business. We were good partners and made big money—and now she's bolted."

"Have you set the police after her?"

"Gosh, no," said Hank. "What do you take me for? She's a woman."

"But she's boned your money."

"Half of it was hers—and anyhow she's a woman. I'm not used to kicking women and I don't propose to learn."

George remembered what Carolus had said about the female sanctity business and

did not pursue the subject. Hank smoked, his chair tilted back, his heels on the desk. Ruin seemed to sit easy on the town-lot speculator.

George broke into his reverie.

"Look here," he said, "I told you in the street I had an idea. Are you going after this chap Vanderdecken or not?"

'And what if I am?" asked the cautious Hank.

"Then I'll join you if you'll let me."

"Well," said Hank, "I told those two ginks at the club I wasn't. They've no understanding for one thing, and for another I don't want them to be spreading the news. But I am. For one thing I want a holiday and for another I want that twenty-five thousand dollars. Twenty, I mean, for it will take me all of five thousand dollars to catch him."

"How much have you?"

"One thousand about—and then I've got my royalties for the trap coming in."

"That rat-trap thing?"

"Yep."

"How much does it bring you a year, if it's not rude to ask?"

"Well, I reckon to net in royalties about one thousand five hundred a quarter and the returns are rising. The Britishers are taking to it and Seligman's had an order for five thousand traps only last week for London delivery. I can borrow from them in advance of royalties."

George sat down on a chair and nursed his knee and contemplated the toes of his boot. George, despite his easy way of life was no fool in money matters.

"You are going to spend five thousand in trying to catch this fellow," said he; "and if you fail, where will you be?"

"Ask me another," said Hank.

The two sat for a moment in silence.

"Besides," said George suddenly, "you'll most likely get a bullet through your head."

"Most like," said Hank.

"To say nothing of weather. You know what Pacific weather is on the coast here—and you'll have to lay up maybe months waiting for the chap in a cramped boat with beastly grub."

"Sure," said Hank.

"Well, there it is, the whole thing's mad, rotten mad. It hasn't a sound plank in it. What did you mean dragging me here with that proposition for bait?"

"Me drag you!" cried the outraged Hank.

"Yes. You doped me and dragged me here with your talk at the club, turned my head till I'm sure not sane, for I'm in this business with you up to the neck. I'm as mad as yourself. I want to be off. I wouldn't be out of it for ten thousand dollars, though I'm hanged if I know what the draw is."

"Man hunting," said Hank.

CHAPTER III.

THE PLAN.

The town-lot speculator took his feet down from the desk and George got up, took a few paces and altered his position by straddling his chair, leaning his arms on the back. It was a favorite trick of old Harley du Cane. When big things were on and if there was a crisis and he was seated and talking to you, ten to one he'd get up, take a few paces, and then sit down again, straddling his chair as if he were riding a horse.

"Well, that's settled," said George. "I'm with you. What's your plans? You said you knew where this guy was and could put your finger on him."

"I reckon I was talking through my hat," said Hank. "It's a way I have at times."

"Then how the devil are you going to find him?"

"It's a way I have at times," said Hank, not seeming to hear the other, "but I'm never far wrong when I'm talking that way. I don't know where the chap is no more than I know where Solomon's aunt's buried; but I've a feeling that his haunt's round about the islands down Santa Catalina way. I know all the coast running from Monterey right to Cape San Lucas. I had a tenth share in a shark boat once and I've nosed into all the cricks and corners right to the end of Lower California and I've got a feeling that the Dutchman's using the Channel Islands and that we'll fetch him somewhere about there if we're clever."

"You're sure it's Amsterdam Joe we're after?"

"No, I'm not."

"But great Scott, you *said* you were sure."

"I was talking," said Hank. "The words were hit out of me by something outside my head, but I'm never far wrong when I'm taken like that. I'd bet a thousand to a nickel it's he, but that's not being sure. You see it's not Dutch Pete, for I saw him shot with my own eyes; but the affair was hushed

up and they gave his name different in the papers. He was hand and fist with Joe and that's what's put the wrong idea about. Joe went south more than nine months ago superintending a fishery or something down there and he hasn't come back and he's just the chap to fill this bill. And there you are."

"Well, it doesn't much matter," said George, "as long as a chap's there and will put up a fight and we have the fun of catching him. Now then Hank F., what's your plans? Spit them out."

"Well," said Hank, "my plans are simple enough. I'm going to drop down to the islands and do some fishing and water-lily around picking up information where I can. There's all sorts of boats down south of the islands doing shark fishing and after the sulphur-bottom whales; and at Avalon and San Clemente and places there's lots of chaps I can pick up information from. A police boat or a destroyer would find nothing but shut heads, but a chap that knows how to go about it can tap the wires. Why, you wouldn't believe how news goes about along the coast. The longshore chaps are pirates by instinct and there's not one of them isn't backing old man Vanderdecken; pirates by instinct—only they haven't the pluck of their opinions.

"Well, when I've got the chap's fishing waters I'm going to lay in them and cruise round in them and whistle 'Chase me, Charlie' till he pounces, or maybe I'll be able to put my finger on the creek or bay or wherever it is he makes his port of call—and pounce myself. No knowing."

"I see," said George.

"I'm blessed if I do," said Hank. "It's mighty problematical but I've got the feeling in my toes that I'm going to collar him."

"Well," said George, "we've got so far. Now about the boat."

"What boat?"

"Well, you don't propose to swim after the chap, do you?"

"Well," said Hank, "if one cog goes wrong in this business we may both be swimming after him, begging to be took aboard and him using us for target practice. But I'm not going in a boat."

"Then what the devil are you going in?"

"A yacht. Y-a-c-h-t. Sixty-ton schooner, auxiliary engine, white-painted boat turning a bit cream with wear, cabin upholstered in red plush, bird's-eye maple panels let in with pictures of flowers—everything up to date, seemingly. She jumped into my head at the club as I was talking about old Vanderdecken. That's how things come to me. No sooner had I left the phone and begun talking to you chaps than the hull of this expedition and how to do it hit me on the head like an orange."

"Well, let's get back to business. You have your eye on a yacht, but, from your specification, fifty thousand dollars is more like what y'u'll want than five. What's the name of this yacht?"

"She's not exactly a yacht," said Hank.

"Then what is she?"

"She's more in the nature of an optical delusion."

George had patience. He had also plenty of time and could afford to let Hank play about. It was the first time he had come really in touch with the town-lot speculator's mentality and it interested him. His own position began to interest him, too.

"Well, you are going to chase after this chap in an optical delusion," said he. "I'm listening—go on, spit out your meaning."

Hank rose to his feet and took his hat.

"Come on," said he, "and I'll show you it."

CHAPTER IV.

TYREBUCK.

They left the building and struck down Market Street. It was three o'clock in the afternoon and a blazing day. Market Street looked the same as ever—with a difference. It seemed to George that the whole world had somehow a different tinge as though he were looking at it from the windows of a lunatic asylum.

The people in the street all seemed to be bent on business, serious and sane beyond ordinary, even the loafers and pleasure seekers were bathed in this atmosphere.

Said Hank, as they crossed the street toward a block of buildings topped by a huge sky sign advising people to smoke Duke Orlando cigarettes, "Did you ever read about the one-horse shay? The one that went a hundred years and then bust up."

"No."

"Well, it was made of such good stuff that it couldn't break down, not one part before another; so when the time came it bust up all together."

"What's that got to do with our business?"

"Oh, I was just thinking," said Hank.

They were in a building now and, Hank giving a name to the elevator man, they were whisked up to the fourth floor. Here entering an office filled with the clatter of typewriters Hank asked for Mr. Tyrebuck and in a minute or two they were shown into a room where a man sat facing them at a desk table, a heavy-jowled, bulging-eyed, fresh-colored man with an unlit cigar between his lips. He had just finished with a stenographer but she was still standing waiting with a sheaf of notes in her hand while Tyrebuck, as if engaged with some afterthought, his cigar pushed out on his under lip, sat staring straight at the newcomers without seeing them. His prominent eyes seemed looking at something a thousand miles away. They were. He was looking at Chicago and the dial of the wheat pit. Then he came to.

"That will do," said he to the stenographer. "Well, Hank, how's the world using you?"

George was introduced and they talked. George did the listening. Tyrebuck owned steamers and mines and was engaged just then on a wheat deal. He was one of the busiest men on the Pacific coast and one of the wealthiest, but he found time to talk to Hank. An English business man would have got rid of him politely after the first few minutes. Tyrebuck talked as if he had absolutely nothing to do. They talked of the weather and the president and Europe. Hank, who had been in England during the war, outlining a plan of his for taking over the British Empire, electrifying it, steam-heating it, fitting it with elevators, speaking tubes and American business methods. Then he rose.

"Well, I must be going," he said. "But say, what I came about was the *Wear Jack*. I saw her only day before yesterday down at Sullivan's Wharf."

"Oh, did you?" said Tyrebuck. "Blessed if I hadn't clean forgot her. Is she hanging together?"

"Well, she was the day before yesterday. I'm open to hire her."

"What's your idea—put her on wheels?"

"Nope. I've got an expedition on down South. You've heard of this chap Vanderdecken?"

"Sure."

"Well, I'm going down to catch him."

"Well," said Tyrebuck, "you'll go down right enough in the *Wear Jack* if the putty gives."

"That's what I was telling Mr. du Cane," said Hank. "She's not so much a yacht as an optical delusion. She looks A 1 but isn't. But we're going to take a whaleboat."

"Why not go in the whaleboat?" asked Tyrebuck. "What you want taking the *Wear Jack* along? For fun?"

"It's part of my plan to have a yacht," replied the other, "and she looks like a yacht. Oh, she's not so bad—it was only my joke. I reckon she'll hold together."

"Well, she mayn't be as bad as she's painted," agreed Tyrebuck. "I've been too busy to bother with her. I bought her as old junk, thinking to do a deal, and had her dandied up by Michelson and advertised her. Her lines are lovely. You remember last fall I took you down with Cookson to look at her and he went about prodding her with a knife. He offered four thousand for her."

"Oh, he did, did he?" said Hank.

"Well, he was secretary of the Brookland Creek Yacht Club and they wanted her for a floating annex. When I refused he got impudent and said the members wouldn't have anything to do with the deal as they weren't a suicide club. That joke got about."

"I heard it," said Hank.

"And it crabbed her. Then all the smarties got busy guying her and me and I got a letter from a chap calling himself Charon and offering ten dollars for her as a house boat on the Styx. And so it went on till the chaps forgot her; but it has dished any chance of a deal. Mention her to any yachtsman and all those damned old jokes flutter up like moths; it's like a woman's reputation. Once it's damaged there's no use in shaking it out of the window and putting new buttons on it—there's no buyers."

Hank agreed. "Well, what's your terms?" said he at last.

"Ten thousand dollars," said Tyrebuck.

"Is she insured?"

"She's insured for ten thousand dollars. I pushed her through with the insurance agents that do my steamboat work."

"But I don't want to buy her. I want to rent her."

"Well, I can't rent boats, not even to you, Hank. Why, if I were to rent the old *Wear Jack* and the fact got round I'd be guyed out of town. Can't you hear them at the

club asking me how the longshore business was doing and what was the hire of canoes. No, sir, I've had enough of the joke-book business over that damned sieve. There she sticks till I sell her and the price is ten thousand, not a cent under."

George du Cane felt the lifting of a weight from his mind. The deal was evidently off. He had only to put his hand in his pocket, so to say, and fetch out the ten thousand. But the idea of a cruise in the *Wear Jack* had begun to fill his mind with frank and honest alarm. Besides, he knew that Hank would accept no outside financial help or interference. This was his show to be engineered and run by himself. Feeling safe, he indulged in a little show-off.

"That's a pity," said he. "I shouldn't have minded risking it. Besides, we'd have had the whaleboat; but I suppose it can't be helped."

He spoke without knowledge of the intricacy and subtlety of the rat trap inventor's mental works.

"I've got it," said Hank to Tyrebuck. "You can loan her to me."

Tyrebuck, who seemed suddenly to remember that he had been smoking an unlit cigar all this time, was in the act of striking a match. He lit the cigar, blew a cloud of smoke and placed the dead match carefully on a tray by the Billikin on his desk. Then he said:

"Well I'm damned, Hank, if you don't take the cake. You do indeed. You take the cake with the cherry topknot. You come here to me in the temple, so to say, of business propositions——"

"That's what I'm bringing you," said Hank. "A business proposition on the hoof, warranted sound—it's a buffalo."

"Trot out your buffalo," said Tyrebuck.

"Well, it's this way," said Hank. "You lend me the *Wear Jack*. If she busts up and never comes back, you get your insurance, don't you? If we bring her back with the Dutchman on board, she's a hero and you have the laugh over the whole waterside. Even if we don't collar the Dutchman and come back she'll have proved herself seaworthy and I'll give her a certificate all round the town that'll sell her for you in two hours."

"Gosh!" groaned Tyrebuck. "Why didn't I insure her for twenty thousand?" He wallowed in thought for a moment, then he said:

"Hank, d'you want a partnership in a shipping business?"

"Nope."

"Well, if you do, I'll take you on. I will, sure. Yes, you can have a loan of her. God help the Dutchman if you're after him. Take her down South, take her to blazes, take her anywhere you like and now get out of my office, for I'm busy. One moment—here's my card. There's a watchman on board her; show him this and he'll let you go over her and I'll send you a letter tonight confirming the loan."

Outside Hank took George's arm. "Say, Bud, you're the right sort."

"How so?" asked George.

"I don't believe there's another man in San Francisco that would have gone in with me on this—not on that specification anyhow. D'y' know the *Wear Jack* was built in sixty-seven."

"What do you mean by sixty-seven?"

"Three years before the first German-French war. It's on the shipwright's plate on the after gratings. 'Duncan Matheson 1867.' That's her birth certificate. One of the first yacht-building firms to start in here."

George said nothing but he was thinking a lot.

"I had it in my mind that he'd have rented her," went on Hank. "It's lucky he shied at that idea, for I hadn't thought of the whaleboat. Why, between the whaleboat and provisions and crew, it'll take nearly all that five thousand dollars."

"You wouldn't care to take a bigger boat?" said George. "I'll finance the business or go shares."

"Oh, she's big enough," said Hank, "and this is my show. I'm doing it off my own bat, else I'd have no interest in it. I'm offly lucky to have got you, for you're a millionaire, aren't you, Bud, and you won't want a hand in the profits—besides being the only man in town that'd take the risks for the fun of the thing."

"I believe I am," said George unenthusiastically.

CHAPTER V.

JAKE.

The water front of San Francisco is unique. The long wharves vibrating to the thunder of trade show ships from all corners of the world; from China and the islands, from Japan, from Africa, from In-

dia; tall Cape Horners, held to the wharves with wire mooring lines, lie cleaning their bilges or lining their holds for grain cargoes; there are ships for Durban, ships for Cork, steamers for Seattle and northern ports. Beyond lies the bay, blue or wind-beaten gray, busy with a shipping life of its own, and there is Oakland, six miles across the water for a sister port. Beyond the bay are the hills that have seen the desolation before the first Spaniards broke the ground or the first sandalwood trader rode the waters of the Golden Gate.

Here on the wharves to-day it takes little imagination to see the ships that have vanished and the traders that are gone—the South Sea whaleman with stump topgallant masts and boats slung out on wooden davits, the island schooner of the old days when the *Leonora* was a living ship and before copra was handled by companies.

George and his companion struck the water front where a big "turret boat" of the Clan line was moored, the lascars huddled round her fo'c's'le engaged in preparing fish for a curry.

"That's the canal," said Hank. "She's come through from 'Urope with a cargo and now she's loading up for Bombay or somewhere. Looks like as if she'd been built by some chap that'd gone bughouse, don't she? She's built like that to save dues going through the Suez Canal. Wonder what the shipping companies will be up to in the way of diddling the Panama?"

They passed along, reaching an old decayed bit of wharf that had somehow withstood change and reconstruction. It is now little more than a landing stage, but in the old days, under the name of Rafferty's wharf, it had a broad front where whalers used to come alongside to discharge and clean up, and here Bone's old Sailors' Lodging House, half tavern, used to take unfortunates in and do for them. There was a trapdoor from Bones' back parlor to the water below where boats could come in between the piles and ship off sailormen blind with dope. Then it became respectable and changed its name to Sullivan's.

Alongside this stage lay the *Wear Jack,* a sixty-ton schooner, fifty feet long. The watchman happened to be on deck, a thin man greatly gone to decay, dressed in a brown sweater and wearing an old cap. He was seated on the coaming of the skylight, smoking.

"Hullo," said Hank. "That you, Jake?"

The fellow below cocked an eye up and evidently recognized the other but he didn't move.

"I'm coming aboard to overhaul her," said Hank. "I've just seen Mr. Tyrebuck. Here's his card."

"Well, I'm not preventin' you," said Jake.

Hank came down the ladder followed by George.

The deck of the *Wear Jack* ran flush fore and aft. Neglect sat there with dirt and tobacco juice. Old ends of rope lay about and spars and main blocks that had seen a better day and bits of newspaper and a bucket with potato peelings in it. Forward, with her keel to the sky, lay an old broken dinghy that might have come out of the ark, and a flannel jumper aired itself on the port rail. No wonder prospective buyers sniffed and went off.

The soft-job man on the cabin skylight looked at the newcomers.

"Where's your cyard?" said he.

Hank presented the card. "Now then," said Hank, "if you're not stuck to that skylight with cobbler's wax, hoist yourself and get busy. I'm going all over her, cabin first. Come along."

The saloon of the *Wear Jack* had plenty of head room, six feet four or so; there were bunks on either side and a cabin aft shut off by a bird's-eye maple door. The upholstering was in crimson plush and the table was of mahogany. Everything was of the best and little the worse for wear, but over everything was the gloom of the murdered sunlight filtering in through the filthy skylight and the grimy portholes. Hank opened the door of the after cabin.

"Pretty musty, ain't it?" said Jake. "I kyan't get it right nohow. You could grow mushrooms on that bunk with the damp, though where it comes from, search me. Ain't sea damp; it's damp that seems to have got in the wood. The wood sweats when the weather's a bit warm; smells like an old cheese."

"Well, I ain't buying a scent factory," said Hank.

"Oh, buyin' her, are you?" said Jake. "*Buyin' her.*" He said nothing more but followed as Hank led the way out of the saloon. They inspected the lavatory and bath, the galley, and then they came to the auxiliary engines, for the *Wear Jack* boasted

a neat little Kelvin paraffin engine in a canvas jacket.

"Does the engine run?" asked Hank of the soft-job man.

"Run?" said Jake. "Well, the last time I heard of it runnin', it run off its bedplates. That's the yarn I got from one of the chaps that were in her on her last cruise—but maybe it's a lie."

"Now look here," said Hank, "you deal straight with me and I'll deal straight with you to the tune of five dollars. I don't want to buy old junk. Is there anything wrong with this ship?" He nudged George as he spoke.

"Well," said Jake, "I oughtn't to be talking, I s'pose. I'm put here to show her to parties, but I haven't swore to say nothing. Anything wrong with her? The sticks are carrots and the plankin's mush; run that there injin and you'll shake her to pieces; get her in a beam sea and she'll strain her heart open; but mind you she's fast, her lines are good; but they're just lines held together by a lick of paint."

Hank was down on his knees testing the planking to which the bedplates were fixed with his knife. Then he rose up and led the way on deck. They examined the fo'c's'le. It had accommodation for six.

Coming out of the fo'c's'le Hank began a cruise of his own, poking about here and there, then he dived down below again. When he came on deck he handed Jake the five dollars for his information and they left the ship. He took George's arm as they went along the wharf.

"Remember," said he, "what I told you to-day about the *Wear Jack* being an optical delusion?"

"Yes, and you seem to have been pretty right."

"Oh, was I? Well, way back in my head I was thinking different, and I only know that now. I can't explain my headpiece, except by saying it goes by instinct. When I saw Jake the other day he must have climbed right down into my mind and sat there ever since explaining things without my knowing. Otherwise I'm doubtful if I'd have been so keen on Tyrebuck letting me have the old *Jack*. Not that I mind risking my life. But there it is. I wouldn't have been as keen and maybe wouldn't have pushed the deal through. It's the biggest deal I've ever made."

"How's that?"

"Why, Bud, can't you see what's wrong with the schooner?"

"No."

"The schooner's as sound as I am. She's not as young as she used to be but she's one of the old navy that was built to wear. I've examined her. You remember my speaking about cheating the Suez Canal? Well, it was just beginning to hit me then that maybe all that raffle and dirt on her deck and all the yarns I'd heard about her were put out by Jake himself."

"Why?"

"Why, to keep his job. He don't want her sold. She's his job. Besides, he's been collecting five dollars a time, and maybe more, from every mug of a buyer he's given "a straight tip" about her. That's human nature. He wouldn't have got a cent for praising her."

"Good Lord! What a scoundrel! Why didn't you tell him straight out instead of handing him that money?"

"Not me," said Hank. "Have him maybe sink her at her moorings to-night, or play some dirty trick. To-morrow with Tyrebuck's letter in my hand it will be different. But only for him, I wouldn't have got her for nix."

"Only for yourself, you mean," said George.

"Well, maybe," said Hank.

CHAPTER VI.

JOE BARRETT.

The Du Cane house on Pacific Avenue was—is, in fact—a monstrous affair, viewed as the residence of a single man. Old Harley's tastes were big and florid and he had entertained on a large scale; at his death George would have sold or let the place; but something held him, maybe Harley's ghost, for the old man's personality was so strong that it had imprinted itself everywhere so that to sell or let the place would, so George felt, have been equivalent almost to selling or letting the old man himself.

George had closed a lot of the rooms, cutting down the servants to four or five in number, reserving for himself only a sitting room and a bed, dressing and bathroom.

This morning, the morning after the Jake business, he was awakened by a knock at the door and the entrance of his valet Farintosh. He had picked up Farintosh in England as a sort of curio. He had been

his valet at the Carlton Hotel. Farintosh's father had been own man to the Marquis of Bristol, his grandfather butler to the Duke of Hamilton, his brother was head waiter at Boodles and his sister in service at Sandringham House. He had small side whiskers.

Farintosh, having closed the door cautiously, announced that a gentleman of the name of Fisher had called to see George and was waiting in the sitting room.

"What's the time?" asked George.

"Half past seven, sir."

George lay back with a groan.

"Show him right in here," said he.

George on parting from Hank the day before had dined with some friends at the Palatial. Released from the hypnotism of the town-lot speculator he had begun to cool ever so slightly over the Vanderdecken business. The cooling had gone on during sleep. Awakened an hour before his usual time to the ordinary facts of life his feet were frankly cold. Shultz, the man he had dined with at the Palatial, was going off to the Adirondacks on a shooting expedition and had asked him to join. There would be plenty of fun and plenty of sport—yet he had to refuse.

But there was something more than that. Farintosh. The absolutely sane and correct Farintosh acted as an underscore to the whole of this business. Farintosh, whose lips rarely said more than "Yes, sir," or "No, sir," was voiceful in all sorts of subtle ways, as, for instance, when he had announced a "gentleman of the name of Fisher."

Entered Hank suddenly, backed by Farintosh who closed the door on the pair.

"Say, Bud, ain't you up yet?" cried Hank. "Why, I've been running round since five. Say—shall I pull the blinds?" He pulled up the blinds letting in a blaze of early sunlight. Then he looked round the room, took in its magnificence and seemed to wilt a bit. He sat down on a chair.

"Who's that gink with the whiskers?" he asked.

George explained and Hank, without waiting to hear him out, went on. He seemed suddenly to have recovered his confidence and himself; the radiumlike activity of his mind broke forth; he talked the other out of bed, into the bathroom and through his bathing and shaving operations. And if you had been listening you would have heard George's contribution to the conversation, at first monosyllabic, then in words of more than one syllable, then in long sentences. He was losing his cold feet, blossoming again in the atmosphere of Hank, for Hank was at once an individual and an atmosphere.

At breakfast George was his same old self again and as keen as yesterday about the Dutchman business.

"I didn't tell you," said the rat-trap inventor. "I've been cooking it up, but I've done another deal. Y' remember I said I'd want five thousand dollars to push the thing through? Well, now listen. You seen what I done with Tyrebuck. Well, I've done better with Barrett."

"Which Barrett?"

"Joe."

Instantly before George's eyes arose the picture of Barrett's Stores on Market Street in all their vastness, and Joe Barrett himself, dapper and debonair. Eccentric by nature, Barrett used his eccentricity as a means toward publicity. If he had possessed a wooden leg or a glass eye or a skeleton in his cupboard he would without doubt have used them as a means of advertisement. It was the only thing he really cared for. His business was less to him than the advertising of it; heaven for J. B. existed only as a background for sky signs.

"I met Barrett last night at the Bay Club," said Hank, "and the idea struck me he'd provision us better and cheaper than any one else seeing that I know him so well. He's a sport, and I just let him into the thing, told him the whole business and how I'd got the *Wear Jack* from Tyrebuck for nix and how you were joining in. Then I opened my batteries about the provisions. I want enough for six men for three months, to say nothing of gasoline and oil and some new bunk bedding. He offered to do it for two thousand dollars. I offered a thousand, to take him down, and he forked out a dollar. 'I'll toss you two thousand or nothing,' he says. Luck seemed running so strong I took him, and lost."

"Oh, you lost!"

"One minute. 'Best out of three,' said he and tosses again. I won; then he tosses again and I won. You see he'd got it in his head, somehow, that we were tossing best out of three; either that or he wanted me to win. I tell you he's a sport. The Dutchman proposition had taken such a hold on him I reckon he wanted to help somehow. Anyhow there it is—boat and provisions won't cost me a cent."

"Good," said George, laughing. "And now if you get a crew for nothing, you'll be fixed."

"Well, I've got you for one," said Hank. "You won't cost anything and you can steer."

George put down his coffee cup.

"That reminds me," said he. "How about the navigation—are you any good?"

"Well, I don't say I'm good," said Hank, "but I'm good enough to take that old catboat down the coast and bring her back again. Now if you're finished, let's get, for I'm just longing to begin the sweep of her decks and start clearing her down and overhauling the rigging."

"But see here," said George, "aren't you going to get men to work on her?"

"Yep. I'm a man, aren't I? And you're another. Now you get it in your head, Bud—I'm starting out in this business to catch the Dutchman, not to support a lot of bone-lazy union tumblers for half their natural. Why, you don't know what these dockyard dandies are. Y' remember Eliu Stevens when he started out on that cruise of his in the *Maryland?* I've seen him near crying over the dollar snatchers at work on her. They robbed him of time and they robbed him of money and they damn near robbed him of his life with their rotten spars and mush planking."

"But I'm as innocent as Solomon's aunt of how rigging should be fixed."

"I'll learn you," said Hank.

George was silent. He seemed thinking about things. Hank leaned forward across the table.

"Bud," said he, "you're not backing out, are you? You're not afraid of a bit of work? Why, look here, Bud, I'd only to put my hand in your pocket, so to speak, and pull out the dollars to pay for fitters and riggers enough to fit out a battleship, let alone the *Wear Jack*. But leaving out being robbed of time and dollars, where'd be the game in that? I'm doing this thing with my own hands and head and so are you. Forget money—it spoils everything."

"You're pretty keen after it all the same, Hank," said George laughing.

"Yep. When I'm chasing it, but I'm not chasing it now. I'm chasing the Dutchman. I'm not thinking of the twenty-five thousand, I'm thinking of the Dutchman. It's a game and I'd blush to be helped by money in chasing a man, unless he'd done me some wrong. When I get this chap by the scruff, I wanta say to myself, 'Hank, you took this chap by the work of your own hands and your own head and against odds. The chap had as good chances as you and you didn't shoot him sitting.' If you don't take me, Bud, then we don't understand each other and I'll leave you to that gink with the whiskers and your millionaire ways and start off on my lonesome."

"We understand each other," said George, ringing the bell. "Farintosh!"

"Yes, sir."

"Send round the car."

In the hall as they passed out to the car Hank picked up a bundle he had brought with him.

"What's in that?" asked George.

"Overalls," said Hank.

They drew up in Malcolm Street close to the wharves.

"Take her back," said George to the chauffeur, "and tell Farintosh to come along at half past twelve with enough sandwiches for two and a bottle of—oh, damn—two bottles of lemonade. You can drink lemonade, Hank?"

"Sure."

"Tell him he'll find me in the yacht that's moored at Sullivan's wharf—it's close to here; he can't mistake."

The car drove off and they started for the water side, Hank carrying the bundle.

CHAPTER VII.

THE FIRING OF JAKE.

The street was blazing with the morning light and, turning a corner, a puff of wind from the bay hit George in the face. It carried with it a scent of tar, oakum and bilge, and it was like the breath of the great god Adventure himself, the god of morning and unknown places and strange happenings.

It felt good to be alive and the clearing up of a ratty old yacht with Hank Fisher seemed the joyfulest business on earth. Hank had hit a big nail on the head. Money would have spoiled this show—just as it spoils most shows. They passed along the wharf till they reached Sullivan's. Hank dumped his bundle and came to the side and George following him saw Jake. Jake was fishing.

"Hullo," said Hank.

"Hullo," said Jake.

"Caught anything?" said Hank.

"Naw—fish ain't bitin'."

"Well, I'm sorry for that, for I've taken over the fishing rights. Jake, you're fired. The yacht's mine. I've taken her over and you've got to get."

"Y' mean to say you've bought her?"

"Nope. Mr. Tyrebuck has loaned her to me. It's all the same—you've got to get. Here's his letter. Want to read it?"

He dropped the typewritten letter down and Jake spelled over it. Then he said: "And how about the pay due to me? You goin' to settle?"

"Nope—McCallums will pay you. They'll be glad to see you, for I told them what you said about her."

"And what did I say about her?"

"Told me her spars were carrots and her planking mush."

"That's a damned lie," said Jake, "and if there's law to be had in San Francisco I'll have you for it, b' gob."

"Told me she'd open out first beam sea. Now then, you dog-eyed squatteroo, get your dunnage and clear, pronto."

George had never seen Hank heated until this. His eyes blazed and his lean face filled with venom as he looked down on the man who had tried to crab the *Wear Jack*. Jake tried to meet his gaze, failed, collected his dunnage, drew in his fishing line and scrambled ashore.

"If there's law to be had here I'll have you for this," cried he.

Hank dropped the bundle of overalls on to the deck and they followed it.

"Swab!" said Hank.

Then they put on the overalls and started. Hank started his cleaning up with an ax. There was one lying in the starboard scuppers and seizing it he made for the old dinghy.

"Go hunt for a mop," he cried to the other. "I saw one down below. Can't dump this old bathtub into the harbor as she is or there'll be trouble. B'sides I want exercise."

He began to set the rotten planking flying with the ax while George fetched the mop and also a bucket which under the direction of the perspiring Hank he fastened to a rope so that they could dip up water for deck swilling. The remains of the dinghy overboard, they turned to on the raffle; rope ends, dead-and-done blocks, old newspapers, bits of coal.

"Why, look you here," said Hank, holding up one of the blocks, "look at the size of it? It must have belonged to a three-master as old as the ark. That guy's been hunting the wharves for old raffle to dump aboard her and make a litter; stick it in the sail room for evidence if he starts any law bother. Now gimme that bucket."

The swilling and swabbing of the deck began and continued till the treenails showed up in the planking. Then they rested and smoked a cigarette. It was now noon and George, as he sat on the coaming of the cabin skylight, resting and watching the planking drying in the sun, felt uplifted. Since leaving the army he hadn't done a hand's turn of honest work simply because he could not find any work to do. There are a surprising number of rich people starving for work owing to no fault of their own. The war was a simple godsend to these. Hank was one to George.

Now that the decks were cleared up the *Wear Jack* began to speak to him as only a ship can speak to a man. She was no longer a dirty hulk but a live thing awakening from sleep, a thing with the mobility of a bird, a sister of the sea and the wind. He had been on many a yacht and many a steamboat as guest or passenger, but this was the first ship he had ever got close to. The work with the mop and bucket, the knowledge that he would soon be helping to rig her and handle her, the sight of her now that she was cleaning up, the very smell of her, all combined to work the charm.

At one o'clock Farintosh appeared with the sandwiches. At five o'clock they knocked off. They had cleared and cleaned the deck, made an overhaul of the rigging, cleared and cleaned the cabin and cleaned the bathroom and lavatory.

"I'll start on the rigging to-morrow," said Hank. "It's all sound but a few ropes and ratlines—Christopher!"

"What?"

"I've fired the watchman and who's to look after her?"

"Oh, she won't hurt."

"Won't hurt! Why if you fell asleep on these wharves they'd have your back teeth before you woke and you wouldn't feel them pulling them. These hooligans, if they didn't strip her, they'd camp in her and then she'd be no more mortal use till she was boiled. No. I guess I'll have to stick to her."

"Stick to her!" cried George, "you mean to say sleep here?"

"Yep. The old bunk bedding will do me and the nights are warm. To-morrow I'll get a chap to look after her for a few hours in the evening while I get my dunnage aboard. Come along ashore with me while I get some grub and a toothbrush."

He slipped out of his overalls and they climbed ashore.

"She won't take any harm for an hour or two by herself," said Hank.

They found a street of shops boasting a drug store. Here Hank bought his toothbrush, then he bought a German sausage, some bread, six small apples and two bottles of tonic water, also an evening paper from a yelling newsboy. Then he remembered that he would want a candle to read the newspaper by and went into a shipchandler's to buy one, leaving George outside.

George glanced at the paper, then he spread it open hurriedly and stood reading it heedless of the passers-by or the people who jostled him. Hank, coming out of the store with his candle, looked over George's shoulder and this is what he read, in scare headlines across a double column of print:

HANK FISHER OF THE BOHEMIAN CLUB GOES AFTER THE DUTCHMAN.

JOE BARRETT LOSES ON THE DEAL BUT COMES UP SMILING AT JOSH TYREBUCK AND "BUD" DU CANE.

Then came the details—about the dollar tossed at the Bay Club which gave Hank two thousand dollars' worth of goods for nothing, the loan of the *Wear Jack* by Tyrebuck and George du Cane's participation in the business.

George felt as though all his clothes had suddenly been stripped off him there in the street. Hank whistled.

Then he said: "That's Barrett. Lord! I might have known the chap didn't toss fair. He wanted me to win, and now look! He's got the goods, five thousand dollars' worth of advertising for a thousand dollars' worth of bully beef and canned t'matoes. It won't cost him more than that, for he's giving me the stuff at retail prices. And now it will be all over the town and all over the waterside."

"Curse him!" said George.

There was a jocular tone in that confounded press notice that cast a blight on every one concerned except Joe Barrett. Joe, though he was the only loser of money in the business up to the present, was in some extraordinary way put on a pedestal as a sport, while the others ran round the plinth like figures of fun.

"It's him and his publicity man, Josh Scudder, that's done it," said Hank. "I can tell Josh's hand in it. It can't be helped. I'd reckoned to slip out quiet and come back with a brass band playing Dutchland under alles and Vanderdecken in leg irons; now the blanket's stripped off us clean. We'll be laughed at from Hell to Hoboken if we don't make good. We're on the toboggan full speed, no use grabbing at the snow. There's only one way out—we've gotta get the Dutchman."

CHAPTER VIII.

PUBLICITY.

George did not go to the club that night but went straight home and sent Farintosh out to buy all the evening papers. Farintosh returned with a bundle of everything from the *Evening Sun* to the *Polk Street Piker's Messenger.* Every paper had the news, under all sorts of scare headlines. Some of these headlines referred to Fisher and some to himself, and through all the notices ran a gentle and breezy humor and in them all, with one exception, Joe Barrett had his advertisement and walked protected from laughter as Shadrach from flame.

The one exception was the *Polk Street Piker's Messenger,* a free-spoken organ that generally kept to ward politics. The *Piker,* while allowing that "Rat Trap" Fisher had a swelled head and had better stick to rodents, was frankly libellous about Barrett, said the whole thing was a fake got up by Barrett to help his sale of damaged goods then on, said a business must be pretty rocky to adopt such means and added that it was likely the whole Dutchman business was a fake.

George read this horrible libel with a chill at his heart, for he knew that Hennessy, the editor of the *Piker* was a led captain and creature of Barrett's. No one of any account read the *Piker,* but every one of any account would read the abject apology of the *Piker* sure to be published in a day or two in every newspaper in California together with editorial comments and a full

statement about the Fisher expedition supplied by Scudder. The thing would probably reach New York and London. With Vanderdecken as engine and Barrett as driver and stoker, there was no knowing where it might not reach or how long it might not keep running, and he, George du Cane, was tied to the tail of it.

He was already in the blaze of the limelight and at that moment men in the clubs, people at dinner parties, people in restaurants and people in trams were talking of him. The fact of his wealth would give him a little place all his own in this show. There was only one way of escape—justification. "We've gotta get the Dutchman." Hank's words came back to him. If they did not get the Dutchman, it would be much better not to come back to San Francisco.

George went to bed early but he could not sleep for a long time. It was all very well talking about getting the Dutchman. But how were they to get him? When the getting of him had been only a matter of sport the thing seemed fairly easy; now that it was a matter of dire necessity it seemed next to impossible. A nightmare task like hunting for a lost needle in Kearney Street.

He jumped out of bed, fetched an atlas and taking it back to bed with him looked up the California coast, running his eye along from San Francisco to Cape San Lucas, exploring the sea from the Channel Islands to Guadalupe and from Guadalupe to the Tres Marias Islands. Somewhere in that vast stretch of sea, somewhere on that line of coast that ran from the Golden Gate to Capricorn, they had to find a man who most certainly did not want to be found by searchers. He went to sleep on the thought and awoke to it.

Farintosh was entering the room, he was carrying a bundle of morning papers.

"Pull up the blind," said George.

Propped on the pillows he opened the first paper to hand, expecting to see his name in double-leaded type. Not a word. In all the paper not a word of him or Hank or the Dutchman or the expedition. The next paper was the same and the next. The great San Francisco dailies and the little San Francisco dailies had treated the matter with the most absolute contempt. George felt curiously flat. He even looked at the dates of the papers to make sure there was no mistake and that Farintosh had not by some accident brought him yesterday's papers.

He rose, bathed, dressed and came down to breakfast, but still the depression clung. He felt small and of little account, he felt weak and irritable. What was wrong with him? He had tasted publicity, that is all. Publicity, the wine of the Barretts, is also the wine of the poets. Its fascination is universal and of whatever brand it is, from abusive to laudatory, it is always publicity. Even the pillory, I expect, had its compensations in the old days, and to be recognized with a bad egg or a dead cat was, at all events, to be recognized.

And what a blaze-up that was last night, with every paper screaming round the bonfire. And now this frost. Why, that alone was in the nature of an insult.

Suddenly and in the act of pouring himself out a second cup of coffee, his mind cleared and his energy returned. "We've gotta get the Dutchman. And, by heavens, we will," said he.

He finished his breakfast, rang for the car and started for the wharves. The deck of the *Wear Jack* was empty. He dropped down to the cabin and there was Hank surrounded with newspapers. Hank had evidently purchased largely last night as well as this morning.

"Well," said George lightly, "there's not a word in the morning papers and that's a good thing."

Hank grunted.

"That's Barrett," said he. "He's cut the news off plonk. Why, a blaze in the morning papers would have been out by to-night. As it is, every gink from Pacific Avenue to Polk Street is saying, 'Why, there ain't no news about Hank.' Barrett's being phoned to death at the present minute asking what it all means. Chaps will be talking all day wanting news of the business and inventing lies to fill the gaps, till it'll get about that the Dutchman's been caught by Joe Barrett an's being exhibited at his stores. By to-night all the phones will be humming with lies and all the South Coast papers shouting for information. Why, Bud, where were you born not to know that advertising isn't printing stuff in the papers but making men talk. One big rumor, if you set it bumbling away like thunder in the foothills, is worth all the printed stuff from here to Nome. We're fair handicapped. If I was advertising liver pills, I'd be joyful, but I'm not."

"Think it will queer our game?"

"Well, you don't go duck shooting with a brass band, do you? But there's no use in talking, we're on the slide and we'll have to slither. But brass band or no, I'm going to get him. Come on, we've gotta get to work."

He had been at work since six o'clock, it seemed, on the ratlines and he was now overhauling all the standing rigging. That done, they attacked the running. In the middle of these operations it began to dawn on them that they were observed. Sometimes there was quite a little group on the wharf watching and criticizing.

"How the devil have they got to know the whereabouts of the boat?" asked George. "The papers said nothing about Sullivan's wharf."

"It's Jake," said Hank. "He'll have been all over the wharves talking; take a pull on that halyard. Lord, these blocks will never do. I'll have to go hunt in the sail room to see if I can't turn out some better. What's the time? Getting on for one? Well, I've got some grub down below and I vote we have a bite, and after that, if you don't mind, will you skip ashore to the club and see if there's any letters for me? I'm expecting a business letter from N' York about a patent I've got an interest in."

"Right," said George.

The galley of the *Wear Jack* was well fitted up. Jake had done his cooking there and had left half a tin of paraffin behind him. Hank had got eggs and a great chunk of bacon from somewhere out of the blue and there was the remains of last night's German sausage. In a few minutes the frying pan was shouting over a Primus stove and Hank in his shirt sleeves directing George. There was a let-down table in the galley and plates and knives and forks in a locker.

"I've overhauled the crockery and table and bed linen," said Hank. "Did it last night. There's enough on board for a family —hold me your plate. We'll have a chink for cook."

"How about the crew?"

"Time enough about them—maybe we'll have chinks."

To George, pondering as he ate, suddenly came the fact that Vanderdecken—the Dutchman—Dutch Pete—or whatever his name might be—certainly had behind him a crew of the same color as himself coupled with the fact that a crew of chinks wouldn't be of the same fighting color as Vanderdecken's lot. He said so.

"Oh, it won't come to fighting," said Hank. "If it did I can hit a dollar with an automatic at twenty-five paces once a second and I'll learn you to do the same—but it won't. We've got to take that chap with our wits, not with guns, though they'll be useful maybe for bluff. Did y' ever see strategy and tactics combined in the concrete?"

"No."

"Then you've never seen my rat trap," said Hank.

An hour later George returned from his visit to the club with two letters for Hank. One was the expected letter from New York, the other bore only the San Francisco postmark and was addressed to R. T. Fisher, and ran:

11 West Lincoln Street,
San Francisco.

SIR: As a lover of the sea and all that therein is I take this opportunity to beg leave to apply for a post in your expedition. Can turn my hand to anything that isn't crooked. Was gold-mining at Klondike two years but give it up owing to a frost bight but am used to dealing with rough characters. Seeing the piece about you in the evening paper to-night I make haist to apply and you will find me equal prompt in my dealings I have to do with you and satisfactory. A line to above will oblige, Yours truly,

J. B. YONKERS.

P. S.—Terms can be arranged.

"That's the bill—mackerel," said Hank. "Did you ever see a mackerel shoal? Well, it's always headed by a couple or so of freak mackerel. Chaps with bills like ducks. This is the first of the shoal of chaps that'll be wanting to come along with us. You'll see."

George did.

CHAPTER IX.

CANDON.

An abject and crawling apology from the *Piker* published and paid for in next morning's papers restarted the publicity campaign and though the press never recovered its first careless rapture the thing had made good and was established in the mind of the public and the letters came in day by day, some addressed to the club, some care of Joe Barrett, all of the same tenor. The expedition that had aroused mild merriment in the upper circles of San Francisco was received in dead seriousness by the middle and lower circles—even with enthusi-

asm. The thing had vast appeal to the movie-fed mind. The exploits of the Dutchman, inconsiderate enough in a world where criminal license had suddenly added cubits to its stature, had been boomed by the press.

Hank Fisher had already a name to embroider on and Bud du Cane was not unknown. Letters came from all round the Bay; from Oakland, Berkeley, Port Costa, New York, California, Antioch, Benicia, San Rafael and Tiburon; letters came from Monterey and all down the coast. Letters from "all sorts and sexes" to put it in Hank's words. Women offered to come along as cooks, boys as deck hands, a retired banker at San Jo offered to pay to be taken along. Never in any letter except that of the "bill mackerel" was there a reference to terms. All these people were ready to go for nothing but their "grub and bunk" as one gentleman put it. And if you wish to gauge the utility of a personality like Hank's this vast and healthy wave of adventure-craving which he had set going among the populace of the State is an index.

"And not one of the lot is any use," he said as he sat in the cabin with George one day about a week before the projected start. "I saw those chaps I wrote to yesterday. One'd got consumption, another chap had got swelled head—fancied himself a duke to judge by his talk; another was six foot seven or thereabouts—couldn't have taken him aboard without his head sticking out of the saloon hatch; another chap was on tramp from Oshkosh to Southern California and wanted to take the expedition en route; he was an oil prospector and troubled with something that made him want to scratch; then there was an Italian who'd been a count and an Irishman who'd served in the Irish rebellion—a decent chap, but I'd just as soon take aboard a live bombshell. We'll just have to make out, you and me, as afterguard. Four chinks will be enough for a crew and I can pick them up by the handful."

"When are the provisions and stuff coming on board?"

"To-morrow or next day. I saw J. B. yesterday."

"*Wear Jack,* ahoy!" came a voice from the wharf through the open skylight.

"Hullo!" cried Hank. "Who's that and what d'you want?"

A thud came on the deck followed by the voice at the companion hatch. "May I come below?"

The stairs creaked and at the saloon door appeared a man.

The sun glow from the skylight struck him full as he stood there, a red-bearded, blue-eyed sailorman, neatly dressed in dark serge and wearing a red necktie. His eyes were a most taking and astonishing liquid, sparkling blue—the eyes of a child.

Contrasted with the hatchet-faced Hank and the sophisticated Bud, he seemed youthful. Yet he was older than either of them.

CHAPTER X.

THE RED-BEARDED ONE.

"Hullo!" said Hank. "What the devil do you want?"

"Am I speaking to Mr. Fisher?" asked the newcomer, addressing himself to the town-lot speculator.

"You are."

"You're the chap that's going after the Dutchman?"

"Yep."

"D'you want to catch him?"

"Oh, Lord, no," said Hank. "I'm only going to inquire after his health. What are you getting at?"

"Well, if you want to catch him, get on deck this instant minute and see I've not been followed. Go up casual and have a look round. Keep your eyes skinned for a chap with a patch over his left eye. I'm not funning. I mean business. Get a-deck. I tell you I've no time to explain."

Hank stared at the other for a second, then he uncoiled himself, crossed the cabin and vanished up the companionway.

Neither George nor the bearded one spoke a word. They were listening. Then they heard voices.

"Say, you chap," came a voice from the wharf, "did y' see a guy goin' along here—red-whiskered chap?"

"Chap with a red necktie?" came Hank's voice.

"Yep—he's my pal—which way was he goin'?"

"He was making along toward the Union dock."

Silence. The companionway creaked and Hank reappeared standing in the cabin doorway.

"Well," said Hank, "that's done. I'd no sooner got on deck than a chap with a patch

on his eye came along with kind inquiries. I've sent him along. Now I must ask you for your visiting card and explanations."

The stranger laughed.

"Candon's my name," said he. "Bob Candon. I'll take a seat for a minute, if you don't mind, to get my wits together. I only blew in yesterday afternoon, came up from s'uthard and anchored off Tiburon and first news I had when I got ashore was about you and the Dutchman."

"What was your ship?" cut in Hank.

"*Heart of Ireland*, thirty-ton schooner, owned and run by Pat MsGinnis, our last port——" Candon cut himself short. "That would be telling," said he with a laugh.

Hank handed him a cigarette and lit another.

"I'm not wanting to bore into your business," said Hank, "only I'm giving you this straight—I've no time for blindman's buff. You were proposing to come along with us to hook the Dutchman?"

"That's what I'm here for," said Candon. "I don't want you to lose wind or time over me. I'd have you know I'm dealing straight, but I'm mixed with a crowd that's not straight. Get me? Don't you bother where the *Heart* dropped her mudhook last nor how much her business was mixed up with the Dutchman's business. Don't you bother about one single thing but the proposition I'm going to put before you, and it's this. Ship me out of this port down south and I'll put in your hand every last ounce of the boodle the Dutchman's been collecting, for I know where it's hid; on top of that I'll make you a present of the chap himself, for I know where he's to be found. That's my part of the bargain. And now for yours: I ask nothing but five thousand dollars in my fist when the job's done, and to be put ashore somewhere safe so that those chaps on the *Heart* won't be able to get at me."

He had been holding the cigarette unlighted. He struck a match, lit it, took in a great volume of smoke and slowly expelled it.

"Well," said he, "what's your opinion on that?"

Hank was sitting almost like Rodin's "Thinker." Then he uncoiled a bit.

"Do those guys on the *Heart* know where the Dutchman's to be found?" asked he.

"No, they don't."

"Do they know where the boodle is?"

"N' more than Adam."

"Do they know you know where it is?"

"They suspect. What's this I'm saying—suspect? Why, it's more than that now. Now I've done a bunk from them they'll know for certain."

"And if they catch you?"

"They'll drill me, sure."

"Was that guy with the patch, McGinnis?"

"Nope—Thacker, McGinnis' right-hand man."

Hank brooded. Then said he, "Were you a friend of the Dutchman?"

"What you mean to ask," said the other, "is am I letting him down. I'll just tell you. The Dutchman has been my enemy, but I'm not moving in this because I have a grouch against him. I'm playing my own game, but it's a straight game."

Hank brooded a second more. "We'd have to hide you aboard here till we start," said he.

"You will," replied the other.

"Right," said Hank. "Now will you take a rag and clean the engine for two minutes while I have a talk to my friend here in private?"

He led the way out and came back.

"Well," he said to George, "what do you think of that guy?"

"I like him."

"I like him well enough. Question is about his story. It seems plain enough. He's come up with a crew of hoodlums who've been in touch with Vanderdecken. They've been hunting for old man Vanderdecken's boodle. Nothing doing. Then they've left the hunt and put in here. They had big suspicions he was in the know and wanted the boodle for himself. He's only been let ashore with a nurse and he's given her the slip. It's all plain. Then Providence comes in, which is us. Seems extraordinary, don't it—Barrett advertising us like that and all? For here we are—a sure bolt hole for Candon advertised bigger than Heinz's pickles."

"How do you mean a bolt hole?"

"Well, look at it. Those chaps are after him like a coyote after a prairie dog. He's got to get out of here. He might get out in a fo'c's'le if he wasn't knifed before the ship sailed, but that wouldn't lead him anywhere except maybe round Cape Horn. Whereas, here, he gets a lift back down the coast to where he knows the Dutchman has hid the boodle and he gets five thousand dollars in

his fist and a set ashore. Then Providence comes in again, seems to me. I reckoned I'd have to spend five thousand on this expedition and between Tyrebuck and Barrett it won't cost me a cent, bar the hire of four chinks for crew, so I can easy afford to pay Candon five thousand and come out winners. Besides, he's an extra hand himself and a good sailorman, if I'm any judge."

"It does seem all to fit in," said George.

"Well, shall we take him?" said Hank. "It's a risk, but I reckon we've got to take risks."

"Take him," said George.

Hank went out and returned with the other. Candon had taken off his coat and his shirt sleeves were rolled up and his hands showed the engine-room business he had been put on.

"Come right in," said Hank. "We've concluded to take you along, but there's conditions."

"Spit them out," said Candon.

"Well, first of all I haven't five thousand dollars to be taking down the coast with me, but I'll put a thousand in your fist when the job's done and mail you the other four to any address you like."

"Oh, I'll trust you for that," said Candon. "What else?"

"Second, if we find the Dutchman's property, it will have to go back to the owners."

"That's just what I'd like best," said Candon. "I tell you straight it would have been a condition with me, only I took it for granted, seeing you're out, so to speak, in the name of the law. I'm no pirate. I'm not saying I was always of the same way of thinking, but I reckon those darned hooleys I've just left have given me a shake."

"Well, then," said Hank, "there's only one more condition. You'll help to work the ship for your bunk and board without pay."

"Right," said Candon. "And now, if you'll take that stylographic pen I see sticking out of your vest pocket and give's a bit of paper, we'll draw the contract."

Hank produced the pen and an old bill on the back of which the "contract" was made out, under the terms of which Candon was to receive five thousand dollars and a set ashore after the Dutchman had been brought safe aboard the *Wear Jack;* also he was to take the expedition to the spot where, to the best of his belief, was cached the Dutchman's plunder.

This done, Candon went back to his engine cleaning, having produced and handed over to Hank four ten-dollar notes.

"I'll want a toothbrush and a couple of shirts and a couple of suits of pajamas," said he. "Maybe, as I can't get ashore, you'll get them for me. All my truck's on board the *Heart.*"

"Bud," said Hank to his partner that night, "I hope to the Lord we ain't stung. Suppose the chap's some practical joker put on us by Barrett or the boys at the club?"

"Nonsense," said George. "Where'd be the sense. Besides, the chap's genuine. You have only to look at his face."

CHAPTER XI.

NIGHT.

The week before the sailing of the *Wear Jack* was a busy time for the Fisher syndicate and business was not expedited owing to the fact that Candon had to be kept hidden. The red-bearded one seemed happy enough spending most of his time in the engine room smoking cigarettes. At night, safe with Hank in the "saloon," his mind disclosed itself in his conversation.

No, this was no wasp let in on them by Barrett or the club boys. The mind of Candon as revealed to Hank was as free from crookedness as the eyes through which it looked and on most topics from the League of Nations to the price of potatoes it was sound. And it was not unlike the mind of Hank. It was self-educated; and their enthusiasms, from the idea of universal brotherhood to the idea of the sanctity of womanhood, matched—mostly.

Candon, from what one could gather, had been a rolling stone like Hank, but he gave little away about himself and he was quite frank about it.

"I'd just as soon forget myself," said he. "I've been in a good many mix-ups and I've missed a fortune twice through my own fault, but I've come through with all my teeth and no stomach worries and we'll leave it at that."

Barrett's stores came on board and were stowed and Hank, through a boarding-house keeper, got his crew—four Chinamen all of the same tong—all Lees and bossed by a gentleman rejoicing in the name of Lee Wong Juu. "Champagne Charley" Hank labeled him. They came tripping on board with their chests the night before starting,

vanished like shades down the fo'c's'le hatch and were seen no more.

Hank, standing on the deck with George, heaved a sigh of contentment. "Well, that's done," said he; "there's nothing more to take on board and we're all ready for the pull out in the morning."

"What time do you propose to start?" asked the other.

"Sunup. Barrett has got it into his head, somehow, we're going at noon. I didn't tell you but I got wind he'd arranged for a tug with a brass band to lead us out and josh us. Can you see his face when he finds us gone?"

They went below where the cabin lamp was lit, with Candon reading a newspaper under it.

"The chinks are come," said Hank, taking his seat at the table and fetching out his pipe. "There's nothing more to come in but the mudhook. Well, how do you feel now we're starting?"

"Bully," said Candon. "I was beginning to feel like a caged canary. You chaps don't know what it's been the last week. And let's get finished. There's some truck still to be stowed in the after cabin and I want to do a bit more tinkering at the engine. There's a day's work on that engine—them cylinder rings were sure made in Hades."

"Well, you can leave it," said Hank. "I'm putting out at sunup. I don't count on that engine and you'll have time to tinker her on the way down." He stopped suddenly, raised his head and held up a finger. The night was warm and the skylight full open. In the dead silence that fell on the cabin they could hear through the open skylight the far-away rattle of a cargo winch working under the electrics, the whistle of a ferry-boat and, away, far away, though great as the voice of Behemoth, the boo of a deep-sea steamer's siren.

"Yes," began Hank again, gliding to the door of the saloon as he spoke, "you can tinker it on the way down." He vanished and the others taking his cue kept up the talk. Then they heard him pounce.

"What you doing here?"

"Hullo! Me—I ain't doin' northen! What you gettin' at? You lea' me go."

"What you doing here, you sweet scow hunker? Answer up before I scrag you."

"Tell you I was doin' northen! I dropped aboard to see if I couldn't borra a light, seein' the shine of your skylight."

"I'll give you a light."

Then they heard the quite distinctive sounds of a man being kicked off the ship, blasphemous threats from the wharfside silence. A minute later Hank appeared, his lean face lit with the light of battle.

"Popped my head on deck," he cried, "and saw a chap on the wharfside—I'll swear it was Jake. He lit out. And then I saw a chap hunched down by the skylight. You heard me kicking him off."

"Who's Jake?" asked Candon who had taken his seat again at the table.

"Watchman I fired for handing me lies more'n a fortnight ago."

"Well," said Candon, "the other chap was Mullins if I have my ears on my head."

"Who's Mullins?"

"Black Mullins—McGinnis' left hand. Boys, we've gotta get out. How's the wind?"

"Nor'west," said Hank.

"And there's a moon. Boys, we've gotta get right out now. Get the whaleboat over and the chinks ready for a tow clear of the wharf. Let's see—the whole of the *Heart* crowd will be over at Tiburon, the old *Heart* will be in dry dock, for she'd started a butt and there's weeks' work on her, so they won't be able to use her to chase us for another fortnight. Get me? Well, see now, that guy will be back in Tiburon somewhere about two hours or more and he'll rouse the hive. He'll have seen me when he was lookin' down through the skylight and he'll know you're starting to-morrow. Not having a ship to chase us they'll board us. You'll have a boatload of gunmen alongside somewhere about two in the morning."

"You mean to say they'll board us?" cried George.

"Yep."

"But what about the police?"

"Police! Nothing. Why they'd do the swoop in a quick launch before the bulls had begun to remember they weren't awake."

"Well, let's notify the police and have an ambush ready for them."

"Not me," said Candon. "I don't want to have any dealings with the law. Why, if McGinnis and his crowd were taken, they'd swear Lord knows what about me. Besides I'm not friends with the bulls. I'm no crook, I've never looked inside a jail, but I've seen enough good men done in by the law to make me shy of it."

"But see here," said Hank. "I can't take

her out at night. I don't know the lights, I'd pile her up sure."

"I'll take her out," said Candon. "I'd take her out with my eyes shut. It's near full moon and we'll have the ebb. What more do you want?"

Hank turned to George.

"Let's get out," said George. "We don't want a mix-up with those guys; if we get piled, why we have the boat."

Hank turned to Candon.

"You're sure you can do it?"

"Sure."

"Then kim on," said Hank. He led the way on deck.

The wharf was deserted. To the left of them lay the Bay, silver under the moonlight and spangled here and there with the lights of shipping at anchor. While Hank trimmed the side lights and Candon attended to the binnacle light George went forward to roust out the chinks. He found them finishing their supper. Lee Wong Juu was their cook as well as boss. He had lit the galley stove on his own initiative and made tea. They had brought provisions enough for supper. Their chests were arranged in order, everything was in apple-pie trim and as they sat on their bunk sides with their tin mugs in their hands and their smooth faces slued round on the intruder they looked not unlike a company of old maids at a tea party.

George gave his order and they rose, put away their mugs and followed him on deck.

The whaleboat had cost Hank ninety-five dollars, secondhand. It was not a real whaleboat either in size, make or fittings, but good enough for their purpose, carvel built, four-oared, with tins fixed beneath the thwarts to help float her in case of a capsize. Candon was standing by the boat as George came on deck.

In the rapid moments that had come on them since the spy had been kicked off the ship Candon had gradually gained supremacy, without effort one might say. The man had arisen and was rising to the emergency like a swimmer on a wave, bearing the others with him. He was giving orders quietly and without fuss.

They got the boat afloat with the four chinks in her and, the towrope having been fixed, Candon got into her, having cast off the mooring ropes and Hank took the wheel of the schooner. George, standing silent beside Hank heard the creak and splash of the oars and then came the chug and groan of the towrope tightening; then slowly, almost imperceptably, the bowsprit of the *Wear Jack* began to veer away from the wharf. To port and starboard lay the glittering harbor water and, astern, the long line of the wharves began to show with the electrics blazing here and there where they were working cargo overtime.

As the wharves receded, they stole into a world of new sounds and lights. San Francisco began to show her jewelry, glittering ribbons of electrics, crusts of gems; on the port bow the lights of Oakland far across the water answered to the lights of San Francisco and, across the scattered silver, ferryboats showed like running jewels. The wind from the northwest came steady and filled with the breath of the unseen sea.

"Lord!" said Hank, "how much farther is he taking us? Seems like he was making for Oakland."

"He knows what he is doing," said George.

They held on.

A Chinese junk passed with her lateen sail bellying to the wind and then came along a yacht lit and riotous as a casino with a jazz band playing "Suwanee." It passed and the great quietude of the night resumed and still the tow kept on.

Then came a voice from alongside. Candon had cast off the rope and was coming on board.

To George just in that moment the whole scene and circumstance came as an impression never to be forgotten—the silence following the cast off of the rope, the vast harbor surface glittering like a ballroom floor where the helpless *Wear Jack* lay adrift, the lights of San Francisco and of Oakland and the secrecy and necessity for dispatch lest, drifting as they were, they should be sidewiped by some Bay boat in a hurry. But he had little time for thought. Candon was on board, the boat was got in and the slack of the towrope. Candon at the wheel began to give his orders with speed but without nervousness.

The mainsail rose slatting against the stars, then the foresail. A chink cast the gaskets off the jib while the *Wear Jack,* trembling like an undecided and frightened thing seemed to calm down and take heart. The slatting of the canvas ceased. They were under way.

Candon seemed steering for Oakland.

Then the Oakland lights swung to starboard and passed nearly astern. They were making for Alcatraz. The lights of San Francisco were now to port and the city showed immense, heaving itself against the moonlight; Nobs Hill, Telegraph Hill, Russian Hill, all ablaze beneath the moon, slashed with lines of light. Away beyond Angel Island showed the lights of Tiburon.

Right under Alcatraz Candon put the helm hard over; the canvas thrashed and filled again and the *Wear Jack* settled down on her new tack heading for the Presidio. Close in, the helm went over again, the canvas fought the wind and then filled on the tack for Lime Point, the northern gatepost of the Golden Gate.

The breath of the sea came strong, spray came inboard from the meeting of wind and ebb tide and the *Wear Jack* began to thrash at the tumble coming in from the bar.

Under Lime Point she came about on the port tack, taking the middle passage. Then beyond Point Bonito came the tumble of the bar. The wind was not more than a steady sailing breeze but the long rollers coming in from Japan gave them all the trouble they wanted though the *Wear Jack*, proving her good qualities, shipped scarcely a bucketful. Then the sea smoothed down to a glassy, breeze-spangled swell and the schooner, with the loom of the land far on her port quarter, spread her wings beneath the moon for the south.

CHAPTER XII.

OUT.

Candon handed the wheel over to Hank. "Well, we're out," said he. "Keep her as she goes. The coast's a straight line down to Point San Pedro and I don't want to clear it by more than ten miles." He lit a pipe and walked to the port rail where he stood with the pipe in his mouth and his hands on the rail looking at the land.

George stood beside him. The crew had vanished to the fo'c's'le now that everything was comfortable, leaving the deck to the three white men. No watches had been picked nor was there a lookout. George remarked on the fact and Candon laughed.

"I'd just as soon leave the chinks below," said he, "and run her ourselves for the rest of the watch. Half a man could handle her as the wind is. As for a lookout, why I reckon nothing could sink us to-night. Boys, I'm sure bughouse. I never took a ship out of San Francisco Bay before two hours ago."

"You what!" said George.

"I'm telling you. It came on me to do it and I did it. I've been in and out often enough, but never at the wheel nor navigating. I had the lay of the place in my head but it was a near touch."

Hank at the wheel gave a laugh that sounded like a cough.

"I felt it in my bones," said Hank.

"What?" asked Candon.

"Why that you were driving out half blind; as near as paint you had us on to Alcatraz and you all but rammed the Presidio. I was standing on my toes wanting to yell 'Put your helm over,' but I kept my head shut, didn't want to rattle you."

"Bughouse, clean bughouse," said Candon. "Makes me sweat in the palms of my hands now I've done it. But I tell you, boys, I couldn't have missed. Going by night like that one can't judge distance and as for the lights they'd better have been away. But I couldn't have missed, I was so certain sure of myself. It comes on me like that at times. I get lifted above myself, somehow or another."

"I'm the same way myself," said Hank; "it comes on me as if I got light-headed and I'm never far wrong if I let myself go. Bud here will tell you I rushed this expedition through more by instinct than anything else —didn't I, Bud?"

Bud assented unenthusiastically.

George Harley du Cane, out and away now with the Pacific beneath him and his eyes fixed on the far-off loom of the land, was thinking. He had recognized, even before starting, that Hank and Candon were temperamentally pretty much birds of the same feather. Not only had their discussions as to socialism and so forth seemed to him pretty equally crazy, but he had recognized in a dim sort of manner that they infected one another and that their bughouse qualities were not diminished by juxtaposition. Safe in port, the sanity or insanity of his companions expressed only in conversation about abstract and uninteresting affairs had not seemed to matter. But out here it was different—especially after the exhibition Candon had just given them of daring carried to the limits of craziness. And who was Candon, anyhow? A likable man, sure enough, but the confessed associate of more than shady characters.

And they had accepted this man on his face value as a pilot in an adventure that was sure to be dangerous, considering the character of the man they were out to hunt.

Well, there was not a bit of use bothering. He had gone into the business with his eyes open. There had he been, wealthy, at ease with all the world, talking to those men in the club, when in came Hank with his lunacy, saying he was going to catch Vanderdecken. He had followed the rat-trap inventor out, taken his arm and insisted on becoming part and parcel of his plans. Why? And now he was tied up in a venture with chinks and two cranks, a venture which if it failed would make him ridiculous, if it succeeded might make him a corpse.

Then, all of a sudden, came a question to his mind. "Would you sooner be respectably shooting in the Adirondacks now, or here?" Followed the surprising and immediate answer, "Here." Bughouse, clean bughouse, but the fact remained.

It was now getting on for two in the morning and he went below leaving the deck to the others. They intended carrying on till four and then rousing the crew up for the morning watch.

They told him they would call him when they wanted him and he turned in, dropping to sleep the instant his head touched the pillow. When he awoke it was daylight. Water dazzles were at play on the Venesta panelings as the early sunlight through the portholes shifted to the lift of the swell. Snores from the two other occupied bunks seemed to keep time to the movement of the *Wear Jack* and from the topmost starboard bunk Hank's pajama-clad leg hung like the leg of a dead man.

The whole of the afterguard had turned in, apparently leaving the schooner to run herself. He turned out and without stopping to wake the others came hurriedly up the companionway on deck.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE BAY OF WHALES.

The sun was up and away to port lay California lifting her hills to heaven against the morning splendor. To starboard, a mile or so away, a big freighter in ballast and showing the kick of her propeller was pounding along north, the sunlight on her bridge canvas, and even at that distance George could hear the thud of her screw like the beating of a heart.

A Chinaman was at the helm of the *Wear Jack,* Champagne Charley no less; and forward another Celestial was emptying a slush tub over the port rail. George nodded to the helmsman and then taking his seat on the skylight edge contemplated the coast.

George's yachting experience had been mainly confined to the Bay. He could steer a boat under sail but of deep-sea work and cruising in big yachts he knew practically nothing. Still, even to his uninitiated mind, this sort of thing seemed wrong. Candon and Hank had evidently left the deck at the beginning of the morning watch, that is to say four o'clock, leaving the chinks to run the show. They had been running it for three hours or so and doing it satisfactorily to all appearances. Still it didn't seem right.

He determined to go for the other two and give them a piece of his mind and then, when a few minutes later they came on deck yawning and arrayed in their pajamas, he didn't. They seemed so perfectly satisfied with themselves and things in general that it was beyond him to "start a grouse." Instead he went down and tubbed in the bathroom and an hour later as he was seated at breakfast with the two others his whole attitude of mind toward chinks had changed, for the schooner was running on her course with scarcely a tremor of the telltale compass, the breakfast was set as if by a parlor maid and the ham and eggs were done to perfection. More than that, they were waited upon by a waiter who knew his business, for when he had done handing things round he vanished without a word and left them to talk.

"Oh, that's nothing," said Candon in reply to a remark of George's. "Those chaps could run this packet by themselves. When a Chinaman signs on as an A. B., he is one. He doesn't pretend to be what he isn't, not on a ship running out of San Francisco anyhow; and he's more; every Chinaman's a cook and a laundress and it's ten to one he's a tailor as well. I tell you, when I think of what one chink can do and what one white man generally can't, I get frightened for the whites." Hank was cutting in and an argument on the color question between these two was only prevented by George remembering something of more immediate moment.

"Look here," said he to Candon, "can't

you tell us more about Vanderdecken now we're out? What I mean to say is the plans you have about him. Where are we going, anyway?"

"South," said Candon.

"I know that," said George, "but where south? South's a big place."

"It is," said the other. "Too big for guessing. But now we're out and I'm going to put you wise. First of all, I promised you to put this chap's boodle into your hands; and second, I promised you the guy himself. I hung off from telling you the location till you'd done your part of the contract and got me out away from the McGinnis crowd. Well, you've done your part and here's mine. The place I'm taking you is known by the Mexicans as the Bay of Whales."

"The Mexicans!" said George.

"Yep. We've got to turn the corner of Lower California, that's to say Cape San Lucas, then cut across the Bay of California for the Mexican coast and the Bay of Whales. It's away above Jalisco. It's worth seeing. I don't know how it is, maybe it's the currents or the winds or just a liking for a quiet burying ground, but every old sulphur bottom that's died between here and Timbuktu seems to have laid his bones there. There's a Mexican superstition about the place, maybe on account of the bones, but no one ever goes there. It's the lonesomest place on God's footstool. The shore-along ships keep clear of it and it's all reefs beyond the sand of the bay so you don't get ships putting in. I tell you, you could photograph the lonesomeness. Well there the boodle is and there you'll put your hands on the guy you want."

Said Hank, "Look here B. C."—Candon had come down to initials after the manner of San Francisco—"how did old man Vanderdecken make out, anyway? What I'm getting at is this: I figured his fishing grounds to be the Channel Islands and north and south of there, but that's a good long way from San Lucas."

"That's so," said Candon. "Well, I'll tell you. Right along till near the end he used to keep the stuff he got aboard the hooker he was on. You're right, his lay was the Channel Islands, but finding he'd made the place too hot for himself all along down the American seaboard and expectin' to be searched he did a dive for the bay I told you and there he cached the stuff—and I'm the only man besides himself that knows where the cache is.

"I'm not going to say how I got so thick with the chap as to know his plans and dispositions. I just ask you to take B. C.'s word that the goods are according to the manifest."

"Oh, that's all right," said Hank. "I don't want to dig into your business. All I want's the Dutchman and to put my hand on his shoulder."

"And so you shall," said B. C., "'less the chap dies before we get there."

They came up and, Candon taking the wheel, the two Chinamen who were holding the deck dived below. An hour later, the chinks being called up, watches were picked, George falling to Hank, Champagne Charley to Candon. Candon being the most knowledgeable man and the best sailor, it was agreed that he should work the ship.

"You can't have two heads," said Hank, "and I reckon yours is better than mine where navigating her is concerned."

CHAPTER XIV.

SAN NICOLAS.

The Kuro Shiwo current drives northward up the coast of Japan, crosses the Pacific and comes down the Pacific coast of America, bathing the Channel Islands and giving them their equable temperature. This great current is a world of its own, it has its kelp forests where the shark hides like a tiger and its own peculiar denizens led by the great swordfish of Japan; Japan not only sends her swordsmen of the sea to keep this moving streetlike world, she lends her colors in blues vivid and surprising as the skies and waters of her shadowless pictures.

One morning shortly after sunrise George, fast asleep in his bunk, was hauled out by Hank to "see the islands." He tumbled out and, just as he was, in his pajamas, followed on deck.

The *Wear Jack* between the Kuro Shiwo and the wind was making a good ten knots, Point Conception on the mainland lay almost astern and the sun with his feet still on the mountains beyond Santa Barbara was chasing to death a fog whose last banners were fluttering amidst the foothills. Away ahead like vast ships under press of sail rode the San Lucas Islands, San Miguel, Santa Rosa, Santa Cruz, their fog-filled cañons white in the sunlight.

Later in the morning with the San Lucas Islands far astern, San Nicolas showed up like a flake of spar on the horizon to the south and to the sou'east a trace of the mountains of Santa Catalina.

Candon who was on deck talking to George, pointed toward Santa Catalina. "Looks pretty lonely, don't it?" said he. "Well, that place is simply swimming with millionaires. Say, you're something in that way yourself, aren't you? So I ought to keep my head muzzled, but you'll understand. I'm not going against you, but things in general. I reckon if you'd ever roomed in Tallis Street, San Francisco, you'd know what I mean. I've seen big poverty and when I see millionaires sunning themselves it gets my goat. Now you know what I'm gettin' at."

"Look here, C. B.," said George, "cut it out. Most of the millionaires I know live on pap and pills and work like gun mules."

"Do you?" asked Candon laughing.

"No, I don't, but I expect I will some time; anyhow, one fool exception doesn't count. What I'm getting at is this; chaps like you and Hank get it in your heads that the bigger a man's pile is the more he enjoys himself; it's the other way about, seems to me; also that the rich man lives in a world of his own with laws of his own and——"

"So he does," said the other. "Now you listen to me. When this prohibition jazz started how did the poor man stand? Dry —that's how he stood—looking at the other chaps with their cellars full of drink. They knew the law was coming and they laid in."

"That's true," said George.

"It is," said Candon, "and some day, maybe, I'll tell you a yarn about how it hit me once."

Hank came on deck and stood with eyes shaded looking at the ghost of Santa Catalina on the sky line. "There she is," said Hank. "You can almost see the flags waving and hear the bands playing. Bud, didn't you ever go fishing down that way? I reckon it was that place gave Vanderdecken his first pull toward thievery, seeing the water is thick with bank presidents and wheat cornerers only waiting to be collected for ransom. Say, C. B., if you know anything about old Vanderdecken, tell's why he didn't hold the chaps he caught to ransom as well as picking the diamonds and money off them? That's what I'd have done. I would sure—— Hello!"

A leaping tuna as long as a man and curved like a sword left the sea on the starboard bow, showed its colors to the sun and vanished with a splash.

"Tuna," said Candon.

"Well, what's he doing here?" asked Hank. "He's out of his waters. This ain't the tuna grounds."

"How do you know?" asked George.

"Lord! Oughtn't I to know?" replied Hank. "Why I was on the fish-commission ship on this section of the Pacific coast sounding and dredging and taking specimens of the fish and the weeds and Lord knows what all. That was five years ago but I reckon the tuna grounds haven't altered since then."

"They lay south of San Clemente, don't they?" said Candon.

"They do not, you're thinking of albacore. The tuna grounds are east of Santa Catalina mostly, close to Avalon. Why, I know all that place's well as I know my own office. I've got a hell-nation memory for facts and I could reel you off the lie of the fishing grounds most all along the coast. Right from Rocky Point on the mainland the fish begin running in shoals. Bonito you get mostly at Rocky Point, then albacore; but if you strike out for the islands you'll begin to git big things——"

"Whales?" asked George.

"Whales mostly stick to the Santa Barbara channel. There aren't many now, but you get killers and sulphur bottoms and gray whales—sharks, too."

Hank lit a cigarette and leaning on the port rail looked across the water to the east, then he came forward a bit and looked ahead.

Away ahead and a bit to westward something showed. It was San Nicolas—San Nicolas no longer sharply defined like a flake of spar but with its head in a turban of new-formed cloud. This island, eight or nine miles long, forms the western outpost of the Channel Islands. Unprotected, like them, by Point Conception it receives the full force of wind and weather.

The others came close to Hank.

"That's her," said Hank, "that's San Nicolas. Ever been ashore there, B. C.?"

"Not such a fool," said Candon. "I've cruised about these waters a good bit but I've never met a man who wanted to put

his foot there. It's all wind and sand for one thing."

"Well," said Hank, "I've been thinking from what I know of the place that Vanderdecken may have used San Nicolas for one of his ports of call—what do you say B. C.?"

"Who knows?" said Candon.

"Did you land on San Nicolas?" asked George.

"Oh, yes; we were hanging off the kelp beds three or four days."

"I'd like to land there," said George.

"Well, it's easily done," said Hank. "We could tie up to the kelp for the matter of that, only I'm afraid the *Wear Jack's* a bit too big. She might drag out. Away down farther south the kelp vines run to a thousand foot long and you could most moor a battleship to them, but it's different here. However, we can anchor if you want to. What do you say, B. C.?"

"I'm with you," said Candon. "We have plenty of time and a day won't matter."

Candon went and leaned on the starboard rail. For the last two days, in fact ever since he had given away the whereabouts of Vanderdecken's cache, he had seemed at times depressed, though at other times he would be in high good spirits. Hank had noticed it first and he spoke of it now as he and George went forward to the bow where they hung watching the boost of the water and the foam gouts like marble shavings on lazulite.

"Notice B. C. has the dumps again," said Hank. "I wonder what's working on him? Maybe he feels himself a skunk leading us on to old man Vanderdecken."

"He said that was all right," said George; "said he was acting perfectly straight and that the guy was his enemy. Y' know, I believe in B. C."

"So do I," said Hank, "but what in the nation's he molting about, that's what I want to know. I take it it's just sensitiveness. Even though the Dutchman is his enemy he don't like giving him away. I can understand it."

"I can't quite make him out," said George. "He's educated and has fine ideas about things, yet he always seems to have lived pretty rough——"

"And what's the harm of that?" cut in Hank. "Why, it's the guys that have lived pretty rough, as you call it, that are the only educated citizens as far as I can make out. They've had their noses rubbed into the world. Why, look at me—I'm not saying I'm much, but all I've learned of any good to me hasn't come out of classrooms or colleges. Mind you, I'm not against them, but I do say what makes a man is what he rubs against."

"He seems to have been rubbing against some pretty queer characters to judge by the *Heart of Ireland* lot," said George.

"That's my point," said Hank. "They've turned him respectable. There's many a man would have gone to the bad, only he's been frightened off it by the toughs he's met. They're better than Sunday-school books. I know, for I've been there."

An hour later, San Nicolas was plain before them and an hour before sunset Beggs Rock was on the starboard bow and only a mile away. San Nicolas, itself close to them now, showed its peak nine hundred feet high with its changeless turban of cloud, rosy gold in the evening glow. From the peak the island spilled away showing cleft and cañon and high ground treeless and devoid of life.

They cast anchor just outside the kelp ring. The sun was just leaving the sea. Nothing showed but the brown lateen sails of a Chinese junk standing inshore about two miles away. She rounded a promontory and vanished from sight.

"That's a chow fishing boat," said Hank. "They go scraping along all down this coast, hunting for abalones and turtles and whatever they can lay their hands on."

"That's so," said Candon. "I've met in with them right down to the Gulf of California and beyond. It's against the law to take abalones in most places round here, but much they care."

"They'd lay hands on any old thing," said Hank. "Wonder what those chaps are doing here?"

The morrow was to tell him.

CHAPTER XV.

WHAT THE CHINKS WERE DOING.

They had fixed to row ashore after breakfast but fishing held them till afternoon. Candon, not keen on the business of climbing over rocks, remained behind to finish tinkering at the engine which he had almost got into working order.

Usually there is a big swell running here, but to-day there was only a gentle heave lifting the long, green vine tendrils of the

kelp. It was like rowing over a forest. On the beach they left the boat to the two Chinamen who had rowed them off and Hank leading the way, they started to the right toward the great sand spit that runs into the sea for half a mile or more.

A Farallon cormorant circling in the blue above seemed to watch them. It passed with a cry leaving the sky empty and nothing to hear but the wash of the sea on the beaches and far off an occasional gull's voice from the spit. Reaching a great forward-leaning rock, they took their seats in the shade of it to rest and light their pipes. The sand lay before them jutting into the kelp-oily sea and beyond the kelp the blue of the Kuro Shiwo. The *Wear Jack* was out of sight, the horizon seemed infinitely far and of a world where men were not or from whence men had departed forever.

"Say, Bud," said Hank, leaning on his side with a contented sigh, "ain't this great?"

"Which?" asked Bud.

"The lonesomeness. Listen to the gulls—don't they make you feel just melancholy."

"Do you like to feel melancholy?"

"Depends on the brand, same as whisky. Say, it's funny to think that the cars are running down Market Street and Tyrebuck sitting in his office and J. B.—he's sitting at his luncheon by this. Wonder what they said when they found us gone? Well we've had the laugh on them to start with."

"I hope they won't have the laugh on us at the finish," said George.

"Don't," said Hank. "It makes me feel doddery to think of us going back like dogs with our tails down and no Dutchman! No, you don't see me back in town empty-handed, never. Was you ever laughed at, Bud?"

"Heaps of times."

"Laughed at in the press?"

"No."

"Well, that's what I mean. I've been, and I know."

"What was the business?"

"Oh, it was a girl."

"What did she do?"

"It wasn't what she did so much as what she said. It was this way. It was in Pittsburgh one rainy day and I fell in with a girl; she wasn't more'n eighteen and down on her luck. She asked me the way to somewhere or another and that's how we started off. She'd had nothing to eat that day and I took her into a coffee shop and stuffed her up with buckwheat cakes and truck and then she told me her story.

"Said she had to meet her father at the station that evening and he was old and infirm and they had to look for rooms. Well, it seems somehow or another I was mug enough to help her look for rooms and stand as a reference and lend her twenty dollars. And when the police stepped into the rooms I got for them that night and took the gray wig and patch over his eye off her father he was Sam Brown, the biggest tough out of N' York, with five thousand dollars' worth of stolen diamonds on him. I managed to clear myself, but the press had got the story and I tell you, Bud, I was guyed out of Pittsburgh and it hurt worse than kicking."

"They don't go in for sentiment in Pittsburgh."

"Nope, steel goods."

"Well, come along," said George; "this isn't prospecting the island."

They got up and shook the sand from themselves and started along the spit, then returning they began to climb. The *Wear Jack* came into view anchored beyond the kelp. As they got higher and above the promontory that hid the next bay they saw the Chinese junk of the night before. She was anchored a little way out. On the sands of the bay stood three strange-looking little pyramids, tents evidently, and about the tents people were moving.

"Now what in the nation are those chinks doing?" said Hank. He unslung the binoculars he had brought with him and leveled them at the far-off tents.

"Chinks—one of them's building a fire; they've got a boat up on the sand. Abalone hunters most likely making a camp here for the fishing. Say, Bud, I believe they're hatchet men."

"What are hatchet men?"

"Pirates turned inside out and painted to look like fishermen—just robbers, abalone poachers and smugglin' if they can get a chance. Wickedest lot out of hell—I'm judging by the look of them—have a squint."

He handed the powerful glasses to George who leveled them in the direction of the bay.

The field of sight suddenly swarmed with Chinamen moving against the glitter of white sand—small dingy-looking men wearing big straw hats. A fire had been lit and

the white smoke curled upward against the tents. Near one of the tents a Chinaman was working over a heap of what looked like abalones.

"Hullo!" cried George.

"What's up?" asked Hank.

"There's a white man with them. He's just come out of one of the tents—a long, thin-looking devil. What on earth's he with them for?"

Hank took the glass.

"Sure enough there is," said Hank. "Look at his hair all hanging over his face. He looks to be bossing the chinks. It's plain now what they are. Smugglers, opium or dope of some sort. I've heard the trade's in the hand of whites—they run it into Santa Barbara plugged into abalone shells. Bud! Say! Bud! There's a girl! She's just come out of the right-hand tent with a little chap after her. Looks like a Mexican. She's a white—looks like a lady. She's crying—got her handkerchief to her face. Bud, this gets me!"

George snatched the glass. Hank was right. There was a girl amid the horrid crowd. She was no longer crying, she had taken her seat on the sand in a dejected sort of manner and seemed watching the others as they moved about at their work. Even at that distance it was obvious that she was of a different class to the rest.

"Well, I'm damned!" said George.

"Look! That beastly big chap seems jawing at her." Hank had grabbed the glass.

He saw the long man standing in front of the girl whom he seemed to have ordered to her feet. He seemed angry about something. Then the unfortunate girl turned and went off toward one of the tents. She seemed about to enter it when she collapsed, cast herself on the sand and lay with her face hidden on her arm.

"Blue blazes!" cried Hank.

He shut the glass, thrust it into its case and started off down the rocks, George following.

"Where are you going to?" cried George.

"Bust up that hive," cried Hank. "That's white slave, clean white slave. Come along to the ship and fetch Candon and the guns, this is better than Vanderdecken."

Tumbling, slipping, clawing at bushes, whooping like a red Indian, he led the way, George laboring behind till they reached the beach where the boat of the *Wear Jack* lay, the two chinks close by to it on the sand, smoking and playing fan-tan. The boat was shoved off.

"You mean fighting them?" asked George. His throat was dry and his lips were dry. He had seen the Great War and bursting shells and had risked his life a dozen times, but all that seemed nothing to the imminent attack on that horrid crowd over there on the beach beyond sight.

"Oh, Lord, no," said Hank, a devilish look on his lantern face and a new light in his eyes. "I'm going to cuddle them! Lay into it, you jade-faced sons of perdition. 'Nuff! In with your oars and claw on."

They tumbled over the rail of the *Wear Jack,* Hank shouting for Candon. They found him below coming out of the engine place with a lump of cotton waste in his hand.

"Come into the saloon," cried Hank. "B. C., we're up to the eyes in it. Whacha think! We've struck a gang of Chinese white slavers with a girl in tow," he explained.

As he talked George noticed the effect on Candon. He leaned forward as he sat, pulling at the hairs of his beard, his eyes changed in color, darkening as the pupils spread. When Hank had finished Candon leaned back, sought mechanically in his pocket, found his pipe and put it between his teeth but he did not light it.

"They're white slavers," said Hank.

"Sure," said Candon. The anger consuming him was no less visible for the calm that covered it. Then he broke out, "There you have things as they're going on! And your beautiful laws—where are they? I tell you, boys, white women are being snatched off to China every week that goes, and white men are helping. It's all part of a business mixed up with opium smuggling and dope selling. Well, we've gotta get that girl from them. Question is, how?"

"Land right away and go for them. I've got the guns," said Hank, going to a locker and producing the armament for the voyage, three Luger automatics. "Here's the persuaders and the chinks will help."

"One minute," said Candon. He was thinking hard, nearly biting through the pipestem. Then he spoke. "It's getting on for sundown. Better wait till the dark comes, then we can rush them. They'll think it's the police if we do it proper and

they won't be able to count our numbers. How's the wind?"

"Dropped dead."

"Good! There's no fear of them putting out before we fix them. Once we get the girl on board, we can put off, wind or no wind, for I've got the engine fixed. You see if we put up a fight right away we'll have all those chinks they have with them on top of us. You said they were hatchet men, didn't you? Fight like hornets. Whereas in the dark—why a chink in the dark is no good, specially if he doesn't know what's attacking him. Now, my plan is, bust their camp up sudden, yelling and shooting over them; if they show fight, drill them, but it's a thousand to one they'll quit and scatter thinking it's the police. Nail the girl, get her aboard here and shove off."

"I'm with you," said George.

Hank demurred for a moment. He would have preferred to attack right away; but after a little discussion he fell in with the others.

CHAPTER XVI.

EVIDENCE OF CONTRABAND.

It wanted little more than two hours to sunset and the eastern sky had taken that look of distance which only comes when the sun is low in the west.

Hank, who was the first on deck, called to the others and pointed over the sea. Something white was shearing through the water over there, something that showed up at once through the glass as a high-power motor launch.

"Boys," cried Hank, "it's the police! It's the bulls sure as certain, and we're done out of it!"

Candon took the glass.

"Don't look like a police boat to me," said he, "and I only see two fellows on her. Of course there may be a dozen hid away. Looks more like to me that it's a contrabander done up as a pleasure launch. We can't see anything from here. Let's take the boat and push out so that we can get a sight of the next bay."

"They'll spot us," said Hank.

"They'll spot the *Wear Jack* anyhow," said Candon. "The boat doesn't matter. They'll think we're fishing."

The boat was still alongside. Led by Candon they got in and pushed off.

Half a mile out the next bay had opened enough to show them the junk at anchor and the tents on the beach. The launch, the blue water sheering from her forefoot, was approaching the junk.

Hank, watching through the glass reported. "They're clawing on. There's only one chink on the junk—he's handing over parcels and taking things aboard. You're right, B. C., it's no police jazz. It's contraband sure enough. Bend over the gunnel, you two, and pretend to be fishing. Now the launch is putting off back to the coast. Well, that settles it."

"Where are they out from?" said Hank.

"Oh, Santa Barbara," said Candon. "Sure swabs."

They watched the launch making back to the coast, then they took to the oars and put back for the schooner.

'Well," said George, who was at the yoke lines, "it gets me how these sort of things are let pass by the law."

"Oh, that's nothing," said Hank, with a laugh. "Why, girls are disappearing every week in San Francisco. They get inveigled into Chinatown and that's all. They get taken off to Canton and sold as slaves to mandarins or worse."

"But how do the chinks manage to get them out of America?" asked George.

"You've seen it," said Candon. "You said there were two white men with those Chinese—that's how. The traffic wouldn't stand a minute without the help of whites. Money, that's what's the mischief. Lord, I want to get at those chaps—I'm sufferin' to get at those chaps."

CHAPTER XVII.

THE SURPRISE.

They came alongside the *Wear Jack* just as the fires of sunset began to pale beyond the peak of San Nicolas.

"Come down below, boys," said Candon.

They followed him to the cabin where they took their seats while he filled and lit a pipe, then with the pipe in his mouth he sat with his arms resting on the table and his eyes fixed straight before him.

George and the rat-trap inventor spoke not a word. They had come to recognize B. C. as the better man in a lot of ways and they had, unconsciously or subconsciously, chosen him for their leader in this business that very plainly meant life or death. They were about to attack a hornets' nest, every hornet man-size and armed

with a little hatchet instead of a sting. They had no side arms, nothing but the Lugers. On the leader everything would depend and they felt they could depend on Candon.

"We've got an hour and a half before we need stir," suddenly spoke B. C., "and I've got the plan of how to work this business all laid out in my head. Maybe you'll leave it at that for I've taken notice that too much talking muddles things. You're willing to take my word to go when the time comes and follow me?"

"Yes," said Hank.

Candon slipped the old Waltham he wore from its chain and laid it on the table before him.

"That being so," said he, "I want half an hour's talk with you two on something that's got nothing to do with this business. Don't put in any questions or say a word till I get through. For the last three days I've been keeping my head shut against my better feelings. And only for the fact that the whole three of us may be laid out before morning I'd have gone on, maybe, keeping it shut against my will, so to say, for you are two of the whitest men I've ever fell in with. Boys, I've let you down cruel. I promised you the Dutchman and you shall have him and I promised to lead you to where he'd stowed his takings and that promise holds. All the same, I've not been straight with you.

"I've got to make things straight, right away or bust. That's how I feel. Well, here's the start. We're after a chap by name of Vanderdecken. That's not his name. The tom-fool newspapers put it on him, but let it hold for a minute while I tell you. This chap was no Dutchman. American born he was, of decent parents, but born wild and took his hook to sea when he wasn't more'n fourteen. Now seeing we're hunting this chap, I want to give you his character's far as I can get it and show you maybe he's not such a shark as people have made out and was born for something better than the inside of a penitentiary, where he's sure going when we have him lugged back to San Francisco.

"So I'm telling you he hadn't been at sea more'n a year when he saved two chaps' lives from drowning and he hadn't been more'n three years when he got as fourth officer aboard a Cape Horner. After that he rose steady, educating himself in sea practice and land ways, reading everything he could lay his claws on. Maybe it would have been better if he'd kept his eyes shut and worked along blind like most chaps. But he couldn't stop thinking. I reckon thinking ruins more men than drink. The world seemed all upside down to him with the rich bugs atop same as the fleas on a dog's back.

"Well, he rose, not having any use for liquor and being a good practical seaman, till he got his master's ticket and command of a full-rigged packet in the Shireman line. Then he lost his ship through no fault of his and got fired. The Shiremans had a down on him over stores he'd condemned as not fit for dogs, let alone able seamen, and they'd got wind he was a socialist and they crabbed him all over the shipping company's offices.

"Y' know they're all hand in glove with their secret reports and so on, and Vanderdecken couldn't go into a company's office unless it was to be shown out. Having to eat he went back to the fo'c's'le—that was in Liverpool, and worked his way to San Francisco. From there he got to Nome and struck it rich at Klondike and got robbed. Then he began to float up and down through more traverses than I've time to tell you of till the big war came and he heard of the *Lusitania*. That drove him clean bughouse and he got across the pond and joined up with the Britishers in the submarine fight and got blown up in drifters till he was nearly deaf. Then back he came to San Francisco, which was his port of choice, and more'n a year ago, he joins up with McGinnis in working the *Heart of Ireland* on all sorts of jobs down the coast, shark fishing, sea scraping and contraband.

"He was a pretty sick man, was Vanderdecken with the world and the way it had used him, but it wasn't till prohibition came along that he rose. The hull place went dry and they chucked the liquor down the drains in Santa Barbara, all that wasn't hid away in rich men's cellars. Vanderdecken wasn't a drinking man, but one day at Santa Barbara he saw a lot of money bugs in white ducks popping champagne corks on a yacht and that blew him up. He went to Pat McGinnis and said he, 'Look here, Pat, I've got a notion. Let's lay for a yacht and collar their drink and chuck it overboard.' Pat didn't seem to see the use of that, nor how it would bring him profit, but he turned it over in his thick head and the idea came

to him of holding a yacht up and robbing it. He worked up the idea and put it before Vanderdecken who fell in with it like a fool, on the condition that the drink should be hove over. Vanderdecken wasn't after plunder, but he'd gone bughouse on getting even with the champagne guys and he had to fall in with the other and pretend he was.

"Then when everything was fixed up Pat got cold feet, not from virtue but fright, and nothing would have been done if Vanderdecken hadn't taken hold of the business and gingered the chaps up. He took command of the whole business and then the fun began and when it began Vanderdecken found himself as keen on taking the valuables as on dousing the drink. But there wasn't much in it. D' you know, for all the hullabaloo that's been raised, only three yachts were raided. That's a fact. It was a business that wouldn't bear much repeating and only one yacht was really lucky—one on which the fellow had his wife aboard and all her diamonds and jewels; anyhow, taking it all together, the plunder didn't amount to more'n ten or fifteen thousand dollars leaving the jewels aside, and they might be worth ten thousand. No knowing till they were sold.

"But there was a lot of fizz and claret sent to hello, though you never heard of that. The yacht owners kept that dark. They didn't want to be laughed at for one thing, and another, the rich folk are mortally afeared of the poor folk suddenly rising and batting them over the head on the drink question, and I've just been thinking, boys, that when Vanderdecken's led back to San Francisco, there'll be no penitentiary for him lest the rich men's cellar business should be brought too much to notice and the guys who are poor and dry may say, 'Let's do what Vanderdecken had the guts to do.'

"However, after the last holdup, the *Heart of Ireland* made for the Bay of Whales and Vanderdecken and McGinnis cached the takings, and Vanderdecken changed the cache unknown to McGinnis. Getting toward San Francisco Vanderdecken got cold feet over the valuables and showed his hand by hinting like a fool that the stolen boodle ought to be returned to its owners. That roused McGinnis' hair and the bristles on the crowd. They thought they were going to be choused. They let Vanderdecken ashore but a chap went with him to watch him and the first thing Vanderdecken heard was that you two were going out in a schooner to hunt for him. He knew he'd never get away from San Francisco and McGinnis without a knife in his back. So giving the chap that was with him the slip he hoofed it for Sullivan's wharf and dropped aboard the *Wear Jack*. Boys, I'm Vanderdecken!"

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE ATTACK.

They had guessed it for the last few minutes of the yarn. To gauge the effect upon them one must remember that they were out to hunt the narrator, fearing to be guyed if they did not catch him. What would the guying be like when the real fact was known? The fact that they had been sailing to hunt for Vanderdecken with Vanderdecken on board—and not only on board but acting as sailing master. It was the sort of joke that becomes immortal like the joke about Handy Andy throwing the wash jug out of the window instead of the water—the sort of story that would preserve the protagonists in ridicule, not for years but for ages.

And yet there was no spark of anger in the mind of Hank or in the mind of George, Candon by his confession and story and evident regret for the business had drawn their teeth. Also in the last few days he had taught them to like and admire him and in some extraordinary way he had in the last few minutes made them feel that their affairs were subordinate to his and that they were only side characters in a story that was his. All the same in the mind of each lay the fact that they had been done brown and the conviction that B. C. must now never be taken by the police even if they had to shoot him.

Hank was the first to speak.

"Well," said he, "it's a Kid Lewis of a punch, there's no denying it. And if it was all from your own shoulder, B. C., I'm not saying I wouldn't have hit back, but there's more in this than a man can see. Maybe I'm talking through my hat, but seems to me it's curious. Me putting out on this show and J. B. advertising me and you coming into town on top of the advertisement and taking it up. Well, there's no use in talking, let's clean the slate. I'm not sure if an expedition was putting out to collar

Hank Fisher I wouldn't join it same as you did, specially if I had the McGinnis crowd after me. What do you say, Bud?"

"Oh," said George, "what's the good of talking? Forget it."

"That's easy said," put in Candon. "Mind you, I don't blame myself for joining in with you same as I did. You were after me anyhow and I didn't know you from Adam; but it was a low-down trick making you sign that contract, binding you to put me ashore with five thousand dollars in my pocket after handing you over the Dutchman, which was myself. That's what's been getting me the last few days. It was just the same with the yacht business. I started out only to douse the liquor, but when it came to stripping the diamonds and money off those ducks I was as keen as McGinnis. Then when the thing was done and the stuff safely hived I was mortal sorry for myself. I've got a black streak in me and that's the truth—black and there's no use talking."

"No matter," said Hank. "Forget it. You've got a damn big white streak in you, B. C. I reckon we're all pretty much striped if it comes to that. Anyhow what we've got to do now is save that girl and get the boodle. You can skip when we've collared the stuff—it'll be something to bring back to San Francisco anyhow."

"I'm going back there with you," said Candon. "I'm not afraid to face the music."

"Well, there's time enough to talk about that," put in the other. "The thing is now to get the girl. Time's up and we've got to start. What's your plan?"

"Rush them," said Candon. "Three of our chinks will be enough with us to help in the shouting. Go and pick three of them, will you? Then we'll row ashore, leave the boat headed, crawl over those rocks 'tween us and the next bay, get right up to the edge of their camp and stampede them shouting like ballyhoos and firing over their heads. One of us had better look after the girl and pick her up and waltz off with her. I reckon I'm the strongest, maybe, and I'll do the snatching—don't use more than two rounds apiece when you let off over their heads. You'll maybe want the rest if the hatchet men show fight."

"That's clear," said Hank. "I'll go pick the chinks."

He left the cabin and the two others turned their attention to the Luger pistols emptied the magazines, oiled them, tried the mechanism and refilled them. Then with the pistols and extra ammunition they came on deck. The waning moon had not yet risen but the stars were beginning to blaze and against them the peak of San Nicolas with its cloud top looked like a giant with a turbaned head. Through the windless night the wash of the waves on the beach came clear, rhythmical, slumbrous, like the pulse of the sleeping sea.

Hank had got his men into the boat. He took the pistol handed to him by Candon and the ammunition, then with a glance at the deck where Charley was in charge he led the way overside and the boat pushed off.

"You're sure of the chinks?" asked George in a whisper as they rowed.

"Sure," replied Hank. "I've told them they've only got to shout and I'll give five dollars to the chap that shouts the loudest. I tipped them that these guys have got an Amercian girl with them and that the American government will plaster them with dollars if we get her away. Oh, they're right enough. Now not a word out of you all when we get to the beach. Just follow B. C. and hold your breath for the shouting."

The boat grounded on the soft sand and they tumbled out, hauled her up a few feet and Hank, taking a small lantern he had brought with him, lit it and placed it on the sands close to the bow. Then they started. Europe in the van, Asia in the rear.

The rocks were soon reached. The rocks just here are easy to negotiate, great, flat-topped masses rising gradually from the bayside to a summit that falls as gradually to the sands of the bay beyond. When they reached the summit the blaze of two fires on the beach showed up close together, their light blending in an elliptical zone, beyond which the tents hinted of themselves.

"The chinks are round one, the white chaps by the other," said Candon. "Couldn't be better, for we've got them divided. Now then, you chaps, follow me and do as I do—and for the love of Mike don't sneeze. Got your guns handy? That's right."

He began the descent. When they reached the sands he got on hands and knees. Scarcely had he done so than the notes of a guitar came through the night from the camp of the white slavers and the first words of a song. They could not make out the words but they could tell at once that the singer was neither American nor

English. That high nasal voice spoke of Spain where the cicadas shrill in the plane trees in the heat-shaken air.

"Spaniards," said Hank.

"Come on," said Candon.

Then, had any one been watching, across the sands toward the zone of firelight six forms might have been seen crawling liker to land crabs than the forms of men or beasts.

The chinks around their fire were broken up into parties playing games and smoking. By the white man's fire sat the guitar player on a camp stool, the light full on his sharp profile; another man leaning on his elbow lay smoking cigarettes, and a woman seated on the sand, an elderly looking woman of Mediterranean type, was engaged in some sort of needlework and her hand as it moved, seemed covered with rings. George thought he had never beheld a more sinister-looking trio. The girl was nowhere to be seen.

George, Hank and Candon put their heads together.

"She's in one of the tents," whispered B. C. "Tied up for the night most like."

"Shall we rush them now," asked Hank.

"Yep—get your guns ready. Look! There's the girl! Now then, boys!"

The girl who had just left the most seaward of the tents stood for a moment with the vague light of the fire touching her. She was very small. To George in that half moment she seemed only a child and the sight of her contrasted with her captors came to them as though timed to the moment.

The beach blazed out with noise. The ear-splitting explosions of the Lugers and the yells of the attackers swept the man on the sands to his feet. George saw, as one sees in a dream, the whole of the Chinese casting cards and dice and flying like leaves driven by the broom of the wind. He had a vision of Hank downing the cigarette smoker, then he got a smash on the head from a guitar and was rolling on the sands with a man who was shouting "Hell, hell, hell!" and punching him to silence while the woman with nails in his neck was trying to strangle him, screaming all the time till Hank dragged her off, crying. "We've got the girl! Kim on—kim on! We've got the girl!" Then the nightmare shifted and he was running, Candon in front of him with something on his shoulder that struggled and fought and screamed for help. Then he was stumbling over rocks, Hank helping him and laughing and whooping like a man in delirium and shouting to the stars, "We've got the girl! We've got the girl!"

Then came the glowworm glimmer of the lamp by the boat—and the boat with them all crowding into it, chinks and all—and the musky smell of the chinks and the push off and a great silence broken only by the oars and Candon's voice crying, "Lord! she's dead!" and Hank's voice, "No, she ain't. Only fainted."

Next came the *Wear Jack's* side with Charley showing a lantern, the getting on board with their helpless bundle, and the vanishing of Candon with her down the companionway to the saloon. Then and only then did things shake back to reality while Hank took both George's hands in his. "Bo, we've done it," said Hank.

"We sure have," said George.

Which was a fact—if they only had known.

CHAPTER XIX.

A SEA FIGHT.

Meanwhile the chinks with absolute imperturbability and under the orders of Charley were getting the boat on board. As it came on deck Candon appeared.

"She's come to," said Candon. "I've stuck her in the bunk in the after cabin, but she's so rattled she won't speak—just lays there. Hurry up with the anchor, you chaps. Listen!"

From shoreward through the night came sounds, far-away shouting and then the throb of a gong.

"Those guys are collecting the hatchet chaps," cried Hank. "They'll maybe try and cut us off from the next bay—there was a boat on the sands. Lord! and I've dropped my Luger."

"I've got mine," said George.

"Mine's in the cabin," said Candon. "Get the windlass going and I'll start the engine. Give me a call when the mudhook's up, and look slippy." He dived below and as he dived a loose bunt of sail puffed out and a breeze from the nor'west laid its fingers on the cheek of Hank.

"Wind's coming," cried Hank. "Leave the windlass, get to the halyards. Hi! Charley there, look alive, man! Your throat and peak halyards! Bud, lay forward and get the gaskets off the jib!" He rushed to the hatch of the engine room, "Candon, below there! Wind's coming. I'm getting sail

on her. That damned junk will lay for us sure and I'm not trusting the engine any." He rushed back to the wheel and stood while the mainsail and jib were got on her. Then came the sound of the winch and the anchor came home while the slatting canvas filled and Hank turned the spokes of the wheel, setting her on a course south by east.

Candon's head bobbed up from below.

"I can't get the durned thing to go," said he.

"Never mind," said Hank; "the wind's freshening."

As he spoke it breezed up strong, the mainsheet tautened and the boom lifted as the sails bellied hard against the stars and the *Wear Jack* leaned over to it, boosting the ebony water to snow. Candon took the wheel from Hank.

"It's bad luck we have to run right past them," said he as the next bay opened, showing the junk lit up as if for a festival and the fires on the beach.

"They'll have had time to collect their wits and man the junk and they'll know it's not the police."

"Oh, we've got the heels of them," said Hank.

"Hope so," said the other. "Look! they're getting sail on her."

In the dim light the vast lug sail of the junk could be seen rising, and even before it fully took the wind she was moving.

"They're rowing!" cried George. "Look! they've got the sweeps out!"

Candon looked. The fag end of a moon rising over the hills of California now clearly showed the junk putting out to sea ahead of them, the flash and movement of the sweeps, the great lubberly lateen sail being trimmed and the foam dashing from the bow.

"They've got us," said Hank. "Get your guns ready if it comes to boarding. Where's yours, B. C.? Down in the cabin? One sec." He dived below. Then he came up again. "Cabin door's bolted."

"Whach you say?" cried Candon.

"Cabin door's bolted—can't get in——"

"Maybe it's stuck," said Candon. "Don't bother with it. We've no time for fiddling. Lay hold of something to bat these chaps with if they try and board. Hell, but she's racing—that junk!"

She was. Urged by wind and oars, making ahead to hit the course of the *Wear Jack* at an acute angle, she seemed bound to do it.

"What's her game?" asked George.

"Foul us, get broadside on and board us," replied Candon.

"How'd it be to put her about and get her on a wind?" asked Hank.

"No use. Going about would give her lengths—those junks shoot up into the wind like all possessed and the sweeps help. Leave her to me."

The *Wear Jack* kept on. Racing now almost parallel—the junk ahead with sweeps drawn in—the two boats held only half a cable length apart. They could see the junk's deck swarming. The hatchet men, now that they had got their courage, were voicing it and yells like the strident sound of tearing calico came mixed with the wash of the waves and the beating of a gong. Closer they got, still closer, the *Wear Jack* gaining under a strengthening flaw of the wind. Then, with a shout and with a lightning movement Candon, to the horror of the others, put his helm hard over. The *Wear Jack* checked, shied just like a horse and with a thunder of slatting canvas and rattling blocks plunged at the junk, ramming her abaft the chunky mast. The fellow at the steering sweep shifted his helm to get clear, the junk forged to starboard and the bowsprit of the *Wear Jack*, like a clutching hand, snapped stay after stay, bringing the great sail down like a Venetian blind over the crowd on deck.

"We're free!" shouted Candon. "Bowsprit's half gone. No matter—get forward, Hank, and clear the raffle!"

Then as the *Wear Jack* forged ahead, the Kuro Shiwo drifting her faster than the junk, the wind took her sails.

"They aren't sinking, are they?" cried George.

"Sinking nothing," replied B. C., turning his head. "They'll get back ashore with their sweeps. If they were, it'd be a good job! What's the damage, Hank?"

"Bobstay gone," came Hank's voice. "Bowsprit seems all right. Lord, it's a miracle!"

Then he came aft, having set Charley and the chinks on repairs.

"B. C.," said Hank, "you're a marvel. What put it into your nut to do it?"

"It came to me," said the other. "They'd have done it to us in another tick—got fast

and downed us. Hit first—that's my motto."

"Well," said Hank, "you've done it."

Away back in the moonlight across the heave of the sea they could make out the dismasted wreck floundering like a drunken thing, listing to starboard with the weight of her broken wing, *gastada*, out of the running, done for.

CHAPTER XX.

DOWN BELOW.

George and Hank went forward to superintend the work of the chinks on the bowsprit; Candon, at the wheel and well content with the work of the night, felt thirsty. There was no one to fetch him a drink. Tea was what he fancied and thinking of tea made him think of the tea things which were in the cabin. Then he remembered what Hank had said about the cabin door being closed.

It occurred to him now that the girl had bolted the door. No doubt the poor creature was half crazy with fright. It had not occurred before to the ingenuous and benevolent B. C. that the girl must look on her new captors as more terrible than even the white slavers. The yelling and the shooting, the stampeding of the camp, the way she had been seized, caught up and carried off—why, what must she think of them! Up to this he had been too busy to think himself. It was only now, as Hank would have said, that the thing suddenly hit him on the head like an orange.

"Hank!" shouted B. C.

"Coming," replied Hank. He came aft.

"I'm thinking of the girl down below. It's she that's most likely fastened the door. She's most likely scared out of her life the way we've took her off and not knowing who we are."

"Sure," said Hank.

"She nearly tore my head off as I was carrying her—I remember getting a cat out of a trap once, it acted just the same—scared——"

"Listen," said Hank who was standing close to the cabin skylight. The skylight was a bit open and fastened from inside; through the opening came sounds as of some one moving about.

"She's moving," said B. C. "She's got over her fright. Down with you, Hank, and get her story. Tell her I'll be down when George comes aft. Tell her she's as safe with us as she'd be with her gran'mother."

Hank descended. Candon heard him knock—then his voice.

"Halloo there."

Silence.

"Halloo there."

Then came a determined little voice.

"Clear off—I've got a pistol——"

Candon, listening, remembered the Luger pistol he had left on the cabin table. Then came Hank's voice:

"Don't be scared. Com'n' open the door. Don't be scared."

The voice: "I'm not a person to be scared—you ought to know that."

Down below the perplexed Hank, standing before the closed door, was at pause for a moment. Why ought he to have known that? Was she mad after all?

"Well, open the door anyhow," said he. "Don't you know we're your friends? Good Lord, don't you know what we've risked getting you away from that lot? Kim on—all the food and stuff's in the lockers and lazaret and we're clean perishing for something to eat."

"That's good," said the voice, "you'll have to perish till morning, then we'll talk. Now go away, please."

"Whach you say?"

"Scatter."

A long pause. Then Hank's voice, angry. "I tell you what—I wish to the Lord we'd left you there!" And the voice: "You'll be wishing it more when you're in the penitentiary!"

Then Candon could almost hear the perplexed Hank scratching his head. A long pause. Then Hank:

"But for the Lord's sake, you don't think we want to do you any harm?"

The voice: "Then what did you want to do?"

Hank: "Get you away from that lot."

The voice: "What for?"

Hank: "What *for*—why to save you from them—to save you body and soul—didn't you *know* they were taking you to perdition—clean perdition?"

Then the voice, after a moment's pause: "I don't know whether you're toughs or religious cranks. It doesn't matter. Anyhow this door doesn't open s'long as it's dark. Now clear! Come again in the morning and, if you take my advice, steer straight for Santa Barbara. If you put me ashore safe

by morning maybe I'll try and help you with the police, but I don't promise. Now clear!"

Hank cleared. On deck he found George who had come aft.

"She's gone bughouse," said Hank, "or else she was one of them, helping in the contraband."

He recounted the dialogue. "She's got that Luger pistol and seems to me, boys, she's got the game. It's worse than Pittsburgh. Called me a religious crank. Anyhow she's got us, got the grub under her thumb unless we make out with the rice and truck the chinks feed on."

"I can't make it out," said George. "I'd have sworn by the look we got at her through the glass that she was a prisoner with those scamps. D'y' remember the way she carried on, went and threw herself down on the ground with her face hidden in her arm?"

"Seems to me," said Hank, "we've been reading into the situation more than was in it. She was no prisoner. She was one of them—daughter most likely of that woman I hauled off you. I wish we'd left her alone. And to think of the size of her sitting up and crowing like that!"

"Oh, it's nothing," said George. "It's the day of the flapper. She most likely was running that show. It's part of the new world—the millennium that was to come 'after the wah!' "

Candon alone said nothing. The thing had hit him even harder than Hank. The knight-errant in him was flattened out, at least for the moment. He remembered the cat he had released from the trap and how it had clawed him. But it had taken milk from his hand immediately after and become his friend. Whereas this creature——

Then it came to him out of his own mind —for Hank's words had produced little effect on him—that the truth was he had released her from no trap. She was part and parcel with those scoundrels, a vicious girl made vicious no doubt from bad association. This conviction suddenly coming to his mind produced an uplift.

"Boys," said B. C. suddenly. "We'll tame her. There's something moving in this more than we can see. Anyhow we've got her away from those ginks to start with."

"That's true," said Hank, his mind taking suddenly the color of Candon's. But George was of rougher stuff than these idealists. He went to the skylight and cautiously tried to peep, but could see nothing. Then he listened but could hear nothing. He came back to the others.

"She's lying down most likely. Can't see her or hear her. It's all very well talking of taming. What do you think this show is? I didn't start out to tame girls—don't know how to begin, either. I know. It's as much my fault as yours. We shouldn't have mixed up in the business—and I tell you we are in a tight place. Those ginks will swear anything against us and she'll back them. She talked of the police. That's just so. All these white slavers and dope sellers and contrabanders are hand in glove with the police. They couldn't do their business else; we should have left them alone."

"Now that's clean wrong," said Hank. "Doesn't matter a rap if the girl's a tough, we saved her anyhow. We did the right thing and she can't make it wrong by being wrong herself."

"That's a fact," said Candon.

"Maybe," replied George. "All the same she's done us out of our bunks. And what are you going to do with her anyway? Here you are tied up with a girl—you've taken her from her mother, if that old woman was her mother—ripped her clean out of her environment. She's on our hands. If she doesn't go back to that lot what are we to do with her?"

Hank got peppery. "Why in the nation didn't you think of that before we took her?" asked he.

"Why, you know well enough," answered the other. "We thought that lot had stolen her away from her people. Naturally I thought we'd put her back again with her people. Whereas, now look where we are! Suppose even we do tame her, as you call it, and she goes straight? Who's to feed her and keep her?"

"Why, Bud," said Hank, "we'll manage somehow. Look at you with all your dollars. What better use could you make of a few of them? And we'll help."

"Yes, we'll help," said Candon, forgetting the fact that he was due for either the penitentiary or hoofing it to Callao from the Bay of Whales. "We'll help and the three of us will make out somehow."

The millionaire said nothing for a moment. He was about to fly out at the cool way these benefactors of humanity were disposing of his credit and coin. Then he

calmed down and said nothing and went forward to get some of the "rice and truck the chinks feed on" for his companions, also a breaker of water.

The weather was warm, so warm that sleeping on deck was no penance. And Charley being called to the wheel the *Wear Jack* and her strange cargo snored on south —ever south—under the night of stars.

CHAPTER XXI.

TOMMIE.

Hank was asleep with Candon while George stood as officer of the watch. A great blaze of light fanning up beyond the coast hills showed the *Wear Jack* under all plain sail and the gulls following her, royal terns and loons and black-headed gulls, while, far above, a cormorant formed an escort in the blue, wheeling, dropping as though to pierce the deck and then passing off with a cry northward toward the vanished islands.

Away over there to the east fog held the lower hills and made a country of rolling snow to the sea edge, a country now white, now golden, as the great sun rose above it, now breaking here and there and now flying before the wind like the banners of a shattered army.

At eight o'clock, when they had breakfasted somehow out of materials supplied by Charley, Hank suddenly took the wheel of affairs. Not a sound had broken the ominous silence down below and up to now the barred-out men had not spoken a word on the matter.

"It's lucky for us we have a crew of chinks," said Hank suddenly and apropos of nothing. "The chinks don't know and if they did they wouldn't care. If we took our breakfast standing on our heads it would be all the same to them. Well, see here, you chaps, what we going to do? We have to get done with this business right now. I've got a stiff back sleeping in the scuppers and I don't propose to feed for the rest of my natural on this chow junk. Seeing I did the talking last night I propose going down to prospect and have a parley."

"Right!" said the other two with a sudden brightening as though a burden had been lifted from them.

"If she won't open," said Hank as he got on his long legs, "I'll bust that door in. You come along down if there's trouble."

They moved up close to the hatch and Hank went down. They heard his knock and almost immediately on the knock a clear voice say: "Yes?"

Then Hank: "It's come day now. Will you open the door? I want to have a word with you."

The voice: "Yes. I will open the door on one condition—that after I have drawn the bolts you will wait till I give the word before you come in."

"Right."

"If you don't, I'll shoot."

"Right."

They heard the bolts being drawn. Then, after a moment, giving her time to get to the other end of the cabin, they heard her cry, "Come in." Then her voice: "Well?"

Silence.

The voice: "Well—what on earth is the matter with you? Can't you speak?"

Hank: "I'm clean knocked out. Suffering Moses!"

The voice: "I don't want to know anything about Moses and his sufferings. I just want to know who you are, the name of this ship and what you mean. Don't come nearer!"

Hank: "I'm not—can't you see I'm hit. This has been a mistake."

The voice: "I should think so!"

Hank: "Now I see you in the light of day the whole thing has jumped together in my head. Lord, what a mistake!"

The voice: "Well?"

Hank: "I'll get on deck for a moment if you don't mind. I'm hit."

The voice: "So you have said. Well, get on deck and recover yourself and be quick about it. If it's a mistake you've got to mend it and get me back. Go on."

Hank came on deck, beckoned to the others and led them forward.

"Boys."

"Go *on!*"

"Boys, it's Tommie Coulthurst, the world's greatest movie queen!"

The awful silence that followed this crushing announcement lasted for full twenty seconds, a silence broken only by the slash of the bow wash and the cry of the gulls.

Then George said: "Oh, Lord!"

"You ain't mistaken?" asked Candon feebly. Hank did not even reply.

"But we've bust their ship," said George as if protesting against the enormity of the idea that had just put itself together in his

brain, "and I near did for that gink with the guitar."

"I know," said Hank, "and I downed that other chap and hauled that woman off you by the left leg! Well, there we are! What's wrong with this cruise anyhow?"

"I dunno," said George. "My head's turned inside out. Down with you, Hank, and get her up—get her up. We've gotta try and explain. Down with you."

Hank started aft on a run and vanished. A minute later a deck chair appeared at the hatch, followed by Hank. After Hank came a little hand holding a Luger pistol and then the head and body of Tommie Coulthurst.

She looked smaller even than by the firelight, small but so exquisitely proportioned that you did not bother about her size. She had no hat, her steadfast seaweed brown eyes were fixed on the men before her and the strange and extraordinary thing was that her face as she gazed at them brought them comfort of a kind.

For Tommie's face, though small enough, had nothing small in it. It was as good to look upon as truth and honesty and courage could make it—and beauty had lent a hand.

Hank put out the chair.

"Will you sit down?" he said.

Before sitting down she took a glance round at the deck and the chink at the wheel. Then, as though the pistol were bothering her, she threw it into the scuppers. She seemed to have read everything in the situation and found no danger.

"Well," said she, "what on earth is it all?"

"It's a mistake," said Hank.

"So you have told me. But seems to me we are getting farther from Santa Barbara. We are going down the coast, aren't we?"

"We are," said George, "and I'll put the ship about right away if you like—only I'd ask you to listen to us first and a few miles more or less don't matter."

"Go on," said Tommie.

George, who had recovered his wits sooner than the others, had seized on an idea. Maybe it was Tommie's face that inspired it.

"The whole of this business is a most awful mix-up," he began. "First I'd better tell you who we are. My name's Du Cane. George Harley du Cane. This is Mr. Hank Fisher, and this is Mr. Candon. I don't know if you have read in the papers of a yacht putting out from San Francisco to catch Vanderdecken, the man who has been raiding yachts?"

"Yes," said Tommie, "I know about it."

"Well, this is the yacht. We got along down to San Nicolas and going ashore we saw a Chinese camp. We spotted you through a glass and came to the conclusion you were in the hands of Chinese white slavers. We decided to rescue you."

"Good Lord!" said Tommie, sitting forward in her chair with wide pupils.

"And seems to me we did it," said George. "Can you imagine anything more horrible?"

Tommie's mouth was open, relaxed, yet in a way rigid. She seemed in the grip of petrified laughter.

"Not only that," went on George, "but we knocked the mast out of that junk. She chased us and we rammed her. What was she—part of your show?"

Tommie's mouth had suddenly closed itself, laughter had vanished and her eyes shone.

"Yes, part of our show."

"And those were real chinks—hatchet men?"

"Yep—we always work with real stuff."

"We ought to have recognized you," went on George. "We've seen you often enough in the pictures and the press. But the distance was too big. Besides, looking from a distance you gave us the impression—we saw you throw yourself down."

"I was showing Mr. Althusen a pose," said Tommie.

"Althusen?"

"The producer."

"Was that the man playing the guitar by the fire?"

"Yep." Her eyes still blazed strangely. Hank thought she was going to fly out at them.

"He smashed his guitar on me," said George. "It's awful."

"I think it's *splendid!*" said Tommie.

CHAPTER XXII.

A PROBLEM IN PSYCHOLOGY.

If the deck had opened delivering up Mr. Althusen and his broken guitar the three men could not have been more astonished.

"I think it's splendid," she said again. "You saw everything all wrong, but how could you know? I think it's just fine! Those hatchet men were a tough crowd

and they'd have killed you to a cert, only you scattered them like you did. You saw a girl being kidnaped as you thought and you just dashed in. Nobody but white Americans would have acted like that."

"Oh, any one would," murmured Hank.

"No they wouldn't—they'd have gone off for the police or said, 'Oh my, how shocking!' and gone off about their business. You struck! Well, I'm sorry for locking you out, but I'm like yourselves. I didn't know."

"Oh, that's nothing," said George.

Tommie's eyes were fixed on Candon.

"It was you collared me," said she to him.

The blue eyes of Candon met the liquid brown eyes of Tommie. He nodded:

Tommie considered him for a moment attentively as though he were an object of curiosity or a view—anything but a living male being. It was sometimes a most disconcerting thing about her, this detachment from all trammels of sex and convention—the detachment of a child. She seemed making up her mind whether she liked him or not and doing it quite openly; and her mind seemed still not quite made up when with a sigh she came to.

"Well," said she, "and now about getting back."

"That's the question now," said George hurriedly and with his lips suddenly gone dry so that he had to moisten them. "We've got to get you back."

"Yes, that's so," said Hank, unenthusiastically. "We've got to do it somehow or 'nother."

"Look here," said George, suddenly taking his courage in both hands. "I don't mind the row we're sure to get into. It's the guying that gets me. Think of the papers. When we started out on this fool business we got it pretty hot. And now this on top of everything!

"I know," said Tommie. She was sitting forward in her chair, clasping her knees, biting her lip in thought and staring at the deck planking. She saw the position of the unfortunates as clearly as they did. The fact that these men had done for her a fine and chivalrous action which was still absurd hit her in an extraordinary way. Her sturdy and honest little soul revolted at the thought of what the press would make of the business. She could hear the laughter only waiting to be touched off, she could read the scare headlines. She knew. For publicity was part of her life.

The stage was already prepared for the farce. By now every paper in America would be getting up the story of how Tommie Coulthurst had been abducted. It only waited for these men to be dragged on as the abductors amid a roar of laughter that would sound right round the world.

No, it must not be!

For a moment she looked back at the scene of the night before, finer than any scene in a cinema play; real, dramatic, heroic, yet seemingly based on absurdity. Was it absurdity? Not a bit—not until the finer promptings of humanity were absurd and courage and daring ridiculous. They had risked a lot, these men, and she had never in her life before seen men in action. Ridicule of them would hit every fiber of her being. No, it *must* not be.

"Say," said Tommie suddenly clasping her knees tighter and looking up, "we're in a tough tangle, aren't we?"

The others seemed to agree. "Sam Brown," went on Tommie, "he's one of the electric men at the Wallack Studios, caught a rat an' put it in a flowerpot with a slate on top and a weight on the slate and left it till next morning; he keeps dogs an' came to find it and it was gone. Said it must have got out and put the slate back. And Wallack told us to remember that rat if we were ever cornered by difficulties in our work, an' take as our motto, 'Never say die till you're dead.' Well, we're in a tight place but we aren't dead. Question is what's the first thing to do?"

"The first thing?" said Hank. "Why, it's to get you back safe."

"I'm safe enough," said Tommie. "It's not a question of safety s' much as smothering this thing. S'pose we put back now to Santa Barbara, where'd you be? No, the first thing is to get you time. I reckon that rat would have been 'et' if he hadn't had time to think his way out or if some one hadn't foozled along and loosed him. What's your plans? You said you were out after Vanderdecken. Where'd you expect to catch him?"

Hank looked at Candon and noticed that he had turned away.

"Well, it's not him we are after now so much as his boodle," said Hank. "We know where it's hid and we want to get it."

"Where's it hid?"

"Place called the Bay of Whales down below Cape San Lucas."

"How long will it take you to fetch there and back?"

"About a fortnight, maybe."

Tommie considered for a moment.

"Well," she said at last, "seems to me that the only thing to do is to go on till we meet some ship that'll take me back. When I get back I'll have to do a lot of lying, that's all. Ten to one they'll put this business down to Vanderdecken and maybe I'll say Vanderdecken took me and you collared me back from him—how'd that be?"

Candon turned. He struck his right fist into his open left palm. "There's more'n this than I can get the lie of," said B. C. as if to himself.

"What you say?" asked Tommie.

"Oh, he means it's a mix-up," said George. "But see here—we can't do it."

"Which?"

"We can't put more on you than we've done already. I know. I was mean enough to want you to go on with us when I started that talk about our being guyed. It's different now."

"Yep," said Hank.

"Sure," said Candon.

"Have you done?" asked Tommie. "Well then I'm going on. Where's the damage? I'm used to the rough and the open. That film we were working on is finished and I guess a few days' holiday won't do me any harm. B'sides, it works up the publicity. Why, every day I'm away is worth a thousand dollars to Wallack, leaving myself alone. They'll book that film in Timbuktu! Do you see? It's no trouble to me, why should you worry? Now I propose we get something to eat."

"But how about clothes?" asked George.

"Which, mine? Oh, I reckon I'll manage somehow. The thing that gets me is a toothbrush."

"Thank God," said George.

"Which?"

"I've got four new ones," said the millionaire.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE NEW CHUM.

The extraordinary thing about Miss Coulthurst was the absence and yet the presence of the feminine in her. Possessed of all the electrical properties of a woman and the chumable properties of a man, this dangerous individual presiding at the breakfast table of the *Wear Jack* and dispensing tea to her captors created an atmosphere in which even the fried eggs seemed part of romantic adventure.

The sordid had dropped out of everything, fear of consequences had vanished for the moment. The shifting sunlight on the Venesta panelings, the glitter of the Tyrebuck tea things, the warm sea-scented air blowing through the skylight, everything bright and pleasant seemed to the hypnotized ones part of Tommie.

There was no making conversation at that breakfast party. Shut up all night with no one to talk to she did the talking, explaining first of all and staging for their consideration the people they had attacked the night before. Althusen was the biggest producer in Los Angeles—that is to say the world, and Moscovitch, the camera man, was on all fours with him. Mrs. Raphael was Mary Raphael, the actress, and the play was "The Chink and the Girl." The hatchet men were real *kai-gingh* and Tommie was the girl they were making off with and the scene on San Nicolas was not the end of the play but somewhere in the middle, for cinema plays are produced in sections labeled and numbered, and sometimes the end sections are produced first.

Tommie had been born on a ranch. She was quite free with her private history. Her father was Ben Coulthurst. Maybe they'd heard of him? Well, anyway, he was well known in Texas till he went bust and died and left Tommie to the care of an aunt who lived in San Francisco where Tommie was half smothered—she couldn't stand cities—and maybe would have died if the cinema business hadn't come along and saved her. Fresh-air stunts, as they knew, were her vocation. And she guessed she was made of India rubber, seeing that up to this she had only broken one collar bone. Her last experience was dropping from an aëroplane onto the roof of a sixty-mile-an-hour express.

"I've seen you do that," said Hank. "Made me sweat in the palms of my hands."

Well, that was nothing. Plane and express moving at the same speed it was as simple as stepping off the sidewalk. Being thrown out of a window was a lot worse. She thanked her Maker she was born so small, but what got her goat was the nick-

names her diminutive size had evoked. Some smarty on the *Los Angeles Courant* had called her the "Pocket Artemis." What was an Artemis anyway?

"Search me," said Hank.

"It's a goddess," said George, "same thing as Diana."

Well, she had made him apologize anyhow.

Candon alone took little part in the conversation. This gentleman, so ready in an emergency, seemed all abroad before the creature he had captured and carried off. He sat absorbing her without neglecting his food; and later on when she was on deck he appeared with half an armful of books. She was a bookworm in private life and had hinted at the fact, out of which B. C. made profit.

"Here's some books," said he. "They aren't much, but they're all we've got. That chair comfortable?"

Then they fell into talk, Candon taking his seat beside her on the deck and close to the little heap of books. They had scarcely spoken to one another at the breakfast table. And now, all of a sudden, they were chattering together like magpies. Hank and George smoking in the cabin down below could hear their voices through the skylight.

"Wonder what she'd say if she knew," said Hank in a grumbling tone.

"Knew what?" asked George.

" 'Bout B. C. being Vanderdecken."

"Oh, she'd ten to one like him all the better," said George. "It's his watch and I wish he'd quit fooling and look after the ship."

"The ship's all right," said Hank.

"What you mean?"

"You couldnt hurt her or break her on a rock—not till she's done with us. You couldn't rip the masts out of her or put her ashore—not till she's finished with us. She's a mug trap and we're the mugs. I believe Jake put a spell on her. What's to be the end of it? I tell you it makes me crawl down the back when I think of that junk. What made that blue-eyed squatteroo of a B. C. ram her like that for?"

"Well, if he hadn't she'd have boarded us."

"Boarded us be hanged. If he'd blame well stuck ashore at San Francisco we wouldn't have landed at San Nicolas."

"Well, there's no use grousing," said George. "We're in the soup. Question is how to get out. We've got to collar that boodle first, so's to have something to show."

"Something to show! Lord! We'll be shows enough."

"Well, strikes me since we went into such a damn-fool business——"

Hank snorted. "Well, I didn't pull you in. You would butt in. It ain't none of my fault."

"Who said it was?"

"I'm not saying who said it was or who said it wasn't. Thing is, there's no use in grousing."

"I said that a moment ago."

"Oh, well, there you are. I'm going on deck."

Almost a quarrel and all because the Pocket Artemis was chatting to another man who had blue eyes—a blue-eyed squatteroo who was only yesterday good old B. C.

TO BE CONCLUDED.

THE LUCKY PHYSICIAN

DOCTOR HARRY G. LEWIS, of Washington, has changed his tailor. The builder of clothing delivered to the doctor last summer a suit which, according to Lewis, was satisfactory in no particular. Accordingly, he threw it back on the maker's hands and refused to pay for it. Barely a week later Lewis attended the funeral of a man who had been his patient, so much his patient, in fact, that during the long illness they had become fast friends. The dead man had also known the tailor, who went to the funeral.

As the mourners were leaving the church, the tailor edged up to the physician's elbow and, taking hold of it, drew him to one side, whispering:

"My congratulations, doctor! You never have any of your bad work thrown back on you."

Classics in Slang

Jazzed by H. C. Witwer

Author of "Phil Grimm's Progress," "Confidence," Etc.

Mr. McTague didn't know those ardent spirits had gone to his head, "where of course they's the most room," until later

VIII.—THE LAST OF THE MOHICANS

To the Sporting's Editor of the *Daily Shriek.*

GENTLEMEN: Well, editor, how's it by you? By me things is all topsy and even turvy again. Whilst it is true that I have managed to win another box fight since I last dropped you a line I have likewise went to work and got myself in wrong again with Ethel Kingsley, head and only saleslady in my bookstore and a weaker vessel which wouldst of caused the jovial Soloman to file 1000 suits for divorce the minute he seen her. It claims in "Who's Who," or some equally thick book, that the course of true love is fill of bumps and detours. Well, editor, if that's how you can tell it is true love or not, then Ethel Kingsley must be so crazy about me that the merely sight of another masculine gives her convulsions! Because, editor, since I crashed into love with this eye-soother I have had more ups and downs than a rubber ball ever seen.

The latest jam which I got into followin' hard on my sensational win over "Murderous" Milligan, heavyweight champion of one per cent of the Thousand Islands, was caused by three ingredients, editor. Reduced to fractions, they was, ie; toyin' with a couple drams of canny Scotch which I took for medical purposes on the account my bookstore gives me a pain in the neck, refusin' to give up prize fightin' and gummin' the sale of ye book shoppe to a guy which if he had a counterfeit penny wouldst have more money than brains.

Well, I will take up my remarkably victory over Murderous Milligan first, editor, as I have just saw what it says in your so-called newspaper with the regards to same. To the viz:

Salt Lake City, Dec. 10.—After being floored four times in the first round, "One Punch" McTague knocked out Murderous Milligan in the third round of a scheduled ten-round bout here to-night. The men are heavyweights.

Now right there, editor, is a thing which captures my animal! A merely couple of sarcastical lines about one of the greatest, most thrillin' and gory two-handed battles since David slapped Goliath for a row of Hindu pickle jars. No wonder that artificial newspaper which gives you your weekly tip has only got a circulation of a scant million copies the daily, when they give the memorial One Punch McTague-Murderous Milligan conflict a bare two lines and fill the rest of the paper up with murders, divorces, bank robberies, fires and advertisements, all things which nobody reads.

How the so ever, editor, as I feel satisfied that you are dyin' to know how I come to knock Murderous Milligan stiff, or even if you ain't dyin' to know it for that matter, I will give you the inside story. Shut the windows to keep out the bustles and noise of traffic, pay no attention to the telephone, pack your nifty, nobby jimmy pipe with the toppy red Soup-and-Fish tobacco and I will haul off and do my stuff.

If you have did me the common politeness of readin' any of my various letters, editor, you remember I was left a bookstore by my uncle, Angus McTague, when he become a permanent inmate of a nice, cool vault in Breathless Cemetery. I met Ethel Kingsley when I come to claim my legacy and sell it, as I have the same cryin' need for a bookstore that a Spanish mackerel has for a nice, new motor cycle. The panickin' Ethel was left in the charge of the store by my formerly uncle, whilst the embalmer was downstairs pacin' impatiently back and forth across the parlor, til pendin' the time when I should show up. Well, when I

showed up, editor, and got one look at this girl which wouldst of made a monkey out of Julius Cæsar, why I decided that to tell her I was the nephew and a box fighter to boot wouldst be very close to the height of ridiculous. So I says I am simply a friend of the nephew, my name is Archibald Gustavus Windsor-Blenheim and as a matter of fact I am in the glove business. The last remark was true, only with the double meanin', hey, editor?

Well, messrs editor, I get away with this with the greatest of ease for the while. And in the meantime Ethel hits on the darin' plan of plyin' me with culture by the means of my own books. Don't let this make you fall the victim to the idea that I am a dummy, editor, because I know plenty as far as that goes. But I been too busy all my life for the past few years tryin' to make a livin' to take the time to memorize Rudyard & Kipling, Shakespeare, Nicholas Nickleby and like that. So Ethel forces me to take home a book oft in the stilly night and make a attempt to read it and then write out on paper what it's all about. In that way, editor, I am grabbin' off a college education without havin' to bother with the mails. The latest book I spent the night with was called by the title of "The Last of the Mohicans." It is fill of bloodshed and violence and they is enough Indians in it to pose for all of this year's pennies. But I will tell you about that in due time, editor. Let us now get to my history-makin' battle with Murderous Milligan and be done with it.

After a suitable length of time has elapsed Ethel finds out I am a fighter on the account I got a annoyin' habit of comin' in to see her with my characteristic face out of true. As the girl is commencin' to get uneasy and suspicious, editor, why I am fin'ly obliged to tell her the nude truth. Instead of gettin' all steamed up, editor, why Ethel gets wildly enthusiastic and nothin' wouldst do but she has got to see me fight. That's where I made a technical and fatal mistake! I took her to see me box Barney Flynn which at that time was actin' heavyweight champion of the United States navy.

By a odd coincidence, editor, Flynn knocked me for a set of Armenian ash cans with a punch and Ethel scurried away from the clubhouse, through with the manly art of aggravated assault forever and a day. Then, editor, as the bookstore is doin' the same amount of business that a guy with a line of fur-lined overcoats wouldst do in Hades Ethel decides to quit her job. So's to keep her in the store I immediately broke down and confessed that I was really the missin' nephew and my name was not Archibald Gustavus Windsor-Blenheim, but simply One Punch McTague.

This was a terribly shock to Ethel, editor, which from Uncle Angus' descriptions of me when he must of been delirious had got the idea that his nephew was a combination of Rudolph Valentino, Vince Astor and Jack Dempsey, with a slight touch of Lord Byron. So you can imagine how it burned Ethel up, editor, when she finds out that the nephew is really a man of the caliber of the humbly writer. She says in a faint voice that she has got to think matters over before makin' up her pretty little mind as to whether or no she will stay on at the bookstore, and then she gives me the air. That brings us up to the points where this letter opens, editor, so from now on I expect you to be all ears like you look in that picture at the top of your sportin' column, not meanin' nothin' out of the way.

Well, I am walkin' down, or it may of been up, the street thinkin' as it says in one of my books what a silly little ass I was to tell Ethel my dread past, when who do I stumble over but a pilot of scrappers which I ain't seen for weeks and years. The newcomer's name in round numbers is Lucifer Higgins but he is commonly known as "Red" Higgins and not because he is bald-headed either. Red use to be a balm salesman in Gilead or somethin' like that before he crashed into the fight game and though we have knowed each other for about exactly ten years, editor, why we are still friends. Well, editor, after we have exchanged lies about how we are gettin' on in life and the et cetera, Red wants to know who is managin' me now if at all. I says they is nobody managin' me and I find that condition perfect. With a manager, editor, I can command $1,500 a fight and get $500 for myself, while without a manager I can only get $750 a fight; but then I don't have to split it with nobody but me.

"How wouldst you like to make yourself a couple of grand?" asks Red, after the customary pause.

In my language, editor, a "grand" is a thousand bucks.

"Why I wouldst just dearly love to do

that, teacher, said he, in a well-modulated voice," I answers. "Only I don't wish to get mixed up in no bootleggin'."

"This will be even easier than peddlin' hooch, if they *is* anything easier!" says Red. "I had a fight all set for 'No-Decision' McBloom and the big sap goes to work and hurts himself in trainin'—his ice wagon run over his foot. You got a whole two days to ready yourself in if you want to take his place and they's two thousand berries in it for you, win, lose, draw, or the cops! What d'ye say?"

"What chance have *I* got with Dempsey?" I says, sneerin'ly.

"Who said anything about *Dempsey?*" says Red. "The guy you are goin' to mingle with is a bigger boloney than *you* are. For one thing, he's been out of the ring for two years and he should be a pitiful set-up!"

"How is it this baby ain't had a fight in two years?" I asks with the pardonable curiosity, editor. "And what's his name?"

"His name is Murderous Milligan," says Red. "What are you wincin' for? He ain't fought for two years on the account of a little incident which happened in his last fight and kind of disgusted him with prize fightin'."

"Eh—what was the small incident?" I says.

"He killed the other guy," says Red. "Now——"

"Just a moment!" I butts in. "I am a scrapper, Red, and not no sacreyfice. You will have to get somebody else to serve as a prey for this assassin!"

"Be yourself!" snorts Red. "Milligan wouldn't kill another guy like that in a week! It was a accident, pure and simple."

"Well," I says, "I am pure and simple too, as far as that part of it goes, but I can't see my way clear to be a accident! I——"

"Look here, McTague," says Red, "Milligan is so scared on the account he cooks this other guy that he's afraid to swing at a bag, even! He'll be a push over for a young, aggressive hitter like you. If you don't put him on the floor in a couple of clouts I'll be the most dumfounded guy in Salt Lake City!"

"What has Salt Lake City got to do with it?" I says with my piece of mind slowly comin' back as the net results of Red's confidence in me.

"'At's where the brawl is goin' to be staged," says Red. "Salt Lake City where if they catch you smokin' a cigarette why it's the same as if you throwed a brick at the president! Well, come on down to the gym and I'll make arrangements for you to work out til we leave here. You'll be back in New York inside of ten days with two grand in your kick and not even a hair on your head disturbed to show you been in a fight!"

Editor, he called the turn. When I got back to New York they wasn't no hairs disturbed to show I was in a fight; but when it come to my nose, ears, eyes and mouth, why it was altogether different!

I'll never forget the night when I climbed through the ropes at Salt Lake City, walked across the ring and shake hands with Murderous Milligan. I couldn't of got a cheer if I had waved a American flag and carried a picture of Harding on my back, because Milligan was a big local favorite and the fair-minded customers wanted to see me flat on the canvas before they wouldst deign to pay me any attention at all. How the so ever, editor, I am not the type of guy which has got to have applause to egg him on, so payin' no heed to the hisses and razzin' I walked out at the first bell and took a right hook to the chin, which if it hadn't of been for the lights I wouldst of thought it drove me right through the mat clear down to the basement!

I got up at "nine," editor, and Red hollers for me to make Milligan lead to me. I am nothin' loath and I let Milligan lead to me, with the odd results that he drops me once again with a cloudburst of rights and lefts to the body. The house was in a uproar and so am I. I crawled to my feet in time to beat the count and the rest is all a blur, editor! I remember goin' down and gettin' up and gettin' up and goin' down and then comes the welcome bell and I tried to sit on the top rope, thinkin' it was my corner. I have never been so helpless except on the day I was born. And the frantic Red tells me I have been down four times but I didn't believe him. I hit that mat backwards, forwards and sideways, editor, at least twenty times in that openin' frame and don't think I didn't!

Well, editor, Red worked over me like a hysterical beaver durin' the rest and I come out for the second round under instructions to clinch at every chance and tire Milligan

out by makin' him miss. I done this with great success in the spite of the fact that the things the irritated patrons called me in a useless endeavor to make me stand up and slug with the sloe-eyed Murderous Milligan wouldst of made a chorus man slap Dempsey in the face! At the bell Milligan managed to reach me with a long, overhand left, but he was so weak it only sent me to my knees.

Then comes the third and last round, editor. As I started to go out, Red slaps my glitterin' back and whispers hoarsely:

"This big stiff has blowed up from tryin' to knock you dead in the first round. He's all through now. Go out there and do your stuff and this frame winds it!"

The minute the old cowbell rings out, editor, I walked right over to the dumfounded Milligan and stuck a stiff left into his pan. The crowd yells murder when I folleyed that up with a poisonous right smash to the heart and Milligan crashes against the ropes, his knees shakin' like Palsy himself. That was all I wanted to see, editor, and I went to work like a carpenter on Murderous Milligan, which was now so tame he wouldst of run from a rabbit. First I left hand him all over the ring, then I right hooked him goofy. I'll say this for Milligan, editor; after his head cleared from my first rally he fought back like a scholar and a gent. He was no bonbon eater but a sweet puncher and a rough and tough boy! As it was, the two or three wild clouts he managed to sock home didn't do me a bit of good, but I had too much stuff for him.

The end come when I caught him flush on the button with a right cross and he sunk to the mat a total loss and the picture of ruin. He tried to get up at "eight" but the referee had saw enough for one night and steppin' in between us he raises up my hand. A few hours later me and Red is bound for Gotham and I am two thousand gulden to the good. I found out later that Red had collected $4.500 for our end, but as they remark in Gehenna, that's another story.

Well, editor, the minute I get back to New York I get ready to rush up to my bookstore so's to find out what Ethel's decision is with the regards to me and likewise to show her the jack I got. Red has already matched me by wire with "Shifty" von Gazzati at Philadelphia, whatever *that* is, and he hurries to the telegraph office to post a appearance forfeit.

On the ways up, editor, I happen to notice in a slot-machine mirror that my ordinarily not unbecomin' face is all at sixes and sevens from Murderous Milligan's praiseworthy efforts in that horribly first round. So I stop into a drug store where the gang has been hangin' out since instead of prohibition they closed the saloons, and whilst I am gettin' my pan rearranged Doc Niter, the liberal-minded prescription clerk, says I am nervous and shaky and I better have a shot. As the rule, editor, I don't touch a thing, because a man in my line of work cannot fight booze and box fight too; and then again I never could relish this drug-store gin. But in this case Doc Niter happens to have some dour Scotch, to the viz: "Hooch, mon!" editor. So, purely in the interests of let us say science, I got outside of a couple of drops of the stuff which made the Haig brothers and manys the other guy known all over the world. Not bein' used to ardent spirits, editor, why it immediately goes to my head where of course they's the most room. How the so ever, I didn't know it had went to my head til later.

The next stop is at my bookstore, editor, and what is my surprise to find a guy up on a ladder in front of the works of Charley Dickens and Ethel is down at the bottom of that ladder with a handful of papers. The dumbell on the ladder is callin' off the names of the books and Ethel is checkin' 'em up. Both of 'em is busier than a tight-rope walker with St. Vitus dance and they don't see me til I'm on top of 'em. Ethel gives a little gasp, turns on a blush which has been goalin' the menfolk since she's been fourteen years old and then she gives me a cold stare.

"Why here's the proprietor now, Mister Clay!" she says.

"All right, Cutey, I'm coming down!" calls this dizzy boob.

"Comin' down is right!" I says, kickin' the ladder from under him with a well-shod foot. "Where d'ye get that *Cutey* stuff, you big boloney?"

He is a bit daze, editor, layin' there on the floor and he seems to be at the loss for a answer. But with Ethel, it's different! She turns on me with the flashin' eyes.

"How dare you!" she says. "This gentleman was going to buy the store—we were taking inventory—and now——"

"*You* don't go with the store, Ethel!" I

took the liberty of interruptin' whilst the guy on the floor gets slowly to his feet. "They ain't *no* man goin' to call you Cutey whilst I'm around, and that's that!"

"Are you my guardian?" asks Ethel, her voice a chill breeze.

"Ethel," I says, "you may not believe it but I am your comin' husband, provided we both act sensible! As for Mister Mud here, he——"

"My name is *Clay,* you fool!" bellers the would-be buyer. "And let me——"

"Your name might of been Clay when you come in here, but your name is *Mud* now!" I says sternly. "Take the air before I slap you silly!"

"Why I'm buying your store, you lunatic!" howls Mr. Clay-Mud. "This young lady and I had agreed on everything but the price. We were waiting for you to get back to settle that. I—eh—pardon me, I did not know that you and she were engaged. How much do you want for your store?"

"The price of this store is exactly ninety-three thousand bucks and the bottlin' privileges to the Hudson River," I says. "Laugh *that* off!"

Editor, I have come back to talk with Ethel and see how I stand with her and I can't be bothered sellin' no store. To-morrow is *another* day, the way *I* look at it.

"You're crazy!" bawls Mr. Mud-Clay, and grabbin' his hat off the cash register he tripped away into the great outdoors.

"He is right—you *are* crazy!" says Ethel, pinnin' on her hat with a three-alarm fire in each eye. "What do you mean by letting that man think we're engaged? We're *not* engaged and we never *will* be engaged! That gentleman would have bought your store and you would have made a nice profit and now you've chased him away. You've been drinking, haven't you?"

"I only——" I begins.

"Don't interrupt me!" snaps Ethel. "You've been fighting again, too, haven't you?"

"I merely——" I says.

"You listen to me!" says Ethel. "I'm going to leave this store now and I'm never coming back! It isn't making enough money to pay my salary and you have ruined what little business we have been doing. I have an offer to take a position as secretary to a big business man who was in here the other day and I'm going to take it. When you are ready to sell your store let me know and I will help your buyer with the inventory, that is all! I thought you were going to give up prize fighting."

"I simply——" I starts.

'That's enough!" says Ethel. "I'll never forgive you for that disgraceful scene in front of Mister Clay. I hope I never see you again!"

Bam!

With that, editor, she flounces out, that's if ladies can flounce any more, the way they are dressin' these days!

So I suppose all is over between us again, editor, and my tender heart is all broke up in little bits of pieces. Alas and alackaday, who can understand women, as Mark Anthony says. Well, anyways, editor, Ethel's telephone is sure goin' to be a busy instrument for the next few days and that "big business man" which Ethel is goin' to work for as secretary had better be Dempsey, otherwise he is in for a rough trip!

Here is "The Last of the Mohicans," which I am goin' to turn in to Ethel by mail and see if *this* will get me anything.

THE LAST OF THE MOHICANS.

By

Jimmie Cooper and One Punch McTague.

Well, it seems that jolly old England and that dear France is enjoyin' the pleasures of a war right over here in America at the points where this fascinatin' novel of the nobly Indian's playful traits and the et cetera, opens. The English Gen. Webb is hangin' out at Fort Edward with 5,000 men when he gets a phone call to the effects that Gen. Montcalm, the Frog leader, is comin' up Champagne Lake with one buck private for every descendant of a house fly. Monty's idea is to make a captive of Fort John Henry which is in charge of that dear old Scotchman Munro, who's got fewer soldiers than a shark has feet. So Gen. Webb sends 1500 doughboys over to Fort John Henry, as watchin' 'em do nothin' but drill day in and day out is gettin' on his nerves.

Captain Duncan Hayward, a bright, young, handsome, blue-eyed devil-may-care, is gave the wonderful job of takin' Gen. Munro's two swell-lookin' daughters, Cora and Alice, to Fort John Henry on the account the girls is crazy about adventure and this looked like a good chance to get some. Well, before Mons. Fenimore Cooper got done with 'em Cora and Alice had more ad-

ventures than Gulliver ever dreamed of, and they was all fed up on Indians and that's a fact!

For a guide the smashin', dashin' Cap Hayward had selected a notorious Indian runner rejoicin' in the name of Maggie and this baby is a double crosser from the words go! Maggie is on the French pay roll and he has made up his mind he will lead the tourists into a trap. Halfways to Fort John Henry why the party picks up with a dumbell called Dave Gamut which is wanderin' hithers and yon around the forest playin' a flute. This cuckoo insists on joinin' the party with the results that the redskins hears the said flute and makes ready to close in on the boys and girls at their earliest convenience.

After a few months' travel through the woods the party stumbles over a good Indian named Uncas, which calls himself The Last of the Mohicans, deliberately stealin' the title from the name of the book. With Uncas is a scout by the names of Hawk-Eye; and, accordin' to Mr. Cooper, when this guy was right he could take hold of a rifle and shoot a gnat in the middle of the eye at 800 yards. As soon as them babies seen Hayward's guide Maggie they knew at a glance that he was leadin' his customers into a ambush and Maggie knew they knew it, too, so he took it on the run.

A short time later they is a series of bloodcurdlin' yells such as the old Indian huntin' cry "Yoicks!" and a band of pesky redskins descends on the party and captures 'em, but not before Hawk-Eye had beat it to Fort John Henry to get help.

The minute the Indians, in charge of Maggie the renegade guide, has captured the party, Maggie says he is willin' to ship Alice back to her father, but Cora has got to become his bride.

"A-ha!" says Cora. "None but the foul fiend could take such a revengeance! I will not wed you, so go ahead and do your stuff!"

"Be yourself!" snorts Maggie, hurlin' his tomahawk at her in a fit of playfulness. It missed and this was more than the brave Cap Hayward could tolerate, so he bust his bonds and knocked Maggie for a row of Peruvian succotash dishes. Another Indian steps forward to knife Cap Hayward, but just then Hawk-Eye returns with reinforcements and in a trice, whatever that is, the Indians is wiped out. The only one which got away was the only one they really wanted to cook, to the ie, Maggie.

Well, a rescue like that was nothin' at all in the lives of the soldiers—in the books—of them days. So the army marches on after shakin' hands all around. No sooner has the army marched out of sight when Maggie returns with a fresh and more savager band of Indians, grabs Alice and Cora up on his horse, or maybe it was two horses, and beats it for his wigwam.

At this point Cap Hayward is commencin' to get sick and tired of this Indian Maggie, so with Hawk-Eye and Uncas, the last of the Mohicans, he sets out to rescue the girls and make out of Maggie a scenario which woudlst interest any undertaker. After a brief nine months of searchin' the forests they come across Maggie and his band just about to burn the girls at the stake. Uncas lets forth a yell and leaps from a cliff on top of Maggie and then starts a free-for-all which lasts for ten pages in the book and which wouldst of made the Battle of the Marne seem like a debate in the Y. M. C. A. It wound up with Uncas, Maggie and Cora bein' killed, but then the rest of 'em paired off and lived happy ever after. So things could of been worse and prob'ly wouldst of been if Mr. Cooper had had the time to write a few more pages.

I forgot to add that when Uncas kissed off why that was the last of the Mohicans and they ain't no use lookin' for none any more.

Your lovin' friend,

One Punch McTague.

P. S.—Please answer this letter, as I love to get mail.

This series began in issue of November 20, 1921. Look for "Gulliver's Travels" in the next number.

From a Line of Kings

By Austin Hall

All in good time the famous matador, Joselito, purposed to crown his career with the blood of Cid—bull of Mexico's great Mendoza strain. When the day came—well, when you've read of it, you'll understand why you can't talk to a peon of a Mendoza without thinking you are talking of a king

WHEN Don Pedro Gonzales de Mendoza, peer of Spain and descendant of a grand admiral of the same name, a man well known in history, took it into his head to migrate to the magic lands across the seas he chose to do it as a gentleman. Being a peer of Spain was in those days, even as in these, a privilege of no common distinction; wherefore it was always an event when a man of such rank chose to make his home in the land of the New Castile; and it was more than an event when such a man went forth with the sincere intent of embracing a wilderness and building up an empire instead of tearing one down.

If you are any student of history you will agree that Don Pedro was unusual. Furthermore, if you will travel to Mexico, to the State of Chihuahua, central part, you will learn from any inhabitant thereof that it was Don Pedro who first introduced the great Mendoza cattle strain—not a beef strain but a strain that has produced the most famous fighting bulls that the world has known. It will be easy to get a peon to talk, because when you speak of a bull his eyes are pretty sure to dilate and when you talk of a Mendoza he will get excited.

Don Pedro Gonzales de Mendoza, descendant of an admiral and a peer of Spain, may have built up an estate in New Castile as large as an empire in the mother land; but to-day his greatest claim to fame lies in his having imported and founded this greatest strain of fighting bulls in Mexico. And being what he was Don Pedro has no quarrel with his fame. He was a sport in his day; and there is no reason to believe that his shade is a bit less sporty. All honor to the old peer and his great Mendozas!

This is a tale of a Mendoza.

A Mendoza! If you are talking to a peon and watch his eyes you will think that you are speaking of a king. And if you let him talk you will feel that he is reciting not the deeds of bulls but the heroism of a long line of Romans. A Mendoza is royal—always was and always will be—in Mexico. Consider the three hundred years of fighting blood and the elimination. If it takes one thousand years to build up a race of men how long does it take to build up a royal line of Mendozas? They must have gone back to the days of the Mohammedans and the Abdalrahman caliphs.

To-day, if a matador has made his fame and wishes to confirm it they pit him against a Mendoza. It is something like the honor of fighting a king; only there is this difference—a king always has the cards stacked in his favor, while the poor Mendoza, monarch though he may be, has the odds piled against him. Nevertheless, the matador who steps out of the bull ring after such an encounter always has something to look back to. He has been in a fight. To kill a Mendoza is the climax of all things Mexican!

Cid was a Mendoza. We are starting this tale at the beginning so that you will know all about the great champion El Toro Cid de Mendoza and how he came by his name—an appropriate one, inasmuch as Cid stands at the head of odds-taking fighters; and you will know how from the day of his birth he was foredoomed to stand in the welter of his own blood and wag his defiant head to the gloating chant of a murderous multitude.

He was sired by a famous father and at the very moment when he was born that father was standing in the Plaza de Toros facing the end that must come to each of the fighting bulls. And by the time the young Cid had found his feet and was winding his tail corkscrew fashion while he bunted the milk from his mother's teat the father had sent two picadors and one ban-

derillero to the land where they give a beast an even chance; and when he had come to his first full belly and had crowded to sleep by his mother's side, the great bull who was his sire was sinking to his glorious end with the matador mortally wounded and the murderous roar of the multitude ringing in his ears.

The battle that day in the Plaza de Toros was the greatest, with one exception, that was to be seen for many a year. That one exception has to do with this story. The great bull had gone down; but another had come to take his place. It helps this story that the two events were coincident. Men say, "The king is dead! Long live the king!" The calf Cid was the king of the Mendozas!

Being but a calf, however, he was conscious only of the glorious bliss of the afternoon sun and the annoying solicitude of his mooing mother; he knew naught of his destiny and he cared for naught except the reflexive comfort of lying down and enjoying his first quota of mother's milk. He was large-jointed and weak-kneed and of a reddish tinge like his father; and like all his strain he had the white splash at the top of his forehead. When he was an hour old he was able to toddle in wabbling style by the side of his mother and when he was a day old he began to wonder at the glory of things and start a calflike investigation of the world about him. What started that investigation he could not know any more than he could know the reason of the fear that made him cling to his mother. The world was a wonderful place, full of strange things, bushes that brushed his sides, cacti that pricked his nose, sweet-smelling grasses and curious stones that had no reason whatever.

It was great to nose about and investigate the bewildering mysteries of the world, to seek for something he knew not what and to hunt out the intangible mystery that he was afraid of. For he was afraid; and, though he knew it not, the fear that was in his heart was his greatest inheritance. His mother was afraid also and would often stand through long hours watching the lights and movements of the world about her. There was something terrible and intangible about this world that was otherwise so glorious and beautiful. What it was the little bull calf, crowding under his mother's neck, could not know; but he could feel it; and as often as he did he would stand still and wait while his mother lapped his coat and mooed the croon of her bovine lullaby.

Not only was Cid a calf in the ordinary sense of the word, but the masterpiece, as well, of hate and human deviltry. Back of him were a thousand ancestors, each one selected for his physical perfection, irascibility and peppery pugnacity; and each one mated to a cow of like selection—a process of elimination conceived in evil and successful to the degree of malediction. Man has a propensity for cursing; and when he wishes to be evil he can give lessons to the devil. With hate as a motive he can make a sport out of most any kind of savagery; and with hate and bovine perfection he had built up the strain of fighting Mendozas. Cid had that hate; but being a calf he knew it only as fear, a fear that was indefinite, reflexive and coupled with the general make-up of things.

At first he sensed it indefinitely. A thousand ancestors, who had died in the frenzy of madness, prompted the fear that was the embryo of his hate. He was afraid even of his own shadow. And as he grew older he began to feel, out of intuition, that this terrible evil that ruled the world had a personification. It was that for which his mother was always watching!

And one day it came.

He was just six weeks old at the time and as glossy and rugged a little fellow as ever romped in the evening twilight. It was one morning just at dawn when the blazing sun was peeking over the eastern ridges and he and his mother had gone forth for their breakfast of tender grasses. Of a sudden his mother had stopped and mooed her warning, standing still and keeping her eyes on a swale where the ground was hidden. Something was moving and it required no more than his instinct to tell him that here was the evil personification that he was afraid of. Here was terrible fear and perhaps tragedy. The calf crowded to its mother and watched the terrible creatures that were coming out of the swale. There were three of them. Once again his mother mooed and, true to her strain, made ready for fight. A cow is not usually vicious; but when she is she is a dozen times more dangerous than a bull. And a Mexican knows it. The men rode out carefully, separated and then began circling.

They were little men with tall hats and immense saddles; the horses that they rode

—swift indigenous mustangs—capered in the morning sunlight. Cid had never seen a man before but his inherent hate, born of a thousand fathers, told him what they were. He crowded close to his mother and waited in terrible fear for he knew not what. After a bit one of the men rode in and gave the mother a chance to charge; but it was only a piece of strategy to distract her attention from another horseman. The moment that she had set her head the other loosened a graceful spiral that fell, snakelike, over her needle-point horns. The cow was jerked off her feet. When she regained them she was being held taut between the two horsemen.

"Ha!" cackled the man. "Buenas dias, Señorita Mendoza. Do not become angry. We are come to show you to the great matador Joselito. He has come for to christen your baby. Soo, now, señora."

The calf quaked with fear. Here was the unknown, the terrible thing that he was afraid of—the personification of the evil and the substance of it. His mother was maddened; she fought and pulled at the ropes. It was a frantic moment. Cid clung to her side.

One of the horsemen dismounted and stole up behind the calf and when he was close enough caught the little fellow by the tail and an ear, gave a twist and a jerk and threw him with a heavy thud upon the ground, at the same time landing his knee on the little fellow's neck. Cid lay with his mouth open and his eyes bulging out. Never was he to forget that moment. He was terrified now. But it was a terror that was to grow into a hate that could have but one ending and, in his case could be settled in but one place. The man twisted his neck and ground his nose in the sand, rubbing it and twisting it in an ecstasy of cruelty.

At the same moment other riders came out of the swale, riders of a different order, decked for a gala occasion, great men among the species of mankind and with a grace that befitted their station. At their head rode a maiden, black-eyed, laughing—Spanish. When she laughed the twitter of her voice was like that of the songbird. By her side rode a man of the same cast of countenance, of the same pride and evidence of birth—Mendozas, both of them—the last of an old line that had never through three hundred years lost its mark of royalty. They were Mercedes and Juan, direct descendants of the grand admiral and peer of Spain, Don Pedro Gonzales de Mendoza. The first don in all of his pride was not prouder than they; nor was the first donna in all her beauty a bit better to look at than Mercedes Mendoza. She rode up close to the struggling calf and spoke to his tormentor.

"So, Joselito, killer of bulls and hero of a thousand battles," she said, "you have found your Mendoza, the son of the great bull who killed men in the Plaza de Toros. Bear in mind how you treat him; for when you meet him again he shall be grown and a fighter. You have come to christen him. What name shall it be?"

Whereupon Joselito took off his hat and spoke in the manner of one who is accustomed. The hat he placed on the little bull's head.

"See, Señorita Mendoza," he said. "It is as you say. To-day he is a baby and I hold him under my hat; but on that last and glorious day when I shall crown my career with the blood of a fighting Mendoza he shall be El Toro Cid de Mendoza. I christen him Cid after the greatest fighter that Spain has known. The greater his name that day, the greater my honor. El Toro Cid de Mendoza! It is a name that is worthy."

And so Cid came by his name. The famed Joselito, beloved from the Chile to the gringo border, had come up to the hacienda to take his pick of the fighting strain. It was an honor to fight one of them; but if Joselito, the greatest of the killers, could come and select a calf with a direct ancestry like Cid's the glory of that last fight would surtop anything in the way of bull fighting. A matador likes to choose his own bulls; but this was the first time that one of them had selected a calf. Which shows how great was Joselito and how worthy he was of killing a Mendoza.

Five years of waiting! Joselito was an actor—and there are some who say that he had a taint of the gypsy. But at least he understood the impatience of human nature. Five years he would spend in Spain; and while he was adding to his laurels in the plazas of old Madrid the calf Cid could be growing into a bull worthy of that last and glorious battle. Given five years of talk the merit of the encounter would grow into fabulous anticipation. And then if he should win—— Who would be greater than Joselito!

But Cid never forgot. The evil that had come down to him out of his ancestry had been crystallized by the cruelty of the matador. Calf though he was he had the embryo of pride that was to grow into hate; and he felt the humiliation. The matador had twisted his neck and ground his nose into the sand—and the matador was a man! Cid hated a man. From that moment his was a twofold character in a bovine sense—one the natural bull and the other a product of pride and beast intelligence. And the two together made him the great el toro. Before he had reached the yearling state the riders with the tall hats knew him for what he was and spoke ominously of the fate that was in store for the matador.

Five years! Joselito might have given him two and found him an opponent of worthy mettle. But he had given him five. Before he was two Cid had become the greatest of the bulls and the boss of the range. Had the matador seen him he might have anticipated by three years the butchery that he was in mind of. Cid was like his father, sleek of skin, splendid, virile and a fighter. In all the country there was no bull that could compare or hold him equal. From the days of his calfhood when he had romped in the sunset and locked his tiny horns with the other calves he had been the stronger. They were all Mendozas—the herd numbered many thousands—but he was of the royal line of all.

Born of hate, bred of hate and with three centuries of hate behind him, Cid could not understand. He had been afraid as a calf, but now that he was a bull his viciousness was in inverse ratio to his terror. Never was he to forget that day and the humiliation. The world was ruled by evil—and that evil was man. As he became older and as he realized that the men had use for his cows he grew more truculent. Many times had he seen the little men with the tall hats ride into the herd and cut out the stock—always laughing and always getting away when he came down at them. The time came when the sight of a man made him see red and maddened him with the lust of killing. He had fought bulls, but to kill a man was about the greatest glory that he could conceive of.

They would not fight him, though; and as they would not fight he became convinced that they were creatures of fear—and that they were like the evil that they personified. They did not have the beauty and glory of strength that was his to perfection. His was the glorious life full of vigor and pride—the life of a monarch. When the sun was setting he had a favorite sport of standing in a spread of sand and pawing the dust into the air and over his back. It was his way of challenging the world! And he could not understand why the world did not answer. He was a killer. And because he was a killer he thought that all that lived, with the exception of his cows, should step up and be killed. That was good reasoning. But most of all would he like to kill a man.

And then one day the men came right in the midst of his challenge. It was at sunset, the time of day when he was at his proudest. The spot that he had chosen was at the foot of a bluff. Never had he felt better and never was his bellow stronger—it was defiance, defiance of earth and heaven. The shower of dust that he pawed into the air fell in a spray upon his back—and it was good because it was proof of the defiance. He had just started a second challenge when he heard voices above him. He looked up and beheld two men and a young lady standing at the crest of the bluff.

The girl was speaking.

"Isn't he wonderful?"

The girl was Mercedes de Mendoza, the other was Juan, her brother, and the third was a tall, white-skinned fellow such as Cid had never seen. He had come to accept all men as of a certain size and color, but this one was different.

The tall one answered the girl.

"He is that, Mercedes. I would like to own him. Let me buy him, Juan. Come now. What price do you set?"

Then the third one said, "I set no price on this one, Mr. Williams, because he is not for sale."

"I'll give ten thouasnd."

"It's not a question of price, señor, but one of honor. This is a fighting bull. You have heard of them. We rear the greatest fighting bulls in Mexico. This is El Toro Cid de Mendoza—one of the greatest that we have produced. He is pledged to Joselito, the matador. When the matador returns from his victories in Spain he will crown his career by fighting a Mendoza. In six months it will be; and in six months we shall ship the great fellow south to the plaza. It will be a greater day than one of your

championship prize fightings—only not so brutal."

"Not so brutal!"

"No. We Mexicans have brought bull fighting down to a science; reduced it, you might say, to an art. It is because we are humane and value human life. It is a wonderful spectacle, but we protect the fighters. The bull has no chance."

"Yes, I know," said the other. "That's the hell of it! I'll make it fifteen thousand."

"No price, señor."

The tall one turned to the girl.

"Mercedes. I want the bull. You own half of him. Can I have him?"

"Señor, dear," she replied, "it may not be. He has been pledged. And when a Mendoza gives a pledge it may not be broken."

For a moment there was silence, then the tall one spoke.

"Fair enough. A Mendoza's word may not be broken. But for all that a Williams always gets what he goes after. And I'm going to have that bull."

After that they went away, but not until they had watched the bull paying them the homage of his defiance. He pawed the dirt and rumbled his challenge, daring them to come down. But they were only men and proved it by running away. Cid was a monarch. Like a monarch he stood alone in the tropic sunset and ruminated over the reason of things.

He had still six months to rule. Six months!

And then one day came the little men wearing the tall hats, herding the stock before them. And this time they caught Cid with the rest of the cattle. The little men were clever and saw to it that the great bull was in the center where he could do no harm. Cid would have liked to fight but as he was with his cows he gave no trouble. It was not until he had come to a strange place full of queer structures that he was given individual attention. When the herd was split the riders sought him and cut him out. Cid made ready for fight. But as usual the men rode about making strange noises and whirling mysterious things.

He had never been able to work out the cowardice of these creatures of evil; but he was not afraid because he knew that he was braver and stronger than they. He lowered his head. The men rode carefully while Cid waited; and their care filled him with a rush of anger. Always he hated and always he had the lust of killing. When they were close enough he started a blind rush at his nearest enemy. And then the thing happened to him that had happened to his mother—a spiral shot out and dropped over his horns, jerking him but not stopping him—then another and another, until for the first time in his life he was held in a tether of restraint. Then again there was laughing.

Cid hated that laugh; hated it because he felt the taunt of his enemy. He fought and plunged to get at them but they were clever and filled with a cunning that took advantage of his every move. Before Cid knew it he was in a narrow way that separated him from the rest of the cattle—in a corral or chute built of strong fence open at one end. Toward this end he was driven into a place such as he had never seen, a place that he would have known as a freight car, had he been a man. The Hacienda de Mendoza was modern in its appointment and had long since passed the primitive mode of transportation. Cid was on the last lap of his life; henceforth he would be a fighter—a fighter in the Plaza de Toros!

He could not understand. All that day and the next he was shunted and buffeted about in a place that moved and at the same time stood still. He had had no chance to foresee and no time to defend himself against the quick transition. He had thought of fight; but these men had the cunning of evil; so they had humored him with his cows and then in a moment had herded him into this place that had not even sunlight. Surely the men were evil. The fact that he went two days without eating did not add to his good nature.

Little did he know that henceforth every moment of his life would be taken up with the subtle torture of his enemies. He was a Mendoza; but Joselito was seeing to it that he be even a little more—and Joselito was no coward. For months the populace had waited for a sight of the greatest of bulls. Joselito had fought for five years in the plazas of old Madrid. But in all Spain there was no bull that could compare with a Mendoza. Here was a battle of centuries. Would the great matador kill El Toro Cid de Mendoza? If he did it would be a killing well worth seeing. All hail to Joselito!

But Cid understood nothing of his fame.

When the door of the car was opened and he stood blinking in the sunlight he knew naught of the reason of the crowd that watched him. The blur of sound and the buzz of "Toro" and "Cid de Mendoza" was but the croon of his enemies. They did not appall him, because he knew that they would not fight. They were cowards all; while he was a monarch. He felt it. And the beauty that was his was enhanced by his pride. Never was there such a bull nor one that gave such promise of a fighter. A peon loves a bull. The thousand little men who watched the unloading of Cid went forth to sing the praise of his worth and his prowess.

Cid now had a new home or rather a new prison. On the moment of his arrival he was herded into an adobe structure fitted with solid doors and no windows, a structure that shut out all sunlight and had an interior as dark as midnight. The bit of sunshine that had dazzled him from the car to his new cell was the last he was to see for many days. Neither was he to have much food nor water nor anything else that a respectable bull has a right to. It is dangerous for a bull to have good sight and it is not good form to have him fat and logy. Were the bull to see perfectly when he steps into the plaza the fighter would have but little chance. Hence the darkness and the isolation. Bullfighting is a science as well as a pleasure. Cid was being blinded carefully and deliberately to bring him down to the level of the matador.

Days went by with no sound other than the rumble of the other bulls who were to be sacrificed ahead of him on that great day in the Plaza de Toros, days that he knew not and had no way of reckoning because there was never a break to the darkness. And during all the days he had naught to do but move about his cell and weigh up the depth of his bovine vengeance. He had proof now that man was a creature of evil; he had proof also that if he were to kill one he would have to rush to get ahead of his cunning. He had always had sunlight, but now in the darkness his hate was mounting to a frenzy of madness. After a bit came dreams of fighting and goring; dreams that were a relaxation but, after all, only dreams. The only thing that he could do consciously was to stand at the door through which he had entered and bellow the rumble of his defiance. He was great, beautiful, splendid; but he was as terrible as he was wonderful.

At last came the day, a day when ten thousand people, gentlemen and ladies, more or less, sat in the great amphitheater and discussed the merits of the successive matadors. Five bulls were sacrificed that afternoon with appropriate elegance and beautiful bloodletting. The sixth bull would not fight and was classed as a burro. The seventh bull was to be the Mendoza. The ten thousand spectators commented on and discussed their favorite method and deft way of killing. The little men with the tall hats applauded and cheered the goring of the horses; but in the *sombre*—that is, shady side of the theater—a hundred tall men, gringos from the North, sat silent. The gringos had come to see the great Toro Cid de Mendoza.

They were men who loved fair play and had their own opinion of murder, and they had hopes, all of them, that Cid might turn the tables. Below them in a box at the edge of the ring sat Juan and Mercedes de Mendoza—Juan silent and proud as befitted his blood, but Mercedes laughing and gay between her two suitors. One of these suitors was Joselito himself, rich through many victories; and the other the tall gringo from the North who went by the name of Williams. The romance of the affair was known to all. Joselito would kill the bull. Ah, that was it! Then how could Mercedes refuse Joselito! Few were the men there who thought of the gringo.

Six bulls had been killed. The nimble-footed *chulos,* working like jumping jacks, poured sand over the gory arena. The band struck up the martial air and the blood of ten thousand señores and señoritas pulsed to the climax of the moment. Joselito was the greatest of all matadors. And there was no bull like a Mendoza. It would be a battle to the death—and such a battle as they could relate to their grandchildren. But how cool was Joselito; not a ruffle to his hair —as if he were waiting for his breakfast! The trumpet sounded and the greatest troupe in the world, Joselito's own, marched into the arena. How brave they were and how gallant in color; the picadors in the lead clothed in sheening satin and linen of spotless white, riding the blindfolded, caparisoned horses; the banderilleros, toreadors and capeadors in blue satin embroidered in silver and gold with their blood-red capes

draped across their shoulders and wrapped about their hips—heroes (?) all, handsome, lithe, nimble, swinging in three columns to the music—as splendid a troupe as had ever tortured a gallant monarch down to the level of a matador. Surely it was worth the five years of waiting. The ten thousand cheered while Joselito from his box looked down upon his company. There was lacking now only El Toro Cid de Mendoza.

The troupe marched straight to the president who stood up to acknowledge the salute. The trumpet sounded. And immediately all quit the ring except the capeadors who were to taunt the bull.

Cid was waiting where he had waited for many hours with neither food nor water. He was savage with hunger and thirst and the cruelty of the darkness. No longer was he the fat, sleek creature that had been taken from the freight car. He was lean, perfect, sinewy and infuriated with the threefold ferocity of hunger. For hours he had not left the door, hoping and longing to deal death to the one that opened it. During the past few hours he had heard strange sounds, music that was new to his ears and a rumble of sound that he knew came from the creatures of evil. Evil was in the air—and the smell of blood. Then came noises at the lock. Cid made ready.

And once again he was to learn the cunning of his masters. The instant that the door was open he plunged full tilt at his enemy, head down and ready to toss his victim to a gory death. Over his head he heard a storm of applause that was like the winds dropping from the heavens, ten thousand throats shouting in a unison of delight, "Toro! Toro! El Toro Cid de Mendoza!" And from the gringo section came, "Go get 'em, bull! Go get 'em! Whoopee! Hurray for the Mendoza!" At the same instant a barb caught him in the shoulder and a stream of ribbons floated over his graceful neck—the green and gold colors of the Hacienda de Mendoza! Then a maddening blur of frenzy, a swoop of color—and blindness. The quick transition from the total darkness to the glaring white daylight had killed his vision.

Something red swooped before him, a terrible thing that cut his weakened optics and gave a focus to his fury. With tail straight out and head down he plunged at it. But it was gone like a thing of magic, melted into thin air; the experienced capeador had turned the cape and exposed the silver side. For a moment Cid was puzzled. Then the thing shot out like the color of madness directly before him. Once again he charged and once again he missed it. But this time he stopped in full career. A capeador was running up behind him, draping his cape preparatory to another taunt. For the first time the bull caught sight of his tormentor—a man—and a man ready to fight! Before the capeador had time to throw out his red flag Cid was after him, eyes closed, charging.

The man saved himself by leaping behind the barrier. Then Cid did something that brought a shout from the gringos, a thing that proved to all that here was a fighting Mendoza. He had missed his man but he opened his eyes in time to catch sight of a bit of color flitting behind the guard. Cid charged the guard, splintering it and bringing out a cry of agony. Score one for the Mendoza!

The crowd settled down. All afternoon it had witnessed routine bullfighting with the bull having no chance and every killing taking place according to rote. Here was a different bull. A Mendoza fought with his head; and when a bull fights that way he is a dozen times dangerous. It was why but few fighters dared face any of the fighting strain. But Joselito had a troupe of champions and Joselito was the greatest of them all. Cid turned from the barrier, feeling the thrill of victory and maddened by the scent of blood. Deliberately he pawed the dirt, tossed it into the air and rumbled his defiance. The fight had gone only a few minutes but it was easy to see that the bull had given more than he had taken. There could be no playing with a bull like this. Joselito leaned over and spoke to a picador. The picador turned his poor horse into the arena.

They were deliberate now. The capeadors and the picadors came in together. Cid was too fresh and it was dangerous to taunt him as long as he had his strength. Bull fighting has its system as well as its cruelty. The picadors are the apex of the cruelty and the system. They rode in as gayly as their horses would allow. The capeadors spread about. Cid stood still. The fact that he did not charge at once roused a murmur of comment from the spectators. A bull that charges madly is dangerous. One that uses his head is doubly so. But here

was one that combined the tactics of madness and caution.

Joselito from his point of vantage was studying every quiver. Cid tossed dirt and waited. Then suddenly one of the capeadors, running like a rabbit across the ring, flashed the red banner. And once again the agonized pang of fury shot through the bull's brain and he was off in full career, eyes shut, charging. One of the picadors turned toward him and when Cid missed the banner drove his poor blindfolded beast directly in his path. Here was something at least. The bull swerved, lowered his head and caught the poor fated horse in the stomach. Horse and rider went down in a heap, Cid goring. The horse rolled over and a shout of appreciation went up from the high-hatted spectators.

It was like victory to Cid. But had he known, it was the beginning of his end. The picador was armed with a pointed pike with which, the minute he was up, he began stabbing and macerating the bull's withers. The crowd applauded because here was one of the fine points of bullfighting—one that shows the adroitness and courage of the Spanish heart—the bull goring the horse and the picador cutting and jabbing the muscles of his neck to weaken him down to the level of the matador. Cid stood up, his head reeking with the horse's gore and his macerated shoulders flecked with his own crimson. He was mad now. He had had the taste of blood and was sure of his victory. A capeador flashed the red cape again and he was off like a bullet. The picador mounted the gored horse and drove him about the ring until he dropped in agony. The great crowd applauded.

Three times was this repeated, the picadors stabbing and sapping the vitality of their royal victim. Cid was covered with gore and bleeding from scores of wounds. His eyes were bloodshot and bulging; his sight unsteady. Three horses had been gored and driven to an agonized death about the plaza. One of them had been bandaged and driven to a second goring. But still Cid was too strong. A fourth picador rode his horse to the sacrifice. But this time Cid, downing the horse, passed over and pinned the rider. Score two for Cid!

It was a tragic moment—one that called forth the courage and skill of Joselito's famous troupe of champions. A capeador flashed his cape and drew Cid after him. Then a strange thing happened. The capeador was going at full speed, turning his cape, when he stopped suddenly and turned sidewise. It was a trick that had always worked because a bull shuts his eyes when he charges. But Cid opened them in full career; he swerved, caught the man upon his horns and tossed him into the air. The capeador landed on his head behind the barrier!

Cid returned to the center of the plaza. It was empty now and he could enjoy the fury of his victory. For a moment he stood sullen and majestic, waiting for his enemies, his blurred eyes lifting and watching in stunned wonder. And while he stood the ghosts of a thousand ancestors ranged themselves behind him. Cid had the courage of his race. He was covered with blood and the ooze of his life was trickling at his feet. From his neck fluttered the bedraggled colors of the Hacienda de Mendoza. Joselito leaned over and spoke to a fresh picador. The girl at his side was white and tense. The Gringo Williams was gripping the railing, his mouth drawn at the corners and his eyes set in their sockets. From the gringo section up in the *sombre* came a lone voice speaking in English.

"Poor old fellow. He's game!"

But the old fellow was farther gone than they thought. The muscles of his neck had been lacerated until they were almost useless; he was weakening and the blood was trickling from his nostrils. That last toss had cost him one of the main tendons of his neck. His head drooped slightly; and when a bull begins to droop his head the wise one in the ways of bullfighting knows that the end is at hand. But Joselito was a brave man and wanted to be sure. The picador took the signal and rode a fresh horse out to the goring. Cid was mad now and bereft of caution. For the fifth time the spectators got their peso's worth of blood and for the fifth time a picador, plying his skill behind the barricade of the horse's body, drove in to bring down the ebbing vitality of the Mendoza. Joselito had fought too many bulls not to judge his condition.

The banderilleros came next.

Cid was a different bull now. The snap that had been his at the first of the fight was gone. He was dazed, weakened, bewildered, but still defiant. When the fresh banderilleros, lithe little men with gaudy suits aspangle with gold tripped into the

arena, he stood still, watching. Then he advanced slowly and cautiously, rumbling and pawing the dirt to show that he was still a fighter. The little men danced about and came at him. They were different from the others. They were everywhere and nowhere, and Cid was slow. Every time that he lowered his head and came at them there was a flash of color, a roar from the multitude above him and a fresh stab in his neck.

Joselito's banderilleros were the most wonderful in the world. It was a marvelous sight to watch them place the long, many-colored darts in the neck of the terrible Mendoza. Cid could not reach them but he could feel the indignity. They were little and nothing at all, while he was a king! The sight of the old monarch standing alone with the darts wabbling in his neck gladdened the crowd above him. And from each dart came a trickle of blood that made it a sight worth seeing. Joselito knew the time and the moment.

The multitude lapsed into silence. Joselito with the grace that had made him famous tripped into the arena and doffed his hat to the host of his admirers. He was clad in black satin with a white linen shirt front and white cuffs. He had fought a thousand bulls in the same uniform without soiling his fingers. It took skill in most cases; but Joselito had more than skill. He had killed the worst bulls of two continents. There had never been another champion with half the finesse, nor one with half the good looks. The admiring eyes of a thousand señoritas watched him as he stepped before the box of Mercedes de Mendoza. Joselito bowed; then like one addressing a goddess he spoke:

"Señorita Mercedes, I toast you. To your beauty and your eyes I dedicate El Toro Cid de Mendoza!"

But the girl answered nothing. She was sitting with her chin cupped in her palm, watching alternately the bull and the matador. The Gringo Williams, his eyes full of hate, glared down at the bullfighter. Joselito caught the look and laughed. In the center of the ring the great toro stood, weakened, weary and wondering what would be the next onrush of his enemies. But he was still defiant and tore up the earth to the accompaniment of his rumbling thunder.

The moment had come that had been promised for the last five years. Joselito was face to face with El Toro Cid de Mendoza!

If he should win——

The audience recalled the fatal climax that had accompanied the killing of Cid's father.

Cid waited and wondered. Hitherto he had fought with quick-moving opponents, men who ran and horses that were helpless before his furious onrush. He had killed and he knew it; but somehow, even in his victory, he had been going down to defeat. In a dim way he realized that he was being beaten by the intangible genius of the creatures of evil. Here was a new opponent, one who walked and acted differently and who was the strangest creature of all. Cid was cautious now and willing to let the other take the lead before he charged and made an end to his enemy.

Joselito came on slowly and deliberately. In his left hand he bore the *muleta* over which was a red flag; in his right he held the sword that had traveled to the heart of so many bulls. When he was directly before the bull he stopped. For a moment both man and beast studied. Before a matador can make the fatal thrust it is necessary that he play the bull until he has his front feet together. Joselito worked carefully and cautiously to get the big fellow in line. Cid watched and followed, moving slowly and getting ready for his last mad rush. Twice did the man lift the sword and sight along it to the vital point between the shoulder blades. The crowd watched; and the Gringo Williams watched most of all. Then there was a shout, a groan, and a mad moment such as had never been known in the plaza. The Gringo Williams had leaped into the arena!

It was the end. Joselito had worked the beast's feet together and had flashed the *muleta* in his face. Always this was the end of a bullfight. But it was not the end of El Toro Cid de Mendoza. Instead of charging the flag Cid came on, eyes open, straight for the matador! No bull ever charged with open eyes! Joselito saw it and did the only thing that he could do to save himself. He leaped straight between the bull's horns. Had Cid been able to use the muscles of his neck it would have been the last of the bullfighter. But as it was he could only rush him and bear him down for goring. And as it happened the great toro was a moment too late.

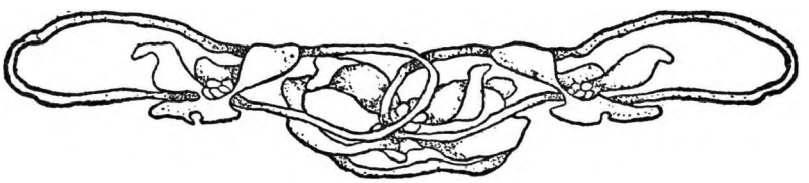
The Gringo Williams was running like the wind. Just in the nick of time he came up behind the bull and raced along his side, reaching Joselito and jerking him with his strong arms away from a Mendoza death. The bull went on and when he turned the white man and the brown man were safe behind the barrier.

Cid was not the only one who went mad that day in the Plaza de Toros!

Three weeks later Cid was on another train and bound north for a land where they give even a bull an even break. In another three weeks he was in a great pasture, high fenced, that held a number of cows of his adoption. One day there came to the fence a man and a woman. The man was Williams and the lady went by the name of Mercedes. Said the lady:

"Isn't he wonderful?"

"He is that," answered the man. "I wanted to own him from the start. Now I have got him. When his progeny grow up I can say that they are descended from a line of kings."



BELONG TO AMERICA!

FOREIGN delegates to the arms parley in Washington have commented on what they call "the double significance of Americanism" among the other peoples of the world. When a foreigner speaks of America, these diplomats explain, he may mean America the nation, the people, the people's characteristics and ideals, or he may mean America the government, the particular administration that happens to be in control of the country. To the outsider the American as a man stands for one thing while the American government may stand for an entirely different thing. You get the significance of this when you realize that to you "England" means the characteristics of both the Englishman and the English government.

In this national peculiarity of ours there is a challenge to you and to me. So far, the administrations at Washington have differed greatly from each other and, at times, from the American people's thought, because the country is large enough to contain sections so powerful that they can influence legislation and national achievements to their own advantage. That may continue in some degree as long as the business interests of various sections differ.

But above the legislative and political changes that attract the foreigner's attention there should be a loftier and nobler realm of thought and feeling forever in evidence, fixed, stable, permanently influencing all lesser things. That is to say, whatever is done at Washington, Americanism should always mean the same thing to the world. You and I can help to bring that about. We can insist upon a nation-wide idealism. We can help to make Americanism a nobility of feeling that will color and dominate all the changes of politics.

Remember that all you do is a contribution to America. Remember that to be an American means to scorn pettiness of purpose. Remember that it is alien to our desires and our ideals to do anything that smacks of the charlatan, the cheat or the bully. By thinking thus, by working thus, by voting thus, we shall build up a public sentiment that will make our government stand for what the best individualism among us stands for. When that happens there will be but one picture brought to any mind by the American government and the individual American—and both terms will stand for something higher in the sight of all the world.

Spunyarn

By George Hugh Banning

WHAT HAPPENED IN PREVIOUS CHAPTERS.

Tom Whittly had written a sailor yarn, but he wanted to know more of the sea than he had been able to learn from yachting cruises. So assuming the name of the hero of his story, Dick Farrier, he got a job as rigger aboard the new auxiliary schooner *Aggie Newmiller,* fitting out in a Pacific port for a voyage to Australia. He became a friend of Ross Newmiller, the captain's son and first mate, but crusty Captain Newmiller had small use for him and refused to ship him as one of the crew. While in Dick's room, Ross read a part of the manuscript of Dick's story, purporting to be the will of Gilbert Farrier, Earl of Merylswood, leaving a fortune to his son Dick on condition that within four years he learn the trade of sailoring, act as ship's officer aboard a deep-water vessel and marry "an eminently respectable woman of good repute." Mistaking fiction for fact, Ross, with his sister's future in mind, had Dick shanghaied—with the knowledge of Roberta who, just home from college, was to make the voyage with her mother and father. When Dick recovered consciousness Captain Newmiller put him to work with the crew. A few days at sea, Mathsen, a seaman, was struck by Captain Newmiller, stumbled overboard and was drowned despite the captain's belated effort to save him. A little later Stevens, the hard-boiled second mate, with whom Roberta had been amusing herself by conducting a mild flirtation, attempted to kiss the girl. Dick interfered and in the fight that followed was stabbed in the shoulder. During his convalescence he and Roberta had become better acquainted and she realized that she liked him too well to marry for money. One night a ship was sighted and when a boat reached her she proved to be a yacht bound for Malaita, one of the Solomon Islands, loaded with munitions for the defense of a gold mine. The last member of the crew died after telling his story. Later Dick heard Stevens encouraging the crew's growing spirit of mutiny—which Captain Newmiller had his reasons for desiring. Stevens' own idea was to have the crew work the gold mine. Taking desperate chances Dick warned Captain Newmiller of the uprising and was made third mate.

(*A **Four-Part Story—Part III.***)

CHAPTER XIV.

MUTINY.

BUT the things we plan are the things we seldom do. It might have been easy enough for Captain Newmiller to have surprised Stevens on the poop with a sudden threat backed by the persuasion of a drawn pistol; and equally easy to have led him captive to the "brig." And by the same methods it might have been simple to have gone forward and directed the consignment of arms aft. The skipper's scheme was a good one, but brief time had worn a hole in the dikes too large to stop with a finger or an arm or all the arms of the after cabin. Jack had boarded the *Aggie* and was, at the moment the old man stepped from the companionway, landing his cargo.

And a part of the cargo was not only landed but loaded. If hell ever "popped," now it was booming. Reports and retorts from pistol and gun brought Farrier up with a start. He forgot his commission with Flunky and the brig, and went bumping his way through dark corridors to the cabin of the chief.

Chief Kennedy was as hot-tempered as he was Irish. He cursed by the pink-toed prophet and galloping sea monsters. He kicked his naked limbs and tore his undershirt before he could ring the suds from his dream-logged brain and bring his mind to reason. But he was in his everyday humor and breeched simultaneously, not stopping to grope for whys and wherefores when guns and cartridge belts were to be sought.

But Farrier left him and entered the quarters adjoining, where he intercepted a snoring duet and dragged Ed O'Neal and Roy Harlow to the carpet.

"It's mutiny!" exclaimed Farrier, " a real one!"

"Drag 'em out!" cried the chief, appearing at the door, armed and ready to go.

And in another minute the three men

stood blinking on the poop, weighing assumed situations with contemplated action. The silence was tense.

"Under cover, you there! Drop on your bellies and crawl!" came the skipper's voice to them from over the break of the poop.

But before a clock could have ticked again there came a double flash banging from the foot of the mainmast, a siren hum, and the sound of shattered glass from the wheelhouse. And in the same instant resounded a louder report directly ahead followed by hoarse grumbling and: "Under cover, there! You confounded fools! Never saw the likes of it."

The four men dropped, waddling their way like horned toads, to where they found the old man intrenched between the break of the poop and the deck load, chewing a dead cigar and gently cursing.

"Drop down here, you! Good Lord, you'd be picked and pickled without so much as an effort to shake your wings!"

A bullet whacked at the edge of the deck load and ricocheted with a sickening flutter to the jigger mast. The four men scrambled over the coaming and dropped behind the wooden parapet to the main deck.

"I was a bit slow, maybe, Mr. Farrier," grumbled the skipper. "But they didn't expect me quite so soon, that's certain. We're going to get 'em!"

"Where the devil are they all?" queried the chief.

"Two sniping at the mainmast. Eight more farrard the deck load. You can see their heads bobbing up now 'n' then. All hands of 'em were fixing to come aft when I surprised 'em. The two amidships stole a march. We need rifles. Mr. Farrier, take these keys. Look in the locker 'longside my bunk and you'll find three. Ross took the others and left us short. Go through the galley and you'll keep under cover."

"Yes, sir."

"Better go with him, Mr. Harlow. You'll find three bandoliers too and a few boxes of extra ammunition. There's pistol cartridges in the drawer underneath. Fetch 'em out. Sharp, now!"

Farrier and Harlow were about to fulfill instructions when they were surprised at the entrance to the sanctum by Aggie herself.

"For the land sakes!" she exclaimed. "Whatever is happening?"

"It'll be all right, Mrs. Newmiller," said Farrier. "It's just a little mutiny, that's all."

"*Mutiny! What? Mutiny* did you say?"

"Yes, but just so you don't put your head above the companionway, you're safe. Better warn Miss Newmiller, too, if she wakes."

"Well, of all things! *Mutiny!* You know I thought all along that something terrible would happen! It was just yesterday I told Charles that——"

"Yes, yes. He knows it," broke in Harlow.

"And look at that!" Mrs. Newmiller was eying the bottle on the table: "I knew it! And I told him to leave the filthy stuff alone. It's always the way. And he promised me to-night when he said he had to sit up and get——"

"He's all right," interrupted Farrier impatiently.

'No, he's *not!* He's not all right at all! Oh, why can't he—— And look at you! All over dirt—*blood!* Whatever have you been doing? Are you hurt?"

"No. I'm not hurt, Mrs. Newmiller! No one's hurt! Come on, Roy." And they hurried into the skipper's cabin, Mrs. Newmiller fluttering after.

"Oh, I knew it! I knew it all along! Why ever do men have to fill themselves with whisky? What are you boys up to? What are you doing there? Heavens! Are you going to kill somebody?"

"No, we're just going to—— You carry the rifles, Roy—my arm—I'll take these."

"Here, put the bandoliers over my shoulder. You take the boxes."

"And, you know, I told him all along! He wouldn't listen!"

"All set, Dick?"

"No. Where are those pistol cartridges?"

"In the drawer, he said."

"Here! Here they are!"

"And just when he needed all his strength, he had to go and fill up on that nasty——"

But there came such a volley the entire ship trembled. Mrs. Newmiller screamed and hid her face in her hands. Harlow bounded out. Farrier started to follow, but stopped short on sight of Roberta who at that moment threw open the door of her stateroom and stood wild-eyed and dishevelled, challenging him to answer what she dared not ask. Her face was pale and her lips trembling, but under it all was a brave

determination not unmixed with a kind of disdain which emphasized itself with the silence.

"What is it, Dick? What is the matter?" she said calmly. Her eyes were staring fixedly. They were frozen by grim forebodings conveyed through the exhausted form she confronted.

"I haven't the time, Roberta. You must keep under cover! It's mutiny!"

"Very well. And what are you doing here?" she asked, as if the warning were nothing new.

"Why shouldn't I be here? I was ordered here by the skipper to——"

"And you are not with the mutineers?"

"Of course he's not!" exclaimed Mrs. Newmiller. "What a question! Mr. Farrier! With a miserable crew of cutthroats?"

"With his shipmates," corrected Roberta. "With the men of the forecastle who were driven to mutiny by their own captain!"

"Well, of all things! What ever has come over the child?"

"I'm sure I don't understand you, Roberta," said Farrier. "As for the instigator of this trouble, I know all about it. I was there when it happened. As for the men of the foks'l, I am not one of them, I am now——"

"You are third mate," supplied Roberta with scorn, great tears glistening in her eyes. "Don't tell me, *now*, that you don't understand!"

She fell into a chair, sobbing. Farrier, roused by reports of guns, turned to what he still conceived as duty.

"I'm afraid I can't answer you Roberta. I really don't know what you mean."

He made his way to the intrenchment from where eight men could be seen zigzagging across the deck load, while two more behind the mainmast covered the rush by continuous sniping. Most of the bullets flew high, glancing from the quarter-deck or lodging in the bulkhead of the galley. But the three rifles brought up by Roy Harlow were already spitting fire and the ten men halted at the mainmast, some lying in cover of the coils of rope, others disappearing entirely in a large hole in the deck load left for the accommodation of pumps.

"Now!" growled the skipper, "let 'em try it again. Save your ammunition. Lay aft, Mr. Farrier. Get Barnacle Joe and the Flunky."

"You vouldn't have no trouble gettin' *Barnacle Yoe,*" came a voice from the galley door. They looked and saw the white figure of the little cook driving his cabin boy forward at the point of a revolver. "Ay shoold say not! It's *dis* rat, you'll have trouble vith. Get along you!"

"I didn't come t' sea t' fight. I ain't goina fight, neither!"

"No, but you'll get to work and load those pistols, or I'll load *you!*" threatened the chief.

And Flunky was bullied into obedience after instruction from Farrier regarding the loading of guns. So the fortress was complete, the skipper, the chief, and Ed O'Neal armed with rifles; Farrier, Roy Harlow and Barnacle Joe, with pistols, all squinting over the parapet awaiting a second volley and the rush to follow.

"They'll make for the winch holes next," warned the skipper. "It's their closest cover. Lay low till they start, then give 'em all you've got."

The winch holes were located just abaft the mizzenmast. These were pits about ten feet square and eight feet deep where the deck cargo had been broken to afford a direct lead of halyards to the drums. It was the last adequate cover the ship offered Stevens and his crew, there being only twenty yards between the mizzenmast and the break of the deck load aft—nothing intervening but the spanker.

It was an anxious spell of quiet that followed, Stevens and his men having little to shoot at, the others having little to shoot. But one thing was certain: the men in the pump hole were not there to camp for the night. Darkness was their best weapon and already the stars of the east were fading.

"Listen!" exclaimed Harlow, rushing to the starboard bulwarks.

But at that moment there was no such a thing as listen. Ten tongues of fire followed by ten sharp reports and a splintering storm of bullets caused the withdrawal of heads from the parapet while the attacking force sprang from cover and came charging toward the intrenchment, shooting from the hip.

"Now!" yelled the skipper; "give it to 'em!"

But his rifle had spoken before him. One man crumpled in his own shadow. Another stopping to take aim was dropped by Ed O'Neal, while the eight remaining rushed for

the cover of the winch holes and were soon out of sight below the deck load.

"Two out of ten!" grumbled the old man. "It'll take more than *that* to discourage 'em now."

"Listen!" exclaimed Harlow again. "I think I hear 'more than that' coming right now. It's Ross and his gang coming back. Hear the engine?"

"Right you are!" cried the chief.

The skipper paused a moment to consider, then lowering his gun he turned to Harlow.

"Go aft through the galley to the lazaret and up through the scuttle to the wheelhouse. Make it from there to the boat. Keep out of sight, but head the mate in farrard. Land on the foks'l head and surprise 'em from the rear. Sharp now, or it's too late."

Harlow saw the scheme in a flash and was gone.

"Now," said the old man, "keep them interested!"

"*This'll* interest 'em!" muttered the chief taking careful aim. He fired. "Got 'im! Look! I *got* 'im!".

The chief was right. He had pierced the heart of a hornet's nest where no bee lacked a sting.

CHAPTER XV.

DISASTER.

Despite all adversities visited upon Farrier and the small company in defense of the ship, pressure no less repelling bore down upon the mind and conscience of Roberta. Her father, afraid to face the penalty and humiliation to result from his own misdoings, was sacrificing the lives of men to shield himself from the law. Dick Farrier whom she had learned to respect—perhaps to love—had become an accomplice. He had cloaked his greed for fortune in the garb of duty as an officer, and had joined the heinous intrigue to which she herself had acceded and of which she had become a material part.

Raising her head she glanced desperately about with a feeling so restless she could have wept. During intermittent silences between bursts of rifle fire came a weird rhythmic wailing almost too faint to hear—a human voice—yet one she could identify with no one. It was undulated singsong, like a juvenile recitation of verse. Then it would die away and she would hear only the ticking of a clock until the next report of rifles again stimulated the weird chant:

"It come t' te-tee. It come t' te-tee. It come t' te-tee——"

Roberta's mother seemed not to hear it. She fussed nervously about the cabin in a dazed manner, trying to make things orderly, fretting incoherently and sighing whenever the sound of rifle fire resounded through the corridors. Once, following a sudden report, she dropped a tumbler which shattered on the floor. From this she burst into tears and hurried off to her stateroom, her last words being:

"Roberta, get the dustpan——"

"It come t' te-tee. It come t' te-tee. It come t' te-tee——"

What on earth was that noise? Dustpan! What good was a dustpan?

"It come t' te-tee. It come t' te-tee. It come t' te-tee. It come——"

"*Tick—tick, tick—tick, tick—tick, tick—tick——*"

Heavens! Would the clock never stop? It glared coldly at her with its brass face, undisturbed by love or mutiny. The ordered throb of its beating heart challenged the sincerity of her own.

"It come t' te-tee. It come t' te-tee. It come t' te-tee. It come——"

The four white walls were unbearable, monotonous, glaring. The slide rules had been on the table for a month. They were ugly things, black and symmetrical. The chronometer box was yellow oak. It clashed painfully with mahogany and white enamel. Dustpan! Dustpan, cabbages and kings were one to her now!

What was the reason for it all? What was she, Roberta, for? She had come aboard the *Aggie* to cause everything and to rate nothing. Simply by being Roberta she had caused Dick Farrier to fight Stevens, Stevens to fight the skipper, and the skipper to wage war on nearly the entire ship.

"*Tick—tick, tick—tick——*"

It was because of her too that Farrier had embraced the hope of making "something out of nothing." She was *nothing*. She had been taken for granted into a silly scheme of which she was the last ordeal. Qualification number one, sailor; number two, third mate; number three, *a woman of good repute*—one "eminently respectable."

"It come t' te-tee. It come t' te-tee. It come t' tee skipper too——"

Of all the women in the world, one of "good repute"—one "eminently respectable"—was the worst! She would rather be anything than just that. She would rather be a dustpan or a chronometer, a clock, a pair of slide rules—*anything* with something to do. She was tired of *being*—being an ordeal, a Roberta.

"It come t' te-tee. It come t' te-tee. It come t' tee skipper too——"

Impelled by a sudden crack of a rifle she sprang from her chair with a mad desire to go anywhere, to do anything. Slamming the door with a bang, she rushed wildly into the galley where she stopped short.

The surging of blood that had burned her cheeks ebbed away and left them cold. Determination was swept by terror. She choked upon screams that would not come. She tried to look away, but her gaze was fixed by the tarnished gleam of two dead eyes that stared not *at* her but into her very soul.

"It come t' th' chief. It come t' th' chief. It'll come t' th' skipper too. Fi-i-ine! Fi-i-ine!"

The voice sounded close at hand, but seemed to come from another world. Roberta tried to face it but could not. In the palsied and jaundiced flicker of a smoking lamp she saw, stretched out on the floor dead—eyes peeled and staring—the body of the chief. A bullet wound was in the center of his forehead and the head appeared to be stove into the deck three inches where the entire back of the skull had been carried away.

"It come t' th' chief. It come t' th' chief. It'll come t' th' skipper too. It'll come t' th' skipper's crew. It'll come t' you. Ha-ah! Fi-i-ine! Fi-i-ine! They never buried Cocky. They never buried Scotty. They murdered Mathsen. Fi-i-ine! *You'll* see! *You'll* see! And it'll come t' th' skipper too. Fi-i-ine!"

Roberta turned, sudden fury smothering her terror. Sitting on the threshold, splitting kindling with a long thin knife, sat Flunky, grinning hideously and squinting down at the body with the eyes of a maniac.

"What are you doing?" demanded Roberta.

"Ha-ah. Fi-i-ine! *You'll* see! There's a yarn they sing at the capstan bars goes like this:"

The depraved cabin boy, keeping time with the knife, began to chant in drawling discords:

"Oh, the skipper said to the bos'n's mate,
'Steady the bobstay, high-o-high.
The flies in the soup were born too late,
And the jibbering cook must die.
Heave-ho!
The jibbering cook must die!'

"Fi-i-ine!"

He turned his yellow eyes to his work again, humming as he whittled thin sticks on the galley floor.

"What are you going to do with those shavings? Can you tell me?"

"Ah-ha-ah! Fi-i-ine. That's a good one! What am I going to do with them shavin's? Fi-i-ine! Soak 'em in blood! Soak 'em in blood! Listen. I'm goina tell you sump'n. The skipper's gone mad. He thinks he's fightin' a mutiny and it's that same mutiny what got the chief. Get me? No, you don't. Neither would the skipper. And do you think the chief would? No. Why! Because he's dead. Ha-ah. Ha-ah! Fi-i-ine! But there's just one way out of it. Look. Watch me."

Striking a match he lighted the small end of a stick, held it up and watched it burn. He grinned ecstatically, then leaned over and extinguished the flame in a pool of blood.

"See there! Did you see? Fi-i-ine! Soak 'em in blood! Wunst when I was down off the New He-brides in a six-masted barkentine a lubber sings out from the foks'l: 'Cap'n! Cap'n! Man overboard! Man overboard!' But th' ol' man snickers and sings back: 'T' hell with 'im!' And just at that same moment an old shellback from aloft sings down: 'Oh, cap'n! Cap'n! Hey there, cap'n! Pig overboard! Pig overboard!' Right there th' ol' man throws back his ears. 'Ready about!' he sings. 'Ready, there! Hard down!' That was fi-i-ine! See? Pig! Pig overboard. Huh, that wuz differ'nt. But I'll show 'em. It come t' th' chief. It'll come t' th'—— What you standin' there starin' for? Yer mainstay's loose. Yer crazy. Crazy like th' ol' man. Ha-ah! Fi-i-ine!"

Roberta shuddered and turned for an opposite door leading to the main deck.

"Fi-i-ine! Fi-i-ine!" came the whining voice after her as she stepped over the threshold.

At first she could see nothing. The men

were hid in dark shadows of projecting timbers. No one spoke and no one noticed Roberta; or, if noticed, no attention was paid her. But soon her sight adjusted itself to darkness, as did her wits to the grim situation being met by the four remaining men of the after cabin. They were watching anxiously over the top of the timbers. Now and then came the click of a bolt or safety latch; now and then, as they shifted position, shone the faint gleam of a gun barrel.

"Father," whispered Roberta, placing her hand gently upon his arm.

The skipper looked around. A bullet went whining overhead.

"Get away from here, child. Go back to your mother. Don't bother us. I say, O'Neal! Where's Flunky?"

"Hay tock de shief aft, sor," said Barnacle Joe, leaning forward on his gun.

"*Father,*" said Roberta again, this time with a voice firm and demanding.

"Lay aft! What did I tell you? Go to your mother. Don't bother us here. Pistols loaded, Mr. Farrier? We'll need 'em at close range."

"All loaded, sir."

"It come t' th' chief. It come t' th' chief. It'll come t' the skipper too. It'll come t' th' skipper's crew. Ha-ah! Fi-i-ine! Fi-i-ine! And th' ol' man sings t' the bos'n's mate, 'soak 'em in blood,' he says. Soak 'em in blood! He's cra-a-azy! Cra-a-azy like a bedbug. Fi-i-ine!"

"What's that noise aft. Where's Flunky?"

"Vy don't hay caum back, I vonder. I go fetch 'im aup, *hein?*"

"Stay where you are. Too many men gone already. Why doesn't Harlow steer 'em farrard like I told him? They're due now."

"Father, if you don't listen to me——"

"Lay aft, I told you."

"I can't go back. I can't stand this any longer. You must stop this horrible murder—do you hear me? I mean it. And if you don't——"

"For God's sake, get away from here! How many times must I tell you? Are you loaded up, Mr. O'Neal?"

"Yes, sir. But I need more cartridges. I'm out."

"Take these. It's all you get. We're due for the rush any second. Watch 'em close. I wonder what's the matter with Ross?"

"Father, if you don't stop it——"

"'*Stop* it!' How in the name of blue blazes can *I* stop it? Go back to your cabin. What are you talking about? Belay there. Don't fire!"

But Barnacle Joe had fired.

"*Dare!* I hit dot saun of a biscuit moncher right in de snoozer. Score me von! Hey, boys? Von fer Barnacle Yoe!"

"That's fair enough," grumbled the old man. "But not another shot out of you. Understand? Save what you've got. Wait till they come!"

"Father!" demanded Roberta, "if you fire another shot I'll——"

"Well, I never heard the beat of it! Do you want us to stand here and get pumped full of pig iron without a comeback? It's mutiny—that's what!"

"Yes, I realize that. Mutiny you started. One you schemed for. One you started by your second mate. You wanted him to appear the instigator and to think himself what really you were. Oh, yes, I know all about your mutiny. To wash blood you use more blood. To bury crime you use more crime. You'd rather be guilty of murder in the eyes of God than mere battery in the eyes of men. Now you know why I'm here—to help you before it's too late. You must surrender. And if you won't—then I'll do it for you——"

Roberta turned away in tears.

"She's crazy," muttered Ed O'Neal.

"Vot do she mean?" queried Barnacle Joe.

"Roberta," said Farrier. "We don't understand you. And whatever it is you're talking about, you're wrong."

"It's policy for *you* not to understand me!"

"Get aft! Get aft! Get aft! What are you talking about? By God, I can't stand for this any longer."

But the skipper stopped short in his purpose and listened.

"What's that noise? Hear it, O'Neal?"

"Soak 'em in blood. Soak 'em in blood. Fine Fi-i-ine!"

"It's Flunky!" exclaimed Barnacle Joe in a frightened whisper. "Ay go aft an' see."

"No you don't. Stay where you are! There's no time. Hold what you've got. Where are the pistols, Mr. Farrier?"

"Here, sir."

"Good! They're fixing to come. Duck when they start firing, then up an' at 'em. If Ross doesn't hurry, we're done!"

"It come t' th' chief. It come t' th' chief. It'll come t' the skipper too. So th' ol' man says t' the bos'n's mate, 'steady th' bobstay——' "

The sound grew faint and farther away till it could be heard no longer.

"Damn that Flunky, he's gone lunatic!"

Roberta smiled sardonically. It had taken them a long time to learn what she might have told them at the start. But then she was only Roberta. No one could bother with her now. The thought provoked her. Since her arrival on deck she had recalled faintly a story—one she had read in childhood—in which a mere tot had stopped a fierce mutiny by inadvertently walking between two opposing fires. This recollection had prompted the manner in which she addressed her father. It made her bold. It had suggested vague means of ending the controversy, although—at the time—she could scarcely picture herself in the melodramatic pose of peacemaker. She, Roberta, the captain's daughter, standing bravely between the muzzles of hostile guns, standing calm and serene like an angel of peace, hands uplifted—— Nonsense!

But now such action presented itself in a new light. A burning humiliation had settled a fire ball in the base of her heart, melting the gold of romance with the alloy of realism. She knew what action to take. It was no longer nonsense. She did not care to see the life of another man blown to its Maker for the sake of a mere reputation.

"Father!" she exclaimed almost viciously.

The skipper threw his dead cigar forcefully to the deck and glowered down at his daughter.

"This mutiny is yours," said the girl. "You started it and now I want you to finish it. I ask you this for the last time."

"Belay! For God's sake! We'll end this when we're good and ready. No sooner!"

"You must end it now. It's your duty to give the men what is rightly theirs. You must surrender!"

"Surrender, must I! H'm-mm——"

"That's the only way to right everything."

But this opportunity—if it could have been considered such—was blown to atoms. The sunken batteries forward belched forth in a single volley accompanied by the angry whine of bullets that splintered the wood on all sides, shattered the glass in the wheelhouse, rang one bell, cleft the fall of the jigger trysail and with a muffled roar tumbled the great stretch of canvas into its lazy jacks.

Roberta fell back upon the galley door as if carried there by the hot breath of the falling sail. The door jarred open. She stepped over the threshold to regain balance. Another shattering volley followed the first. Savage cries of men sounded from the deck load, interrupted only by return fire from the after cabin. Again Roberta thought of her plan. Ecstasy buoyed her courage. She was resolved to go. She breathed deeply or rather she started to, for a sharp odor cut her short.

She looked about. Flunky was gone. Only the dead body of the chief remained with glazed eyes still staring. A thin gray smoke issuing from the corridor had cast a cloud over the ceiling of the galley and fashioned a waving halo around the lamp. The storm on deck no longer concerned her. She rushed from the galley to the cuddy. Here the smoke was denser. It poured in from the officers' quarters. She ran through to the corridor where flames, quick as tongues of serpents, appeared and vanished from the door leading down to the engine room. Roberta drew back nearly suffocated by the fumes. A picture of the crazed cabin boy flashed across her mind. She remembered the shavings. She remembered him lighting one. Dashing to the engine-room door, she slammed it shut and hurried back toward the sanctum.

"Roberta!" came a voice. "Where are you? Where in Heaven's name!"

"Here, mother. Come quick! We must go!"

"Go where? Is it fire? What in the world——"

Aggie entered the cuddy in a flurry and dashed back again to her cabin followed by Roberta.

"Come, Roberta! Hurry! Save what you can! The *clock!* Take the clock."

"But mother! There's no time for that now. We must get away."

But "mother" was not to be advised. With one of her husband's sheath knives she wrenched the clock from the wall, carried it twice around the room and in desperation threw it out the porthole.

"There! Now the chronometer! Get the chronometer! There's time to save more."

Roberta threw herself into a chair and shook her head pityingly.

"Save *more!* For Heaven's sake, mother!

Think what you are doing! The one thing now is to save time! Bother the chronometer!"

"Do as I tell you! The ship's afire! It's burning up! Can't you help? Here! Take this chronometer. Don't be so contrary. Oh, why ever does this have to happen?"

Roberta obeyed.

"Now, mother, come on! Let's get out of here!"

"I'm coming! I'm coming! Don't be so impatient! There's still time. The *sextant!* Your father's sextant! Take it!"

At that moment the door flew open. Ross, nearly breathless, entered in a cloud of smoke. He returned his revolver to its holster, ran to the safe, opened it, withdrew some papers and money bags, pocketed them, rose and, snatching his mother in his arms, sextant and all, started for the companionway.

"This way, Bobbie!" he cried. "Hurry! Time t' get out of here and no more. It's oil! The tanks in the engine room——"

"But the mutiny?" queried Roberta, hastening to obey her brother and passing him at the companionway.

"Don't bother about that now. We foxed 'em! Get out of here! Quick! Or there won't be a ship under you."

In the meantime Aggie had fainted quite away. Roberta had reached the deck and was following Ross across the rail to the deck load.

At the spanker rigging stood the six remaining mutineers, disarmed, subdued and under guard. Rifles and bandoliers lay in a heap on deck. At the opposite companionway, from which black smoke poured in great volumes, appeared the skipper followed by two of his officers.

"She's a goner!" Roberta heard him say.

"Lay farrard, Bobbie, quick!" ordered Ross. "The whole after end'll be blown to the devil!"

With his mother in his arms Ross ran to the forecastle head and laid her down.

"She'll be all right in a moment, Bobbie. You stand by and watch her."

"That'll do you fellas there," came the skipper's voice across the deck load. "You'll take orders from me hereafter—every hand of you—or take the consequences. All right, Mr. O'Neal! Get 'em over on the whaleboat. Lend a hand there, Ross. Get 'er in the water. And sharp, now!"

All hands were whipped into action. They moved instinctively at the commands of officers, all efforts being bent to the launching. Cargo booms having been lashed to the deck, makeshift gantlines were employed, leading from aloft. But the task was slow and before the boat had been budged an inch the red glare at the companionway burst into bright gold fire.

Flames appeared at the hatches, ports, skylights. They swept the poop and leaped higher to the rigging and the fallen sail. Then, like the rumbling of an earthquake, the entire ship groaned and trembled. A sudden puff of black smoke burst from the hatches and covered the sky. The vessel bore down by the stern with such momentum that great waves broke and rolled from either quarter. From the bowels of the ship came a roaring like thunder. The poop deck tore free from bulwarks and bulkheads. The wheelhouse crashed into the sea. Fire shot skyward with the report of a monster cannon. The jigger mast fell in a tangled mass over the starboard beam carrying half the spanker rigging with it into the sea.

Men ran to every available shelter while the sky rained wreck of hells. From the heart of the explosion splashed liquid fire that burned even on the surface of the sea about the stern of the wreck. Flames spread to the edge of the deck load. The entire after part of the vessel burned like a living crater. A smoldering glow rose slowly along the leech of the spanker. Presently the boom plunged in a riot of sparks through the galley. Then like a sudden flash of sheet lightning the spanker burst into a single soaring torrent of fire—churning the smoke in tornadoes.

Men ran from it like rats before a prairie fire. One jumped into the sea. Another threw himself face downward to the deck, burying his head in his arms. Another, whom Roberta recognized as Peavey, rushed to the forecastle head where he wilted before the foremast like a weed before a flame.

"Leggo halyards on the mizzen!" cried the skipper, running aft to obey his own command.

The mizzen sail came thundering to deck, the old man himself standing halyards. The sail was unscorched by the burning spanker and a temporary blockade was effected. By this time the boat had been swung outboard and was being lowered into the water, although few men had stood by for this accomplishment. But when the command

sounded to man the boat the fugitives returned running.

Peavey ceased his crying and was among the first to volunteer as oarsman. He who had been cringing on the deck load rose and urged others to hurry; and indeed he did so with reason.

Ross and Farrier had gone forward after Aggie and Roberta. The hissing of steam had grown deafening. The vessel was felt slowly to settle by the stern. Steam rose in such volumes that flames grew white and the sea weltered in a ghastly sheen of silver. Suddenly, as if the great hulk could stand it no longer, she groaned, lurched, and trembled in every rib. As she listed she tore her planking from her rivets and burst her transom from her sternpost until the entire after part, gaping like a huge mouth, swallowed half a sea. She writhed like a wounded whale, vomiting back the water with a blanket of burning oil and cinders.

"Hold on! Avast there, you in the boat!" roared the skipper. "Damn cowards! Come back here!"

Roberta, lifting her mother from the deck, looked and saw the whaleboat gliding away, four men at the sweeps, one at the helm.

"Back here! Every hand of you! Do you hear me?"

The old man let forth in true sailor vernacular, punctuating each curse with a shot from his pistol. But the boat disappeared through smoke and darkness.

"Gawd-blym-e!" yelled Ben-Tenny. "The 'ogs 'ucked the rifles!"

The *Aggie* in her last death struggle lunged forward on her keel, then with frenzied screams slid back, her bowsprit pointing at the dimming stars, her entire poop completely submerged in boiling water.

Ross rushed forward where the yacht tender and ship's dinghy were fast to the martingale. He slacked the painters. Then, aided by Ben-Tenny and Harlow who had arrived on the forecastle head, he started to rig a boatswain's chair to one of the jib halyards.

"No hurry, boys," said Ross. "She's going to float. She can't sink with that cargo!"

Even as he spoke the bow descended, until the *Aggie,* her decks awash, lay like a worm-eaten log with only the forecastle head and the top of the deck load clearing the surface.

"Float be swaggled," sang out the old man, swinging past the fore rigging from the deck load. "Get in that dinghy, five of you men, and pull! *Float,* is it? What good will it do to float? Get in that boat and pull and if you can't pull, *swim!* If those pirates make the yacht before you do they'll lay claim to her. They'll *own* her, that's what! And if a breeze comes up they're off—and we'll keep right on floating! Tumble to, now, every hand of you, and get away from here. That's the game! You stay by the ship with me, Mr. Farrier."

"Come on then, Ben!" sang out Ross, who had already lowered himself to the dinghy.

Ben-Tenny dropped down into the boat followed by Roy Harlow, Jim Murphy, and Ed O'Neal. They pulled clear, one man tinkering with the "kicker" engine while four more pulled for what their arms were worth. And when the motor started they pulled the harder, the sound of the exhaust dying away in the distance as a hovering cloud of vapor enveloped them in the uncertainty of their project.

The old man grunted as he turned his eyes from the cloudy hope. He lifted his neglected Aggie to his arms. She clung to him hysterically. In him was the only salvation.

"And you said we'd be rich!" she sobbed. "You said we'd be rich. You said we'd sell the cargo and pay our debts. You said we'd hire a master and settled down on shore. Charles, Charles, why did it have to happen? Why couldn't you have——"

"There! Fall off! Come now, Aggie. Crying won't help. We almost landed it all and we may land it yet. She's still floating. We'll find 'er later and tow 'er in. She can't burn much more. She's out now, practically. We'll save every foot of her cargo. Insurance'll patch 'er up."

The old man cleared his throat and attempted to free himself from his wife's embrace.

"By God! I'll fix those highbinders. Ross'll get there! If he doesn't, then we're as good pirates as they! Where's Barnacle?"

"Hare, sorr. Dot iss, Ay tank so."

The voice sounded miles away.

"Where are you?"

"Hare! Hare! B'low the foks'l head!"

"What are you up to?"

"Op t' von hell-ll of a yob, ef yeh want

t' know. It's a vonder vy somebody don't lend a hand!"

"What have you got?" asked Farrier, dragging himself to his feet. He was so exhausted he could scarcely lift a foot.

"Barrel o' salt pork! Vy don't yeh caum and help. She's heavy, mon. Ay vos dom near drowned gettin' 'er aup from d'forepeak."

"Good! You're all right! Lend him a hand, Dick! Or, that is, never mind. Here, take this."

The old man shifted his cargo to Farrier. Aggie accepted the substitute but the substitute did not accept Aggie. He transferred her nervously to Roberta, followed the skipper down the ladder to the main deck and entered the boatswain's locker chest deep in water.

"Any more cases below?" asked the skipper.

"Four fadom down, yes, sorr. I got dis aup afore ve sunk."

"Very well, leave them where they are. We can't sink any deeper."

The three men returned to the forecastle head, dripping with water. Farrier dropped to the deck and fell fast asleep. The old man and Barnacle Joe sat side by side on a coiled sheet. They said nothing. Roberta arranged the folds of the staysail into a kind of a hammock where she laid her mother. Then she lay down upon a coil of rope and cried. Chronometer boxes, brass clocks, sextants, dustpans, cabbages and kings swarmed and whirled her away to dreams just as the morning broke.

CHAPTER XVI.

"TWO SEPER'T' BOATS."

Farrier slept the clock around through a tangle of dreams of hungry man-eaters wallowing in a sea of flame. They grinned at him through rows of saw-edged teeth. They tore at his vitals. They dragged him down to submarine craters where a great fire-eyed devilfish reached out with two slippery arms and drew him close to its soft, breathing body. Heat was stifling. With a last effort Farrier strained to free himself. The monster, in rage, blew a cloud of purple ink which caused the sea to boil, steam and evaporate. Farrier found himself high and dry on the forecastle head, struggling with a huge hawse line tangled about his limbs.

He raised his head and looked about. The past was a nightmare but the present seemed no less a vague dream. Through a dim stratum of smoke the sun burned its way into a sea of slag—molten lead covered with its dross. A thick, oily scum, pocked and pimpled with bubbles, covered the surface, which was smudged and littered with ashes and cinders. The sky was inflamed. Through hovering smoke it appeared a burning rash; the setting sun—a sore.

Wet with perspiration, and dry for want of water Farrier rose dizzily to his feet. Men on the deck load aft moved here and there like shadows. Farrier wondered if he had not slept a week when he realized what had been accomplished. Just abaft the foremast stood a cabin built of mining timbers. A light burned within. Smoke issued from a stovepipe leading through the side. Ridged over the main boom was a great tent made from sail canvas. From the spanker mast hung the cargo boom, its hoist hanging above the wreck.

" 'Lo dare, Tarry Dick-me-boy!" greeted Barnacle Joe at the cabin door. "Ve taut you vos dead. Vot-cha tink of dis here galley, hey?"

"Fine. What's it for?"

"Vot's it for! Caum-eer. Ay show you vot's it for!"

Farrier followed the little cook into the galley and stopped short in amazement. In one corner stood the old stove, in another rested the table evidently rescued from the forecastle. Numerous buckets, together with several charred and dented pots, pans and other "gadgets" littered the bulkheads and deck.

"Where did the stove come from?" asked Farrier.

"Vare d'yeh tank he come from? Ve yorrk him out vit de cargo boom. Day gona yorrk out a lot more too. Vater, mebby!"

"Water? Have you any now?"

To Farrier even the thought was refreshing.

"To-morrow morning," said Barnacle Joe, nodding significantly at a queer apparatus on the stove.

It appeared to be simply two fire pails—one inverted, the other upright—fixed rim to rim. About the lower one had been stretched a strip of canvas, flume shaped, into which frequent drops of water fell from the inverted bucket above. From the can-

vas the content was directed to a container below, by means of a tin flume.

"Could you believed it? Dem drops is fresh vater, made out of pure ocean. She yust started to vorrk a few minutes ago. Ross he inwented it. He told me fer teh keep puttin' vet rags on top of de bottom of de top baucket dere."

"On the top of the bottom of the top of——"

"Sure, like dis!"

Barnacle Joe saturated a cloth with salt water and laid it over the inverted bucket.

"He says fer teh keep de top von cool and de bottom von hot. Don't dat put weevils in yer foretop?"

"It's a condenser!" said Farrier. "I wonder how it works?"

"Yeh! Condenser! Dot's vot he said it vos. Tarry-me-boy, ve done lots vile you vos dere asleep. Cap'n gave orders fer to let you die if yeh vaunted to. He said you'd die anyhow if you didn't gat saum sleep. Lucky for you, *hein? Ay* ain't slept fer more dan tventy-four hours—sance day before jesterday mornin' at four bells. Ay been vorkin' too. Ay built dis here galley. Good yob, hey Dick, fer a barnacle?"

Farrier laughed, but continued to examine the condenser.

"You don't gat it, hey? Vel, Ay show you. Over de bottom baucket dere's a funnel. Hare's d'rim stickin' out. Dot catches de steam on de inside and shoots it aup troo de small end. Ven she hits d' inside of d' up-side-down baucket she gats cold and torns to vater. Den she drips down on d' outside off de funnel and rons out hare, say? Into dis hare canvas and down on de tin into dot third baucket there."

"Good enough! How long will it take to make a bucket of fresh water?"

"Ross said it tack all night. Dan ve all have a drank. Dick, if you're as torsty as me you couldn't spat. Dot you couldn't!"

Farrier watched anxiously as the precious fluid ran glittering about the canvas flume. The fabric had been waxed to conserve its cargo. Already the bottom of the container on deck was partly submerged.

"No von touches it, Dick-me boy, till morning," said the little cook who observed the thirsty look in Farrier's eyes. "Yeh see, dey traust me, Dickie, or Ay'd drank it all meself."

"You're right," said Farrier. "There's more than number one to think of now."

"To-morrow dere'll be enough fer all hands. Pretty soon ve gat all ve need from de tank aft. Dey're gona rig aup sump'n fer teh paump it aup."

"Hello there, Dick," came a voice from the door.

Farrier turned and saw Ross clad only in a pair of dungarees. His face was ashy gray. Great beads of perspiration streaked his cheeks; his lips were colorless and his eyes drooping and circled.

"Well! Hello there, Ross! What's the matter. You look all in."

"All in! I should say so!"

Ross dropped into a chair, his eyes upon the condenser.

"How's she working, Barnacle?"

"Yust started."

"Good! Lord, I'm thirsty."

"Yeh, tank Heaven de sun's vant down. You torn in and to-morrow mornin' you gat vater."

"Who'll watch the condenser to-night? We've got to keep that fire going."

"I'll do it," volunteered Farrier. "I've slept all day."

Barnacle Joe eyed him suspiciously. "Ay tank Ay vatch too!"

"No use," said Ross. "You turn in. You've been working all day."

"Den, Dick, you don't *drank* none!"

"I'll promise you that."

"Good! D' yob's yours."

Barnacle Joe left the galley.

"Well, Ross," said Farrier, "tell me about it. What happened over at the yacht?"

"Very little. We didn't want to start what we couldn't finish. They beat us to it. Our dinghy was loaded till 'er wake topped 'er gun'ls. The kicker kicked, but wasn't worth its own weight. Weight gummed the deal. We used sculls too and went jerking along like five men in a tub. It seemed like we stalled dead between every stroke. Catch Steve? Say, Dick, there wasn't a chance. Steve in that whaleboat of his, with four men at the sweeps, slid over the water *blue-jacket-bent-for-a-hula-dance.* Naturally he got there first, and lined his men up along the rail with five pea shooters.

" 'Well?' he said.

" 'Very well, thank you,' said we.

" 'Never mind that,' he yelled, 'what's the game?'

" 'I bite! What *is* the game?'

" 'It might be just as healthy for you if you learn the rules and learn 'em quick!' he

said; 'and the first one is: you can't come prowlin' around my yacht and live.'

"I asked him where he got this 'my' stuff.

" 'Who wants to know?' he sang out.

" 'Who told you to ask?' I came back at him.

" 'That's for you to find out!' he said; 'and if you don't pull that scow away from here I'll blow you clean out of the ocean.'

" 'Then it's your intention to maroon us —women and all, is it?'

" 'Them's our intentions except fer the women. Them you can send over.'

"Dick, if Roy Harlow hadn't stopped me I'd 'a' popped him one: I reached for my gun, but Roy grabbed it first. Lucky thing or I wouldn't be here now.

" 'If it's food and water yeh want,' said Steve, 'we ain't got none. So as far as that goes we're in the same boat. Otherwise, we're in two seper't' ones.'

"So you see, there was nothing to do but turn back. Glad we did. We'll starve 'em into doing whatever we want, if this calm lasts. We've got salt pork and beef—six cases of it down in the forepeak—and we'll have water to-morrow. That condenser'll do till we get at the remaining water tank. So we're fixed for food and water. As far as bedding and clothes are concerned, the foks'l was full of them. Sinking gave them the bath they needed. We found the stove down in the wreck and hauled 'er up. All these cooking gears too. To-morrow we'll get a lot more. *Keep away the breeze!* is all I say, and day after to-morrow we'll load everything aboard the yacht and sail away —the skipper in command.

"Say Dick, it's lucky somebody saved that sextant. When we got back aboard, there wasn't a soul with a match and the fire aft was out. We had to have fire to make water and cook the food. So what did Roy do but take a lens out of the telescope in the sextant, take a lamp from the ceiling of the foks'l, and light the wick. He held the lens up in the sun, focused the rays on the wick and inside of a minute the lamp was burning."

"Lucky enough," said Farrier. "What did you do with Mrs. Newmiller and Roberta?"

"They're in the tent aft. We made partitions inside and everything. They slept a while up on the foks'l head till the sun drove them down. Outside of being a little thirsty with the rest of us, they're not so bad off."

Ross rose and examined the condenser. Drops were falling faster than ever.

"Not such a bad hunch, was it, Dick?" said he with pride. "To-night, when it's all boiled away, fill 'er up and start 'er going again. She loses about half the water in steam. And don't forget to change the rags. The oftener you do it the more water we get."

"Trust me," said Farrier.

"Good night. See you in the morning."

Ross dragged himself to his feet and left the galley. Farrier threw wood into the stove, extinguished the lamp and went on deck.

The sea was pressed by the weight of silence. Here and there on deck lay the forms of sleeping men, like soldiers after the din of battle.

CHAPTER XVII.

LOVE.

Farrier sat on the edge of the deck load moving his feet in slow cadence with the rise and fall of ground swells. The vessel lay so low that at times he felt the refreshing coolness of water bearing lightly upon the soles of his feet. His fancy wandered through the stars of the Southern Cross. This was his first opportunity for thought since he had left Stevens plotting with the men of the forecastle. But even now thought missed stays. It lost its bearing, foundered on the Milky Way and sank through black nothingness beyond the universe.

"Ross told me you were here and I came to——"

Roberta's voice was so unexpected that Farrier, struggling to rise, missed his footing and nearly fell overboard.

"Be careful!" she laughed.

"I nearly took a header that time. I didn't hear a sound till you spoke. I thought you were asleep long ago."

"I'm slept out," she said, smiling. "I've slept most of the day, like you."

Farrier shoved a coil into position with his foot.

"There! You can lean back on that. You don't mind sitting down for a little chat, do you?"

"Not at all," said Roberta, as Farrier assisted her to a seat. "In fact, I came out here for that purpose."

"I'm glad you did. Hang your feet over

this way, only look out for the water. It comes up high sometimes. That's fine! This lookout job's a lonely one. I'm here to keep the home-brew brewing, you know."

"Is it really brewing after all?" asked Roberta, pillowing her back against the coil. "Ross told me all about it. Goodness, I hope it works! I'm thirsty, aren't you?"

"I should say I am! But that condenser's working fine. We'll all have a drink in the morning."

A short silence followed while Farrier gazed absently at two shadows in the water —one of Roberta, the other of himself. He imagined them to be the last living beings on earth. He pictured the *Aggie* a desert island where Roberta and he were the only survivors of a shipwrecked crew.

"May I guess what you are thinking?" asked Roberta.

Farrier turned abruptly. Roberta too had been gazing into the water.

"I'll give you three guesses," said he.

"Very well, then, you were thinking about me."

"But that's only half," protested Farrier. "What else? Did the rest make your ears burn?"

"Not exactly. It made them ache. You were thinking about the way I talked to you last night."

"Nonsense. You miss your guess."

But Roberta continued. "Please excuse me for what I said. I misunderstood your motives in taking sides against the men. But Ross told me that Donivan Stevens started the mutiny of his own accord."

"Who else could it have been?"

"It could have been most anybody, Dick. Father himself! I thought it *was* father!"

"The news didn't displease him much, I'll admit," said Farrier, reminiscently. "He laughed. He seemed tickled to death. He called the mutiny *his*. It wasn't his at all. I was there when it started. I overheard everything. It was over some childish idea of working a gold mine on Malaita Island. Stevens wanted the *Aggie* and her cargo for that purpose. Your father had nothing to do with it."

"I realize that now. It so happened father was not to blame, but how was I to know?"

Farrier laughed. "Was he guilty till he proved his innocence? What on earth made you blame the captain?"

Roberta did not answer. She only turned away.

"Never mind," said Farrier. "It's not my business. If he wanted mutiny, he got it, and it's all over now. The whole game's beyond me anyhow."

"I'm sorry, Dick," said Roberta, her voice trembling. "I'd tell you everything if I could—if it involved only me. Some day, if we come out of this tangle, you may learn. Now all I can say is, the *game* you mentioned is an unfair one. You've been playing against odds."

"*I* have! I haven't been playing at all."

"That's just it. You haven't known."

"I haven't known *what?* What was there to know?"

"I should think you could have seen through it long ago. It's so obvious. Think a moment. You were brought to sea by force. You were made a ship's officer. And I— But never mind that. It makes no difference now."

"But what's it all about? What have I to do with it? Is it all hinged on me?"

"No, not quite. You're only part. That is—you *were*. But now it's all over. I'm out of it. So are you."

Farrier was mystified. All that Roberta had told him, all that had happened, only increased his bewilderment.

"Dick," said Roberta, demandingly; "can you honestly tell me that you don't understand—*now*—after all this?"

"I swear by all that's good, Roberta, I don't understand anything. I don't know what you are talking about. I don't know why I was forced aboard the *Aggie*, especially when I wanted to ship anyhow. I don't know why I was made an officer—except that——"

Farrier stopped short. He was thinking about the night of the mutiny when he had surprised the skipper in the sanctum. He was thinking of the quart bottle of whisky on the table. That could account for anything.

"Except," continued Farrier; "except that there was no one else for the job but me and Barnacle Joe. They needed him for cook."

"That was the *excuse*, of course," laughed Roberta. "But it was not the reason. Things might not have been so easy for you without the special favor of powers that be."

"Easy! Easy for what? To get the job

as third mate? I had no special aspiration for that!"

Roberta regarded him with frank doubt. "Dick, I admire the pretension, but I can't believe you. Can you tell me, *honestly,* why you took sides against the men?"

"Because," said Farrier slowly, "because, in the first place, had I cared to join the mutineers, Steve would not have permitted it. He led the men to mistrust me. Therefore I considered myself alone. I saw the ship in danger. There was nothing to do then, but warn your father."

"And was there no other reason?"

Roberta was cool and commanding. It was evident she intended to leave nothing unsaid. Farrier knew that there *had* been another reason, a vital one; one that involved an inmost and sacred regard for the girl he loved.

"Roberta," he said, with conviction, "there *was* another reason, but it's a personal one. Some day you may know."

Roberta smiled knowingly.

"Perhaps," she said, "it's not quite as personal as you think. Perhaps we have known all along."

"*We!* What do you mean by that?"

"Who shanghaied you? Who made you third mate? And who——"

Roberta paused, then digressed in a voice that was nearly a whisper. "Was there never a time, Dick, when you thought I cared for you—cared for you a great deal?"

Farrier felt a sudden passion tingling in every vein. It burned like fire. It flared to heights of madness. He clenched his fists to rein in emotions. He held his breath, struggling to face the issue.

"No, Roberta," he said, at last. "There never was. Once I thought you pretended to care for me. I thought you were trifling with Stevens' affections, using me as the instrument."

"And after that?"

"After that—after the fight, I realized you thought nothing of Stevens and little of me. Then I began to care for you. I loved you, Roberta! I love you now!"

Farrier realized that Roberta's hand was clasped tightly in his own. He realized that he was drawing her to his embrace. He felt her cling to his shoulder. Then, as if by a sudden impulse, she was thrusting him away, holding her head apart from a threatening kiss.

"No! No! Don't! You must not! Please!"

"But I love you, Roberta! Everything you asked that I could not answer is answered now. I want to be with you always. I want to make you my wife."

"And you would be willing to do so," asked the girl, slowly; "even if I had nothing to give in return—not even love?"

Farrier, recovering his senses, slowly relaxed his embrace.

"You do not love me, then? You feel that you never could?"

Roberta did not answer.

"Answer me, please. If it is true you don't and can't, then—that will be all. For your sake I'd leave the ship, and you."

"That's what you must do, Dick, as soon as possible. Please don't ask me any more. I can't answer. I like you as well as I like any one on earth. That's all I can say. You must never speak of it again. It can't be. I'm through with the whole miserable scheme. I'm out of it."

"'Miserable scheme!' What miserable scheme? Roberta! For God's sake, tell me! I can straighten it all out for you. I know I can!"

"You can't. No you can't, Dick. I tried to show you, but you can't understand. It's all over now. There'll be no more of it."

Roberta buried her head in her arms, sobbing like a child.

"It was left for me to put things right," she cried. "I had to do it. I had to!"

Farrier rose and lifted her to her feet.

"But things aren't right. Nothing is right. It can't be until you have answered my question."

"I told you that I can't."

"Never?"

"No, Dick, never. It can't be." Roberta held out a trembling hand. "Good night," she said softly.

"Good night," and Farrier took her hand in both of his. Her grasp was prolonged and responsive, but suddenly she withdrew and turned abruptly for her tent.

"Don't go, Roberta. Please!"

But Roberta vanished like a white shadow through darkness, leaving Farrier to untangle the situation alone during the long night watch.

He returned to the edge of the deck load and sat appealing to every source of reason. What was the "miserable scheme" with which Roberta identified herself and others?

What had it to do with being shanghaied, with being a ship's officer, and finally with Roberta's petty flirtations? Why had the skipper wanted mutiny? What was now right that had once been wrong?

But again thought foundered. It was no use. And after all, with life there was hope of Roberta still, and with hope of this Farrier filled the night with daydreams.

CHAPTER XVIII.

SALVAGE.

Love was ever a playground for emotion but a wilderness for thought. Emotion, wild as the wind, races through the jungle maze regardless of highways or trails, forgetful of the past, careless of the future and observing only the twinkle of lights and shadows projected upon the green moss carpet from leaves above. Thought enters cautiously. It blazes its way, marks every tree, observes the general direction and movement of shadows, orients itself by the sun, measures the distance traversed, estimates the distance ahead, consults seasoned woodsmen and holds fast to the beaten track.

Roberta, subject to both forces, was torn between happiness and grief. Had she been given to hysteria she could have expressed herself. Her emotions danced to the music of love while thought, garbed in sackcloth and ashes, was trammeled by penitence and regret.

In seclusion of the tent where space had been set off with canvas partitions for the sake of her privacy Roberta fell upon her rudely constructed cot and buried her face in a pillow. She was lonely. She wondered why she had left Farrier so early. She had been content beside him. She could not be content otherwise. Yet despite it all she had told him to leave her forever—to forget.

Then she put herself in Farrier's place as she had done so often before. Could he, knowing the truth, find happiness in her? Could any man knowing himself the object of such intrigue remain unshaken in love? True, she had identified him with the same selfish ends entangling her, but now she regarded the suspicion as groundless, else why had he not exposed his purpose when she had forwarded the opportunity?

To-night his advances had been unpremeditated and spontaneous. Had he harbored an ulterior motive—had he regarded her as an "ordeal" or "requisite" in accordance with Lord Farrier's will—at least he was no slave to it. He had proved himself master of his own. He had chosen his course and left the rest to destiny and the four winds, not knowing that they had been taken by the horns and bound captive to the *Aggie Newmiller*.

So, for Roberta, connivance had turned boomerang and had lodged itself deeply in her conscience. Farrier's prospective wealth and prestige, which once had coaxed her on, now stood as a glaring barrier between her and all that she cared for in the world. Even could she be considered by the executor of Lord Farrier's will as a woman "eminently respectable and of good repute" and justified in filling a position as daughter-in-law to his late lordship, still she would be totally unjustified and unworthy not only in the eyes of him she loved but also in the eyes of God. She had aspired to Dick Farrier's possessions; now she was unworthy of his affections. That she loved him she had no doubt; otherwise she might have yielded to the temptations of his proposal.

She felt a strange joy in the sacrifice—so strange in fact that her eyes expressed it with tears, her hands by gripping the pillow, and her heart by a burning pain.

Hours dragged by, but they brought no sleep until early morning. Then it seemed no sooner had she closed her eyes than she was awakened by voices outside the tent, and: "Come, Roberta! My gracious!"

Needless to say it was Aggie. She was peering through the curtains with an expression of profound indignation.

"Have you been that way all night? You look like the wake of a tornado! You might at least have removed your dress. *Goodness!* What are things coming to! Come into my tent immediately and straighten yourself up!"

"Yes, mother."

"Well come then—hurry! Don't keep breakfast waiting."

And breakfast did not wait. In fifteen minutes all hands were assembled in the outer tent. Five worn, ungroomed men with little to say, filed along a table built of mining timber and took seats on whatever keg or cracker box lay within reach. The old man, as usual, drew up to the head—Mrs. Newmiller on one hand, Roberta on the other.

"Where's Ross?" he grumbled.

"He's in the galley, working on the con-

denser," said Harlow. "He wants to make it work faster."

"Always fooling with something! Can't leave good enough alone. You tell him to come here and quit his bothering the cook."

But Ross strode in at that moment with a pail of water, a saucepan and a broad smile. He placed the bucket on the table, filled the saucepan and offered it to his mother.

"Goodness! Is this what we have to drink from?"

"It's not what you drink *from* but what you *drink* that will keep you alive," averred Ross.

"This is no private yacht!" put in the old man. "Drink it up—and sharp—or we'll die of thirst watching you."

Though a little embarrassed Mrs. Newmiller obeyed and the makeshift loving cup went from hand to hand until it was nearly empty. Meanwhile Barnacle Joe had entered with a fire pail containing salt pork. With great solemnity he distributed frying pans, saucepans, pie pans and pieces of box wood along either side of the table.

"Ay christen dem tings *plates!*" he said; "and dese here"—he tossed some handmade wooden scoops upon the table—"dem dere's *spoons!*"

"And I fancy you christened that stuff in the bucket *food!*" said the skipper with a glare that might have been christened *smile.*

"Dat's what Ay don't. Ay christen dat *dam-brosia fer de gawds.* And ven Ay catch a sea gaul you gat torrkey."

Barnacle Joe helped all hands to a sample of what remained in the ship's store before taking his turn at the water bucket. After that no one noticed him. Thirty-six hours of fasting, however, justified the christenings and all hands finished breakfast fit for a day's work.

After helping her mother to put the tent in order Roberta went on deck. The morning was already sweltering. Timbers of the deck load were blurred and shimmering from the heat. The sea was calm and glassy though still filmed with oil and wreckage. The yacht was a mere speck on the sky line. All life seemed vested in the ever-watchful scavengers of the sea. White and rose-colored boatswain birds with long, crimson plumage, gulls with their frock coats and sea hawks soared above the vessel or skimmed the waves in search of food. A long, black shark, its dorsal fin slicing the surface, patrolled its beat like a grim sentinel waiting for trespassers. Wondering what manner of premonition had brought the monster to this fateful spot Roberta shuddered and turned away.

Barnacle Joe was busy splitting wood for fuel. Farrier was nowhere to be seen. Evidently he had turned in. Roberta started aft where men were engaged in more interesting occupations—especially the skipper who was again in his element.

"Leggo the fall! Take it through the snatch block! Get a handy-billy on it! Slack away, there, Mr. O'Neal, on the toppin' lift. No, not that! *Toppin'* lift! Don't you know what a toppin' lift is? Stand clear of that. Never saw the likes of it. What good's an engineer on a sailing vessel? That's the boy. Slack 'er a bit. Good! All hands on the watch tackle. All together! Sing out, somebody! *Lean* on it! *Break* it! *And* again! *Once* more! Take a turn. Good!"

And so it went; the old man making all the noise, the rest doing all the work, until before noon the worst of the débris was cleared and many slightly damaged articles of value salvaged.

Roy Harlow was the most spectacular worker of them all. He would swing out upon the fall block over the wreckage, lower himself into the flooded hull, swim down with a sling and remain submerged sometimes for as long as a minute. Breaking surface again he would wave his arm and with four men at the tackle up would come some bulky piece of mechanism to be swung to deck.

Harlow was in the summer of his youth, blessed with a bright nature, though stamped with an indelible grin. He seemed chronically amused at the glaring contrast of his own ruddy cheeks and auburn hair. As he emerged from the water his face was nearly scarlet and his sleek hair shone like polished gold. He wore only a pair of blue denim breeches brailed up to the knees and belted with spunyarn above the hips. Well-developed muscles stood out upon his body, the skin of which, already sunburned, glistened with scattered drops of salt water that trickled down along the less prominent contours of his back and chest.

Men on the deck load listened eagerly to reports of his submarine discoveries. He had found the union to the water tank, an elbow, nipple and pipe to fit. He had brought

up a Stillson wrench much to the satisfaction of all hands. He had taken it down with him again—the wrench together with a four-inch chest expansion that furnished him enough reserve oxygen and time to disengage the connection and insert a plug. Next the nipple and elbow were fixed to the union, and the long pipe with one extremity above the surface was engaged, offering direct access to fresh water.

The crew knocked off to celebrate. All hands joined Harlow for a plunge into the flooded area of the wreck, protected from sharks by what remained of the hull. Barnacle Joe, all smiles, portioned out a small amount of distilled water and a ration of salt pork. After refreshments men worked until sundown raising the bilge pump to the deck load. Farrier, who had blurred the forenoon with cat naps, joined the active members of the crew and worked with them even after darkness closed in. The skipper's resolution to put the pump to action was not without results and before Barnacle Joe was allowed to announce dinner fresh water bubbled from the outlet in as great a volume as could be desired.

The night continued calm. All hands, except Farrier, the watchman, turned in with expressions of supreme satisfaction. The worst of the battle, they thought, was over. But Roberta wondered, while discreetly avoiding further words with Farrier, what adventures might cross his path as he paced the deck through the long night watch. Stevens and his men she knew were thirsty. They had the rifles. The *Aggie Newmiller* had the water.

CHAPTER XIX.

MUTINEERS' SURRENDER.

Roberta was not alone in her suspicion. Had not the skipper warned Farrier, common sense would have sufficed. Men were seldom given to death by thirst or starvation with water and food so close at hand.

So he worked hard long after all hands had turned in. He was building barricades of mining timber—one on either quarter and one on either bow, so that any part chosen by Stevens as an objective might offer protection for the defense. The task was not easy. Ten-by-twelves are not the simplest things in the world for one man to move, especially if he is hindered by a partially disabled arm.

Within a few hours, however, the fort was complete or at least as much so as Farrier intended that it should be. But clear weather is guaranteed only by the wearing of a raincoat and so the watchman paced away a long and uneventful night, at first thinking of Roberta, later struggling against sleep.

But morning came—also Donivan Stevens. Stevens hove up in the whaleboat. Gloomy Gus and Black-fin were at the sweeps. A dozen or more rifles lay heaped by the after thwart.

"Ahoy! Dick! Where's the skipper?" sang out Stevens.

"He's not up yet. What do you want?"

"Want t' talk t' one of the officers."

"At your service, Steve."

"Belay on that. We're thirsty. Got anything aboard?"

"What'll it be? Scotch or Bourbon?"

Stevens muttered something to Black-fin. The whaleboat drew closer.

"See here, sonny," said Black-fin, "we got arms enough here t' blow you clean over the port bow."

"And I've got crust enough to dare you to try it," said Farrier. "So many *arms* and so few *hands* put you somewhat up the creek. Where's the rest of your crew?"

"Say Dick, quit the bluster. If we wuz here t' start sump'n' we'd 'a' brought the gang. But we ain't here fer that. We want water."

"The ocean's full of it. Help yourself and cool off before you address a ship's officer with such marked disrespect."

"Well, if that don't beat everythin'! So you're an officer, eh? Well, then, *Mr. Farrier,* would you be so kind as to o-blige this here yacht's company with you hospidillity?"

"I probably would," said Farrier, "if that there yacht's company would be so kind as to send up those guns."

"Well now, ain't that jest sweet of you? We'll turn over them guns for forty gallons o' water and a keg o' pork."

"How do you know we *have* all that?"

"Don't you fancy we can see that there pump? And don't you s'pose we know there's whack in the forepeak? Now listen here, Dick——"

"Mr. Farrier."

"*Mr. Farrier!* echoed Stevens with a long sweeping bow; "we come over here fer t' make an offer t' ye. We're gona take you

all aboard the yacht. You can't get no place in this hulk and you know it."

"Very well, Steve, send up the guns and come aboard."

"You'll give us the water and whack then?"

"You'll have to talk that over with the skipper. In the meantime, however, you can send your men back to the yacht and get them to pull her over here. Sav-ee?"

"Now looka here, Dickey——"

"Mr. Farrier."

"Say, belay on that funny stuff. We come here to play square."

"All right, do what I tell you then."

"Aw, quit blowin' with'n," growled Black-fin. "We want water and we got t' get it."

Meanwhile the whaleboat had drifted alongside.

"Mon to mon, Dick," said Gloomy Gus, "vot's de game?"

"That's up to the skipper but I'll take care of the preliminaries. Send up the guns. Send Steve aboard here and go after the yacht."

"Pull dat jot five mile? Vot-che-tack oos for?"

"Very little at the very most, but you're men enough, I take it, for that—four of you."

Stevens found mutual consent in reluctant glances from Black-fin and Gloomy Gus.

"Rifles first?" said Stevens. "All right. Send down a tackle."

Farrier rigged a handy-billy and the arms were lifted to the deck load. Stevens climbed over the side and stared about in amazement.

"Have to hand it to you fellas," he said. "You done a lot in the past two days. Looks like you intended to stay here a year."

"We could come close to doing it, at that," said Farrier.

Gloomy Gus and Black-fin shoved off heading for the yacht.

"What's all this? What's going on here? Mr. Stevens, who gave you permission to board this vessel?"

They turned and saw the skipper, followed by Ross, come pounding over the deck load.

"I was ordered aboard, cap'n," said Stevens. "Eh—Mr. Farrier here, done it. He says he's third mate."

"And in the future you'll obey his orders more promptly, *understand?*"

Stevens answered with a grin.

"Well, you better understand! Come here! I want to talk to you. Mr. Farrier, turn out the cook. Get him on the job. Where is everybody this morning? Turn 'em out, Ross. Great Cæsar's suspenders! Sharp now! Come in my tent, Mr. Stevens."

Stevens obeyed. The two remained in conference for half an hour while Barnacle Joe held breakfast and all hands waited. Aggie complained that such was always the case. When she was late Charles never forgot it. When Charles was late—that was different. She concluded with a sigh, and: "Oh, these men! If their feet weren't so large they might sometimes put themselves in women's boots and be reasonable! Charles! When *will* you come to breakfast and stop that jabbering in there?"

Charles did not answer but came shortly from his compartment, followed by Stevens. The latter lost no time in finding the water bucket, while the old man in all his majesty drew up at the head of the table with "Where's breakfast! I thought some one said breakfast was ready!"

"Dot it is!" cried Barnacle Joe who entered at that moment with the usual bucket of salt pork in one hand and an *un*usual something on an improvised wooden platter in the other. "Dis morning vee gat torrkey, be yomping yew-fish!"

A groan followed as men found seats about the table.

"I'll try anything once," said Ross. "Anything is better than salt pork."

"You sit there, Mr. Farrier—next to Roberta," said Aggie. "Young people shouldn't be separated."

Roberta seemed not to hear the remark. She was scrutinizing, as was every one else, the queer roast birds on the wooden platter. Black sea bass have been prepared in tins and called "salmon;" tinned albacore and barracuda have been labeled "tuna;" quail, served out of season, have been dubbed "Rocky Mountain owl;" but it required a vigorous stretching of the imagination to regard roast sea gull as turkey.

"Turkey!" yelled the old man. "Never saw the likes of it."

"He vouldn't taste bad," protested the cook. "Try 'im."

The skipper taking a strangle hold upon one of the unfortunate scavengers sliced off a piece with his sheath knife, speared it with the point and thrust it suddenly in the

face of Barnacle Joe with, "Here, you, eat it!"

Barnacle licked his chops and ate.

"Now!" growled the old man. "How do you find it?"

"If dot ain't yust lack torrkey Ay never vos shief cook fer Yon D. Rocker-faller."

Investigation by the crew proved that "John D." had escaped the products of such a chef. Some, including Aggie and Roberta, refused to sample the delicacy. Others tried it, but resorted later to salt pork. The old man had never tasted "the likes." Stevens ate what was given him and said nothing. Ben-Tenny remarked that it tasted like a combination of shark fin and ground squirrel. There was no one present to dispute the comparison. Aggie was too interested in Farrier and Roberta to dwell on roast sea gull.

"What's the matter, Mr. Farrier?" she asked. "Don't you feel well this morning? You haven't said a word."

"The watch last night was a long one for me, Mrs. Newmiller. I'm so sleepy I feel only half present."

"And you, Roberta?" she continued, frowning. "You seem to be only a quarter present."

"I didn't sleep well last night, mother."

"You mean you didn't go to bed until early this morning. Really, Mr. Farrier, you mustn't let the child stay up with you on your watches so late."

"I went to bed early last night!" put in Roberta promptly.

"You were up till all hours the night before, I recollect."

"Mother! *Please!* I wasn't!"

"What if she was or wasn't? Whose business is that?" roared the old man, and the rest of the meal was finished in silence; that is—as much silence as Ben-Tenny would permit. He was eating.

Farrier excused himself and left the table rather early. The one thing in the world he most wanted now was tobacco. The supply aboard had been ruined by salt water. He thought of the little cigar stand in St. Helens where he had been able to buy "two-fers." Resting against one of the barricades he looked seaward while his memory drifted back to "Mary's Little Lamb," otherwise known as "The Sign of the Greasy Spoon." He remembered Ross' offer to furnish means of stowing away. He recalled the remark involving Roberta's liking for books and book fanciers. He thought of Roberta playing the coquette—the results—and numerous incidents that began slowly to shape their courses and point to one conclusion. Seizing upon the clew, he reviewed Mrs. Newmiller's remarks at the *Aggie's* breakfast table—remarks which caused her daughter to blush with indignation. All this he identified with the "miserable scheme" referred to by Roberta as being so "obvious."

For some unknown reason he, Tarry Dick the stowaway, had been chosen as a matrimonial prospect for the captain's daughter. One link, the most important of all, was still missing. This was, *why?*

But his sleepy mind could dredge no farther. He packed the mystery away with him to bed. Dreams, however, were too fragile for its weight, and he awoke with other thoughts.

The tent was like an oven but when he walked outside it was leaving stove for fire. The sun struck down from the meridian with a will to torture, while the *Aggie's* timbers groaned and the sea writhed under the oppression. A blur of air simmered dizzily above the deck, though farther beyond it remained motionless and dead.

But while Farrier slept results of the skipper's conference had taken form. Alongside the *Aggie* lay the yacht gently rubbing her guard against a wooden fender. Forward, where the crew was toiling, the deck of the forecastle had been torn away, offering a direct lead to the flooded forepeak where the remaining kegs of salt meats were stowed. By means of a hoist rigged from the staysail stay three barrels had already been raised. Roy Harlow, the diver, was working to locate the remainder.

Seeing familiar faces of the old crew Farrier began to count noses. Of the original ship's company—twenty-five in number—there remained only fifteen. Mathsen, assisted by the skipper, had fallen overboard Scotty of the forecastle and Cocky of the galley had died during an argument over butter. Kennedy, the chief engineer, had been shot dead during the mutiny—his remains cremated in the conflagration that followed. Flunky, the cabin boy, had perished in flames of his own making. Deck hands Olaf, Andrew and Jack, together with Shad of the "black gang," had stumbled upon death in battle. Sharks, perhaps, could ac-

count for them as well as for Joe, the oiler who, afraid of fire, had fallen prey to panic and thrown himself into the sea.

But a yacht, only sixty feet over all, must offer rather cramped accommodations for a crew of fifteen.

Farrier climbed aboard to investigate.

She was a trim little vessel of the Gloucester fisherman type. On her transom plate were the words *Maulahe Poupou* which the skipper later translated from a dialect spoken in the southern part of Malaita, as "Evening Star." Inscribed just below was the name *Melbourne,* evidently the vessel's home port.

Decks of the *Evening Star* were of white pine. The trunk cabin rails, cockpit bulkheads and coamings were oiled teakwood. Sails had been lowered but not made fast. Halyards and sheets lay in snarls and tangles—haphazard about the deck. Apparently she was a new but much neglected vessel.

From the cockpit Farrier went below. He explored the interior from stem to stern. In general it too was an example of luxury in distress. Though finished and furnished with mahogany throughout the cabins were littered with refuse, the woodwork was scarred and the various bunks were piled with disheveled bedclothing. The main cabin with four double bunks offered accommodations for eight. The owner's quarters, by similar reckoning, were good for four. A stateroom adjoining had been equipped for two. The forepeak, having two pipe berths, was good for two more, and the engine room for still another. In all she could accommodate seventeen. Counting the skipper as three, this was just enough.

With the exception of food, water and fuel for the auxiliaries the little craft was complete. Food and water she would have. As for fuel, she would have to wait for wind.

And so she waited—waited many days while weary men toiled and restored her to order—waited longer while the food ran low. And then she set out through a crisp south breeze, a bone in her teeth and made a course for the Solomon Islands.

TO BE CONCLUDED.

THE PATH TO PROMINENCE

HENRY WHITE was possessed of none of those dazzling qualities which, in luckier men, challenge admiration and compel popularity. When he first arrived in the town where he was to spend his life nobody noticed him. He went to hard work at his office every day. He got into the habit of settling every problem as it arose. He never sidestepped anything. He reached decisions without waiting to see what others would do. He paid his bills promptly and contributed reasonable amounts to civic and philanthropic causes. As the years went by he saved money and bought property.

One day the local newspaper mentioned "Mr. Henry White, one of our leading citizens." It surprised him. He had not thought of himself as a leading citizen, although he had noted that in recent years men had come to him quite often for advice on the purchase of a lot, the advisability of electing this or that man city commissioner—such matters as come up in the daily life of any town.

He was not alone in his surprise. George Brown, who had started out in life at the same time as he, was surprised too. George Brown had worked hard to be considered "a leading citizen" and had failed. He asked Mr. White to explain the White eminence and the Brown failure. Henry White did not explain it but others did. They remembered that George Brown had always shaped his acts to win the approbation of others. So far as they could tell, Henry White had sought only the approbation of his own conscience. "Not by the lips of others," they said, impressed by the simplicity of their discovery, "but by the light of your own ideals, do you arrive at eminence and dominance among your fellows."

According to Plutarch

By Thomas McMorrow

Author of "Who's Afraid!" "Little Amby," Etc.

When it comes to essentials, are we much wiser than the ancients, after all?

WHEN Jacob Schell walked out of old Castle Garden at the age of eighteen and threw back his shoulders to breathe the free air of Battery Park he was worth thirty dollars in American money. He had been sterilized and fumigated but he still smelled faintly of the immigrant ship.

He sat down on a bench.

"Get up!" said an Irish policeman. "Go to work and make yer fortune! Ye have not come here to rest!"

Jacob Schell got up, and went to work. At the age of forty-eight he was worth thirty million. The fact of his great wealth was brought home to him by the government, which sent him blanks to fill out; and which, on observing that his business was paying very well, declared itself in as a partner. Newly arrived immigrants read about him in the newspapers and furbished up bombs to throw at him. The breed had changed since old Castle Garden was turned into an aquarium.

The pleasure of having so much money was about all the fun he had ever gotten out of it; he was still living in a cheap flat on an unfashionable street. And now it seemed the pleasure was no longer to be all his. He decided to spend a little himself before his new partner took it all.

He bought a large and rusty mansion on Riverside Drive from a man who couldn't afford to keep it and pay his income tax. He polished it up, installed fifty thousand dollars' worth of period furniture from Grand Rapids and married a wife.

He married an actress, which was a clever move. He had been absorbed in business and knew no ladies who would be at home in a mansion on Riverside Drive, so he chose one who could at least pretend to be with some verisimilitude. She was Dorothea de Rochay, whom you may remember seeing in Shakespearean stock, a fine figure of a woman. At the marriage bureau in the Municipal Building she said that she was Rebecca Scharf, widow, aged thirty-five, born in New York, both parents born in Austrian Galicia.

His friends who had marriageable daughters were shocked and amazed for his sake and said that they trusted the match would not turn out so wretchedly as it really ought to. They thought his head had softened and not his heart. They accordingly engineered an assault upon his financial interests. When the dust and his friends had settled he had an extra million that he hadn't wanted and he had their good opinion back, which he valued more.

They brought their daughters to dance at his housewarming while they sat with him in the new library and smoked black cigars and made small talk, asking him what he had paid for his furniture and drifting lightly from the unfilled tonnage of the Steel Corporation to the day's market quotation for call money.

To-day was the first anniversary of the wedding.

They sat in the library. It was afternoon. On the gate-leg table between them were high-priced periodicals, newspapers, Shakespeare complete on India paper in a bronze stand and a large book in a shabby green cover marked on the back "Plutarch's Lives."

They were a year older but the library was as new as ever; neither of the couple was a general reader. They were book-lovers of the type which has preserved to us first folios, first editions and great literature produced in unappreciative times. Five thousand volumes were here behind dust-tight, glass doors, calf-bound, sheeny, creaky, uncut, unopened. Mr. Schell read the newspapers in this imposing vault; Mrs. Schell read thirty-five-cent magazines, printed on coated paper, with expensive illustrations showing ladies in evening dress and men with chiseled features. Perhaps

the books could have taught them nothing; people in mansions cannot learn much from people in garrets. They both understood life, and if books do not help us to do that they lose our time, for all their fine talk.

Mr. Schell dropped the newspaper on his lap; like everything else in the house his newspaper was the best New York afforded, a conservative sheet whose financial page was up to the minute and whose editorial columns said that the earth had not moved since the first election of President McKinley and held that any assertion to the contrary was a piece of radical propaganda.

He looked into the open fire beneath the Caen stone mantel; it was wintertime. He looked across the table at his wife. She felt his gaze and raised her eyes. They smiled together. Unpremeditatedly they smiled into each other's eyes. Heaven lies about when husband and wife do that.

"Are you happy, Rebecca?" he asked.

"I am very happy," she said.

He raised the newspaper again. He was a short and heavy man with large and fleshy features and a square black beard. His address was straightforward and matter of fact; he inspired confidence by having it. There was no buncombe about him, no side; when he stood up the sun measured him at a glance complete; behind him was no portentous shadow of tradition or family. Napoleon was such a blunt figure; so was Rockefeller before he projected a family in front of him; so was Cromwell, Lenine, Clémenceau. Hard men these first ones, men who are all there. Jacob Schell was proud of his success and of his stately wife and handsome home, but he did not cheapen himself by losing simplicity.

Several packages were open on the table; gifts from friends in honor of the day. The English butler entered, added another and withdrew.

"For you," said Mr. Schell, breaking the string with his big fingers. He thrust aside the wrapping and disclosed a sandalwood box. He threw the wrapping into the fire. I would like to record that he carefully folded the paper and coiled the string for future use, uttering an apothegm in praise of thrift; but he did none of these.

She leaned forward. The box was hinged. He opened it.

"Ah!" she breathed pleasedly. She picked out the gift.

It was a fan. The handle, which was comfortably broad and long, was ebony; the guards on either side of the leaf were of ivory. The outer surfaces of the guards were carved in arbitrary scrolls and fruits and birds with spread wings. In the medallion in the center of one guard was a peasant girl dancing; the medallion of the other guard showed a boy in cloak and doublet, playing with a spear. The ivory was dark with age.

The leaf of the fan was parchment, much worn. It was painted; the subject on one side was the "Judgment of Paris;" Venus, Juno and the rest were come to judgment and were laying bare their respective cases. An expression of indecision was on Paris' brow, for these were not the goddesses of Rubens—fat, fair and forty. Ziegfeld himself could ask for no lovelier than they to stoop to Follies. On the other side was the story of Diana surprised by Actæon.

This pretty toy was very old; one would say so, judging it by the costumes of the figures carven on the guards and by the free display of female charms in the paintings. It would be far-fetched perhaps to draw any inference from the lack of spectators in the courtroom scene.

"Who sends us this?" wondered Mr. Schell, looking with veiled approval on the tinted goddesses.

"Is there a card?" asked Mrs. Schell. "Here it is!"

She studied the white slip.

"'Try the handle,'" she read aloud.

"Eh?"

"There is no name, but just those words: 'Try the handle.' That is queer!"

"Try the handle," muttered Mr. Schell. "There is some trick about it, I suppose. No doubt there is a spring here somewhere and when you press it the fan will turn into something that we don't want. It is too bad; it is a nice fan. I hate these trick things that are not what they seem. Now I wonder——"

He was twisting the handle and pulling on it. The ebony stick suddenly let go of the guards and came off in his hand. He had closed the fan and gripped the guards to get leverage on the handle.

He found himself grasping the hilt of a workmanlike dagger. The blade which he had drawn from the ebony was eight inches long, of strong and polished steel, with a deep groove or blood gutter down each side.

"A paper cutter!" he exclaimed disap-

pointedly. "Who would think of combining a fan and a paper cutter! If I should talk to the man who makes these fans I bet he would be complaining that business is bad!"

A white cord had been wound several turns around the top of the blade, as though the steel had been loose in its sheath. He drew the rest of the cord from the sheath and threw it onto the table, laying the naked dagger upon it.

He noticed his wife's agitation.

"What is the matter, my dear?" he asked.

Mrs. Schell was staring at the dagger which was reddened by its reflection of the fire. Her eyes were widened so that their whites showed above the brown irises, and her mouth was open.

"Oh!" she sighed. "O-oh!"

"What is it then, Rebecca?" he asked, hurrying around to her side and putting an arm about her shoulders. "Is it the fan, my dear?"

"Yes," she said, swallowing and smiling. "I am so silly. I was frightened. What is there to be afraid of? Nothing can come between us. It was—it was the knife! You know it is unlucky to give a knife. It is the unluckiest thing anybody can give. It cuts friendship, and I thought—I thought——"

She looked up at him and he saw the unaffected terror in her eyes.

"Nothing can come between you and me—can there, Jacob? We have been so happy. No, it is impossible. I don't believe it—I *won't* believe it!"

With an angry ejaculation he seized the fan, and made as though to hurl it into the glowing grate. She caught his arm.

"Don't do that," she said, conquering herself and smiling again. "It is perfectly ridiculous to be so superstitious, but we stage people get that way. I'm just going to force myself to be sensible! I am going to keep the fan. Yes, I am going to keep it!"

She paid the cord back into the sheath, thrust the dagger home into it and spread the fan to admire it.

"It is really very pretty," she announced calmly. "We must learn something about fans so that we will have something appropriate to say to whoever sent us this."

He stared at her, shrugged his shoulders and shook out his paper again. He did not understand women and he knew that he did not, which is the beginning of masculine wisdom.

She rose and walked to the door, the fan in her hand.

"I have given myself a slight headache with my nonsense," she said.

He saw her ascending the main staircase in the foyer outside. She did not appear for dinner, and he ate alone.

He did not like that. He had remained a bachelor because business had been to him an engrossing passion. He had had no female friends and had not made the easy acquaintance of the less worthy of the sex which is tendered every man. He had brought to this marriage of his middle age the decent ideas of a lad of twenty—or better, the ideas of any son of Adam who has not been so unfortunate as to have forgotten the holiness of womanhood. He supposed, as always, that women were human beings, different from men but not cheaper. His wife puzzled him at times when, commenting favorably on his attitude, she gave him glimpses of other masculine viewpoints. He disposed of the difficulty with a few sharp questions.

"Huh!" he grunted. "You see, Rebecca, such fellows are not business men!"

He had not wearied of his wife's society. They were past their youth, and their marriage had been frankly one of convenience. She had been poor and he had been lonely. They liked and respected each other and they had undertaken the daunting business of living together. Their association had increased their mutual regard; they were more nearly in love on this their first anniversary than are most couples on like occasion who undertake while suffering from a great and only passion to put up with a friction of likes and whims and habits whose accumulated effects would try the soul of a saint.

"Where's Mrs. Schell?" he grumbled to her maid.

"She's lying down. She's not feeling at all well, sir."

After dinner he went up to see his wife. She refused to let him call a physician. As the next best thing he sat by her bedside and held her pulse and looked at his watch with gravity.

The fan lay on a cabinet. He took it away with him.

He smoked a contemplative cigar in the library, put on his overshoes and coat and set out for a walk.

With the coming of darkness the slush underfoot had frozen; he stepped gingerly

along the Drive between the shoveled ridges of snow. He climbed the steps of a dwelling a mile south of his own and rang the bell.

The maid assisted him out of his overcoat and rubbers and ushered him into a rear room. The spectacled and elderly man who was sitting there rose with a glad welcome. They shook hands and seated themselves.

"I have come to see your fans, Penfold," said Jacob Schell. "You were good enough to ask me several times."

Penfold led the way into a large chamber crowded with glass cases such as one might see in a museum. Displayed under the glass were fans, open-winged like vividly hued butterflies. Some few were shut, with elastic bands about their guards to hold their sticks close. There were in all several hundred specimens.

Jacob Schell bent over the cases while his host told of his collection. The fans were of all shapes and materials. They were made of ivory, shell, mother-of-pearl, rare woods, metals inlaid with gold or silver. Some were in Chinese lacquer decorated with beaten gold.

"This one dates from Rameses the Great, 1300 B. C.," said Penfold, indicating a utensil with a handle as long as a floor mop's.

"What is the idea of having it so big? He could shoo away an eagle with that, Penfold."

"To keep flies off the Pharaoh," smiled Penfold. "Before modern times fans were a necessity. People had no screens and in hot weather they were fairly eaten up by flies! You may remember that the flies were one of the plagues of Egypt; this fan was made less than two hundred years after the exodus of the slaves under Moses. By studying fans we get an idea of what a torment flies were to our dirty ancestors. The æsthetic development of the fan came later when the greatest artists painted them. Here are examples of Charles Lebrun, Boucher, Watteau, Greuze. These are *vernis Martin.*"

"*Vernis Martin.* I heard that name while I was buying furniture."

"Very likely. And very likely the man who told you that the furniture was *vernis Martin* did not know what the name meant. It refers to the varnish. There were four brothers of the name who worked in the middle of the eighteenth century and discovered their famous shellac. Here is a Japanese iron fan. Noblemen carried these; it was a point of honor with them that they should defend themselves from common fellows with the fan only, keeping their honorable swords for opponents of equal quality. Here are court fans, dancing fans, tea fans. And this great thing is a Chinese war fan; the general used it to signal to his troops—and with its shaft he could fell a warrior in armor."

"It is very interesting," said Jacob Schell, who had not found exactly what he sought. He produced the fan which Mrs. Schell had received that afternoon. "And what kind is this, Penfold?"

His friend examined it with pleasure.

"It is an Italian dagger fan of the Renaissance. I should put its date at about 1550, though we can never be sure of these things. They were ordinarily made in two kinds; such as this one, where the blade goes into a false handle, and another type where the blade went up among the sticks and was released by a spring. It is a fine example."

"See what it is to read and to study!" exclaimed Jacob Schell with admiration and regret. "He knows all about it at once, like as though some one should ask my opinion of a matter of Wall Street!"

"I should be glad to exchange my information for yours."

Jacob Schell laughed.

"Ah well, perhaps we both know something, eh? But your learning is the better, my friend. I want to read books but I cannot set my mind to them; so often they are written for children or for fools; and at least I am not a child. I have thousands of books and I have not found one among them worth anything. Except, indeed, my 'Plutarch.' And that is not mine, but my wife's. You know the book?"

"Oh, yes."

"A great book. It is so thick—so! My wife was formerly an actress, as you know. Her first husband was also an actor and they played Shakespeare, his works. This book belonged to her husband. He studied in it about Pericles and Julius Cæsar and Mark Antony—so that he might know what kind of men they were that he was playing. I am very fond of reading it. Such good sense!"

He spoke of the gift again as he was leaving.

"This fan, now—it is nothing to be afraid of? It is not poisoned or something of that sort? Those Italians are queer people."

"Why, it could be poisoned," said Pen-

fold, spreading his hands. "Though I imagine the virtue of the poison would be gone after nearly four hundred years. If you grow tired of it I would be glad to have it and to pay you whatever it cost you."

He knew his friend. Jacob Schell was quite free of the vulgar notion or affectation that money matters are among the unmentionables. Yet he was charitable even to being open-handed, in his own way.

"I gave nothing for it," he said. "Therefore, Penfold, you shall have it for nothing also, if we cease to want it. Good night."

He returned to his home, called in at Mrs. Schell's chamber and then went to his own and to bed. He fell asleep promptly and rested soundly; he was a just man according to his lights and had never abused his health.

He had replaced the fan on his wife's cabinet.

They met at breakfast. She was still not at ease, pleading the headache. He kissed her, bade her to be careful of herself and went down to his waiting car and so to his office.

He returned in the early afternoon. He sent for the limousine and they rode to Hastings and back, along the bank of the Hudson. He had solicitously closed the windows of the car so that she might not take cold. Then, as she seemed disinclined to talk, he fell to thinking of a business venture and while doing so he lit a cigar abstractedly and puffed it energetically until they had returned to their home.

"There," he chuckled as he helped her to alight. "The air must have done you a world of good!"

She was in better spirits and was laughing as they climbed the steps. "The air was wonderful," she said, pressing his arm.

He walked into the drawing-room to get something from the safe in the wall behind a Gobelin tapestry. He was humming lightly and happily as he spun the combination.

"Hello," he called. "Here is a nice business, Rebecca! We have been robbed!"

"Robbed, Jacob?"

"Why, sure! There was a package of bills here that I got from the bank yesterday—a thousand dollars in twenties—and they're gone!"

Hurriedly he ran over the contents of the safe and returned to her in the foyer.

"That's a strange thing," he said, lowering his voice and glancing about them. "The safe was locked and nothing was taken but the money. Who could have done it? It looks like it must have been one of the servants. What do you say?"

"I can't think it was one of them," she said nervously. "There was a window cleaner in here this morning while you were at the office. You must have left the safe open, or I did, and he took the money! I saw Madeleine the parlor maid talking to him at the lower door and she said he was a poor man looking for work, so I told her to have him clean the windows."

"Humph! He's not such a poor man any more; he's worth a thousand dollars! If that's how it was, there's no use talking about it to the servants. Tell me what the fellow looked like and I'll inform the police."

She gave him an exact and detailed description of the window cleaner and he telephoned it to the local precinct. The theft annoyed him not a little, although his charities cost him a hundred times as much in the course of any year.

Mrs. Schell was musical. He dropped into an agency on his way uptown a few days later and secured tickets to hear Caruso at the Metropolitan. That is what he asked for—tickets for Caruso. He did not like music, especially operatic music, and did not know even the names of the operas to choose among them.

He went to her chamber to give her this little surprise.

She was seated at the window, and did not hear his step on the carpet. She held the fan in her hands, and was doing something to it with a piece of string, twisting the string about the handle. She cried out when she caught his breathing at her shoulder.

"Have you broken it already?" he asked, picking up the fan from the floor. "I am sorry I frightened you."

"The blade is loose in the sheath," she explained. "I suppose that is because it is so old. What was it, Jacob?"

"Tickets for Caruso," he said, exhibiting them. "For to-night!"

"Lovely!" she exclaimed and jumped up to give him an ecstatic hug. He felt paid in advance for the miserable evening he promised himself at the Metropolitan.

"You must wear your pearls."

"They are at the jeweler's," she replied with a disgusted grimace. "I broke the clasp. Isn't it annoying?"

The opera was "I Pagliacci." Caruso was

in great voice; but Mrs. Schell wept during much of the performance. Her tears did not disturb Mr. Schell. When first he had seen her weep at music he sympathized with her and thought he understood her trouble, as he was not feeling very bright himself and would possibly have wept if the thing kept up; but now he knew that it was her way of enjoying herself. He shut his ears and set himself the task of reconstructing the Federal reserve statement for the week which he had read that morning. In this congenial work the time passed less unpleasantly than he had anticipated.

He discovered the next morning that they had been robbed again during the night. It was again money, taken from the safe without trace left of a housebreaker.

"Now, then, it must be the servants!" he said positively. "I will have a detective in!"

Mrs. Schell had no better plan to offer. There had been no window cleaner this time.

"Give me a couple of days to make an inquiry," she said. "I hate to accuse them all and I suppose if we send for a detective he will give them all the third degree—and whether he finds the thief or not they will all pack up and go. It is mighty hard to get good servants nowadays. I will talk to the girls."

Her maids were all pretty: she had picked them for their looks, providing they were otherwise competent. She had a stage sense for effects. If one of the men was the thief it was very likely that one of the maids knew it.

'Let it be so," said Mr. Schell. "I will wait until next Thursday."

Wednesday afternoon he brought home a large sum of money—eighteen thousand dollars. He was to pay off a mortgage on a small property and the lender had refused to accept payment, being content with his security. To make a case to compel him to discharge the debt it would be necessary to tender him cash, such being the letter of his bond.

Mr. Schell showed the envelope to his wife, laying a finger on his lips. He put it into the safe. They had changed the combination since the last robbery.

She went out in the car after dinner, leaving him at home.

He sat in the library. He was reading his "Plutarch." It was a great book of nine hundred pages, printed in double columns. He rested it on a movable rack attached to the arm of his easy-chair. He lit his perfecto and proceeded to the consideration of the tale of one Lysander who had been a great admiral and business man of Sparta, some twenty-three hundred years ago.

An appreciative smile spread over the dark features of Jacob Schell. This Lysander was a man, and no creature of fiction:

> When Dionysius the tyrant sent his daughters some costly gowns of Sicilian manufacture he would not receive them, saying that he was afraid they would make his daughters look still uglier. But a while after, being sent ambassador from the same city to the same tyrant, when he had sent him a couple of robes and bade him choose which of them he would, and carry to his daughter; "'She,'" said he, "will be able to choose best for herself." And taking both of them, went his way.

He leaned back to laugh. "This Lysander could be a buyer and this tyrant a manufacturer in cloaks and suits," he murmured. "Just such a thing I have known a buyer to do!"

He read on and admired the cunning generalship of this ancient rogue at the sea fight of Ægospotami, one of the turning points of history.

But now, as he read, the heretofore settled expression of his face flickered. The smile seemed to chase itself in and out of his bearded lips. A thought in the back of his mind kept pointing at the page. He frowned, raised his eyes momentarily from the book as though to catch the connection between the wraith in his head and the printed word, and then resumed.

He turned the page back to reread a passage. The corner of the page had been dog-eared by a former owner of the book, who had also marked the passage which now re-engaged Mr. Schell's attention.

He put the book aside, and sat motionless for a minute. He rose and went up to his wife's chamber. Her fan was lying on a night table. He took the fan and returned to the library. He sat again in the chair and studied the fan.

On a table was a package addressed to his wife which the butler had placed there shortly before. He untied the string, and looked at the contents; they were a sheaf of roses of a delicate pinkish-yellow. There was no card. He closed the package and sat toying with the string.

Mrs. Schell returned at nine o'clock.

"This package is for you, my dear," he said. He had retied it. "There are flowers

in it. I find that I must leave you for a few hours. Gronenberg just called up to remind me of my appointment to play 'skat' with him at his house to-night."

It was his only card game and he was very fond of it.

"When will you be back?"

"Don't wait up; you know how we are, Gronenberg and I! By three o'clock, say —but certainly not before two!"

She gathered up the package and the fan, and left him.

He went from the house shortly after, going afoot. His friend Gronenberg's apartment was on Broadway, two blocks to the east, and the weather was fair for walking.

He strode along Riverside Drive. He passed the corner where he should have turned for Gronenberg's, and held on. He walked always faster. He hurried along. He had covered three miles and was far up on Washington Heights before he paused in his stride. And then he looked about him as though he did not know where he was. He struck into a side street, taking up again his headlong gait.

At twelve o'clock that night he hailed a taxi.

"Riverside Drive!" he said, giving the street of his home. But when the car, speeding down Broadway, came to his street he stopped it before it turned west. He walked the two blocks to his house.

The windows of the mansion were dark. He let himself into the foyer and entered the library without switching on any lights. He threw his overcoat and hat on a chair. He went to his desk and from the drawer he took a revolver. He seated himself in his easy-chair in the midst of darkness and waited with the weapon lying on his knee. His pulses were quite normal now.

The grandfather's clock in the foyer struck half past twelve.

He heard the slither of slippered feet on the stairs outside the room. Some one was descending, very cautiously. Had there been light he could have seen the Gobelin against the drawing-room wall from where he sat. He was facing in that direction.

There was a rustle in the drawing-room; perhaps a light breeze wandering about had lifted the tapestry.

But now a small circle of light showed on the farther wall of the drawing-room. The tapestry was awry and the light was falling on the painted surface of the safe which was set flush with the wall. The light ceased moving; it was centered on the dial of the safe. The wall was painted that fashionable tint of brown-green which is called putty color, a tint which devours light, but the faint radiation from its surface showed him a figure standing there—no more than a blur in the even darkness.

He saw a hand enter the brilliant circle and its fingers close on the dial. He could see the dial turning as the fingers spun it, now forward, now back. The safe opened, and the light shone on a wrist reaching in. The light went out.

Again, very cautiously, the slippered feet slithered out into the foyer. They were going downstairs to the basement.

He rose and followed. A casual acquaintance, knowing only the urbane master of the Riverside mansion, must have been surprised could he have looked at that moment upon the face of Jacob Schell. A man must be capable of a very grim face on occasion if he is ever to gather together thirty million. He will have worn other faces—for he must be a person of intelligence and ready sympathies. But he will have known times when he was as set and remorseless as a buccaneer swarming the side of a doomed ship or a soldier running to the fight, open-mouthed and glaring of eye.

Down the stairs in the wake of the thief he stole. He entered the basement. Now the light flashed again. Its radiance struck the wall and then it struck on the face of a man.

"Don't move!" cried Jacob Schell hoarsely.

The light vanished and he heard feet pelting down the hall toward the service entrance. His revolver was leveled. He pulled the trigger. Before the echoing bellow of the heavy weapon had died out he switched on the lights, having already found the push button in the wall.

His wife was standing within arm's reach. She was clad in a flowered kimono. In the narrow hallway sprawled a man with outflung arms.

Jacob Schell dropped the revolver into his pocket and went to the man in the hall. He turned the man over on his back and knelt beside him for a moment. The bullet had gone true.

"He is dead!" he said quietly.

"Thank God!" cried Mrs. Schell with a sobbing laugh.

The servants came—with a clamor and hullabaloo to the head of the stairs, and then further very doubtfully.

"A burglar," said Mr. Schell to the butler. "Go out and call the police and then wait here. You women go back to bed!"

"You had better go back to bed too, my dear," he said to Mrs. Schell.

He followed her to her chamber and shut the door behind them.

"Well, Rebecca, my dear?" he said.

She went to a rosewood writing cabinet and took from it a photograph and a handful of white string.

"That is my husband," she said, extending the portrait to him. "My first husband; he is lying downstairs in the hall."

"You told me he was dead, Rebecca."

"I told you nothing but the truth as I knew it, Jacob. He had been in jail, following a robbery while we were on tour. He was in Sing Sing and I was told that he was drowned while escaping by swimming the Hudson.

"But before he was arrested and while he was in hiding and being sought for his crime he communicated with me by writing on strings. I had to help him: he was my husband! He had invented this system of writing. I will show you how it was done." She looked about her. "My fan! Ah, here it is."

She began to wind a string about the handle of the fan, making the coils sit close.

"You will remember the message which came with this thing? 'Try the handle?' When the handle was taken off you found the string. But the message had this other meaning too. I guessed it at once, for this is the kind of string he always used. When I tried the string on the handle I read his name on it. Here is the message which came by the bundle of roses to-night—when that string is tied around the handle of the fan, too!"

He read the writing on the string: "One o'clock to-night. I must have money."

He put the fan aside and drew her head down onto his shoulder.

"There, there, Rebecca," he comforted her. "Your trouble is over now. He will not be back again! I do not blame you in the least; you were buying my happiness from this scoundrel as well as your own. I thank God that he came back this once more and that I was here to meet him."

"But the card game?" she said, catching at an irrelevant trifle to relieve the strain.

"Gronenberg lost his temper when I beat him and we ended the game," he lied like a gentleman. "It was the sheerest luck that I came in time. Wonderful luck I have had to-night! No wonder poor Gronenberg was angry!"

He petted her a little more, saw her to bed and went downstairs.

He sat again in his easy-chair and chose himself a fat cigar. He raised the volume of "Plutarch" which lay opened face down on the library table. He set himself to reading the dead man's book to pass the time and compose his nerves. He started again at the scored paragraph on the dog-eared page:

> When the Ephors send an admiral or general on his way they take two round pieces of wood, both exactly of a length and thickness and cut even to one another; they keep one themselves, and the other they give to the person they send forth; and these pieces of wood they call Scytales. When therefore they have occasion to communicate any secret or important matter, making a scroll of parchment long and narrow like a leathern thong, they roll it about their own staff of wood, leaving no space void between, but covering the surface of the staff with the scroll all over. When they have done this they write what they please on the scroll, as it is wrapped about the staff; and when they have written they take off the scroll, and send it to the general without the wood. He, when he has received it, can read nothing of the writing, because the words and letters are not connected, but are all broken up; but taking his own staff he winds the slip of the scroll about it, so that this folding, restoring all the parts to the same order that they were in before and putting what comes first into connection with what follows, brings the whole consecutive contents to view round the outside.

"Can you imagine such fellows!" murmured Jacob Schell. "What fine crooks they would make. The New York police would have their hands full with those Ephors, I bet you!"

The butler appeared in the doorway. Jacob Schell nodded, thrust a handful of cigars into his pocket and went downstairs.

Look for more of Mr. McMorrow's work soon.

Bright Roads of Adventure

By Ralph D. Paine

Author of "First Down, Kentucky!" "Eyes in the Boat, Number Six!" Etc.

Entertaining an army, in the moist sense, at a cost of three dollars!
This all happened in the spacious days of twenty years ago

VIII.—IT HAPPENED IN HAITI

WANDERING the high seas in a newspaper dispatch boat during the Spanish War was a hard life but seldom monotonous. Among the steamers chartered for this purpose was the stanch and notorious *Three Friends* of Jacksonville in which sailed, for a time, correspondents both of the *World* and the *Herald* as the result of an amiable working agreement. It was a coincidence and a most congenial one to find myself again afloat in Cuban waters, aboard the vessel whose bold assistance as filibuster and pirate had done so much to keep alive the flame of freedom in that war-wrecked island. Even in the new rôle habit was strong in the gallant *Three Friends*, and this was a wary ship. It still required a vigilant man at the wheel to prevent her from shying at every smudge of smoke on the horizon.

The blockade of the American fleet extended two hundred miles along the northern coast of Cuba while Admiral Sampson awaited trustworthy tidings of the enemy's dangerous squadron, flying Cervera's pennant, which had sailed from Spain and then vanished like phantoms. The newspaper boats kept closely in touch with the blockading force, staying at sea several days or a week until something happened to write about. Then they ran for Key West, blow high, blow low, to get the stuff to the cable office.

The navy was astonishingly patient with this meddlesome flotilla of tugs and yachts. It stipulated that they should stay ten miles offshore at night, outside the blockading lines. But otherwise they did as they pleased and were sometimes a confounded nuisance to the fleet. You may remember that when the army went to Santiago and a whole shipload of newspaper men disembarked the Cuban insurgent forces mistook them for an advance regiment of the expeditionary corps. But that is another story.

Among my comrades in the *Three Friends* were McCready, Stephen Crane, and Harry Brown, dean of the *Herald* war staff, who chanted a strange salt-water dirge of his own composing when things went wrong or the weather was too rough for comfort. It went like this, rolled out in deep and mournful accents:

I would rather sing a song
  To a harp of one string,
Than to hear the water gurgle
  Or the nightingale sing.
    Chorus:
A bottle o' rum, the ship's a-sinking,
  Two bottles o' rum, we'll all be drowned,
Three bottles o' rum, she'll go to the bottom,
  Four bottles o' rum, we'll
                never
                  be
                    found.

The *Three Friends* was in command of Captain Montcalm Broward, brother of the managing owner, Napoleon Broward and one of the hardiest towboat and wrecking skippers on the coast. With him were perhaps a dozen of the old filibustering crew, including the mate and several of the deck force. They enjoyed this roving about to follow a war, and now and then it had the flavor of the old days together. There was one stormy twilight off Cárdenas when a suspiciously minded and hasty gunboat, the *Machias*, concluded that she had sighted an enemy ship. Her gunners aimed a shell which nicked the top of the funnel of the *Three Friends* and showered all hands with soot besides spoiling their tempers. Ranging closer, the *Machias* discovered the error and the officer in charge of the bridge offered a handsome apology.

He was rather grumpily forgiven while we wiped the soot from our eyes but it was more than sinful human nature could endure when he cheerily bellowed:

"By the way, can you spare us a couple of sacks of potatoes? The supply ship overlooked us and we've been off here for ten days."

"Look what you did to my funnel," roared Captain Montcalm Broward. "I like your blasted nerve! Tried to blow my ship into the middle of next week and then ask me for two sacks of potatoes! Not a damn spud! You've got a fine way of introducing yourself when you want to beg a favor. Good night!"

That day when we were lucky enough to see a fine little naval action in the bay of Matanzas was also in character with the former career of the *Three Friends*. The torpedo boat *Dupont* and the converted yacht *Hornet* had observed that Spanish troops and laborers were concentrating to rebuild the works damaged by the bombardment of the American cruisers and were also mounting big guns in the forts across the harbor. Now these plucky midgets, a flimsy torpedo boat and a small yacht, had no business whatever poking about in Matanzas Bay in such circumstances as these, but their doctrine was to play a poor hand well and disregard the odds.

While they reconnoitered the pernicious activity of the foe the Punta Gorda battery opened on them with an eight-inch gun. Instead of taking the hint and beating for the open sea the two midgets darted inshore and swept those Spanish works with rapid fire from their nasty little one and six-pound guns. They took them in flank, moving so rapidly that they were as hard to hit as a couple of agitated fleas. They peppered the Spanish soldiers in the open and drove them scampering into a blockhouse which was presently shot full of holes. Carts and mules and digging tools were abandoned. The enemy voted to knock off and call it a day.

The vivacious *Dupont* and *Hornet* waltzed up and down the bay at a thousand yards' range and there was no manning the land batteries to retaliate while the contented bluejackets were pouring shells like a hailstorm across every embrasure and gun mount. Having perforated the landscape in this laudable manner the two midgets came out to tell the *Three Friends* about it, not boastfully but by way of a sociable chat. Of course it was not in the rules of the game for small vessels to go bombarding, they explained, but if you didn't stir up something, this blockade duty would bore you to death.

It was a lively little story and worth writing and the *Three Friends* therefore departed for Key West. The hour was early in the forenoon and it was hoped to file the dispatches in time for the next morning's editions. There were perhaps fifty miles left to run when another boat was sighted, the old filibuster *Dauntless,* in the employ of the Associated Press. She too was hurrying toward Key West—from the Havana sector of the blockade.

Now the cable service was jammed and overloaded with the dispatches of half a hundred correspondents and the procedure was first come, first served. It often happened that belated copy was delayed a whole day in reaching New York and unreasonable managing editors shot back undeserved rebukes, threatening dismissal to some unhappy correspondent. For this reason the *Three Friends* thought it inexpedient to let the *Dauntless* arrive in port ahead of her. Wherefore there began as thrilling an ocean race as you could have found in a month of Sundays. These were two stubborn and reckless vessels, veterans of pursuits and escapes in the Caribbean when "Dynamite Johnny" O'Brien had sailed in them. And there were enough old hands aboard to give this race the spirit of "let her go and here's hoping she don't bust herself wide open." Alas, the *Three Friends* lacked fat John Dunn as chief engineer with his clamp to screw on the safety valve, dern her old soul.

However, there were volunteers to shovel coal and the two shapely towboats tore along, side by side, over a sea which slept in a breathless calm. The afternoon was waning and they still raced on even terms when the sun went down and Sand Key light shone like a star. The funnel of the *Three Friends* glowed hotter and hotter until its color was a dull red. It stood just abaft the wheelhouse, between this wooden structure and a box of a bunk room upon the upper deck where the correspondents slept.

Key West was still an hour away when it was observed that both the wheelhouse and this upper cabin had begun to char and

smolder from the heat of the incandescent funnel. And presently there was a gush of flame while the curling smoke almost enveloped the ship. The mate bawled to the men to fetch the fire hose and start the steam pump but Captain Montcalm Broward interfered to say:

"You let that pump alone, understand! I'm not going to waste good steam on a pump. Look at the *Dauntless*. We haven't put her astern yet."

The *Three Friends* was afire, no doubt of that, but the skipper added that he guessed he could steer her by the emergency hand wheel aft if he got chased out of the pilot house with his shirt tail blazing. And so, trailing sparks and smoke and apparently doomed to be burned to the water's edge, the *Three Friends* continued on her way to Key West. The mate organized a bucket brigade and those of us not otherwise engaged handed along pails of salt water and doused the fire. This checked it but the upper works still smoked and sizzled and the danger was by no means past. The burning vessel swept close to the gunboat *Annapolis* standing by a Spanish prize, and the navy lads yelled and waved their hats. They knew a race when they saw one.

The *Three Friends* churned into Key West harbor with the *Dauntless* no more than two lengths away. It was a bitter finish. In the last resort it was now a problem of getting a man ashore first. The captain of the *Dauntless* executed a neat bit of strategy. As his crew said later, "There was a guy that used his top end for something better than a hat rack." He was making for his own wharf when at the foot of a street near another pier head he spied a loafing one-horse hack made visible by an arc light at the corner. Toot, toot, toot, and the whistle drew the attention of the negro driver.

The *Dauntless* sheered in and slackened way. As she bumped the piling and rebounded a long-legged Associated Press correspondent took a flying leap, rolled like a shot rabbit, gathered himself up and sprinted for the hack. Almost at the same moment, the *Three Friends* had been adroitly swung in to scrape the end of a wharf close by. The spare and nimble McCready hurtled through space and was running when he lit. He knew a short cut through an alley and he went skimming into the street where the cable office stood, just in time to see the hack kicking up the dust ahead of him.

The race was lost! But hold! The winner fell and turned heels over head at the very threshold of the building. A fist had caught him behind the ear. The man behind the fist, who was a trifle nearsighted, peered at the prostrate journalist and became aware that he had blundered. As though explaining it to himself, he was heard to mutter:

"My God, I thought it was a —— —— ——— man!" He named a very clamorous evening paper.

McCready was the victor because of this case of mistaken identity but he was too good a sportsman to take the decision on a foul and my recollection is that they tossed a coin to see who should have precedence with the cable operators.

Late in the month of May the scene of action shifted eastward to the St. Nicholas Channel, between Cuba and the Bahama Bank, where Admiral Sampson stood guard with the best of his fighting ships to prevent Cervera's squadron from slipping through to Havana by way of the northern passage. Day after day the fleet idled and drifted in the tropic heat, days painfully anxious for the silent, brooding admiral seeking contact with an elusive enemy. The *Three Friends* hovered within sight of the flagship, vainly hoping for something to happen.

Then occurred an incident so splendidly dramatic that it was like a splash of bright color against a dull background. The battleship *Oregon* joined the fleet after her spectacular voyage from the Pacific, fourteen thousand miles around the Horn in sixty-eight days, risking attack by Cervera's armored cruisers or by the torpedo craft which lurked off South American ports, and had been driven harder and faster than had been thought possible for a coast-defense battleship of her type. She had endured the ordeal so magnificently that she was ready for battle on that very day she joined the fleet in the St. Nicholas Channel. It is literally the fact that the nation had awaited news of her safe arrival with breathless interest.

At full speed she came steaming through the fleet, her flag hoists gay with fluttering bunting, her massed bluejackets wearing cap ribbons of their own devising, *"Remember the Maine."* And with one great lusty voice the fleet cheered the *Oregon* which, a few weeks later, was to win laurels even more notable as the fighting ship in the

forefront of the battle outside Santiago harbor which obliterated the finest squadron of the Spanish navy.

Admiral Sampson was by this time convinced that Cervera's ships had taken refuge at Santiago where the dilatory tactics of Commodore Schley had failed to establish an effective blockade with the vessels of the Flying Squadron under his command. The admiral hastened to Santiago with the *New York, Oregon,* and *Mayflower* and found that the enemy was indeed inside the narrow harbor while Schley was keeping his ships from ten to twenty miles offshore instead of closing in to bar the exit.

Promptly Sampson established a masterly blockade. The harbor was sealed by a line of ships which held their stations day and night and there was no escape for the doomed Spanish squadron. To make assurance doubly sure Lieutenant Hobson undertook to sink the collier *Merrimac* across the harbor entrance and so drive a cork in the bottle. For this perilous and daring adventure, a forlorn hope, a crew of only seven men was required. But, as the admiral said, "enough officers and men volunteered to man a fleet of *Merrimacs,* there being hundreds of offers from a single ship."

The dispatch boat *Three Friends* rolled off Santiago harbor, beyond range of the shore batteries, while the *Merrimac* was stripped and equipped with explosive mines to sink her rapidly. It was one o'clock in the morning when Lieutenant Hobson took her in, a shadowy hulk of a ship stealing slowly shoreward in the moonlight. Soon the heavy guns from the Morro and Estrella batteries began to thunder and flash and it was unbelievable that the *Merrimac* and her heroic crew could have escaped instant destruction.

Soon after sunrise a Spanish steam launch cautiously approached the wreck of the sunken collier and discovered Lieutenant Hobson and his seven men clinging to the débris. As prisoners of war they were taken aboard the cruiser *Reina Mercedes* and hospitably entertained by the Spanish officers, including Admiral Cervera himself. Lieutenant Hobson was permitted to write a message to his own admiral. It ran:

> I have the honor to report that the *Merrimac* is sunk in the channel. No losses, only bruises. We are prisoners of war, being well cared for.

The message was carried out to the flagship *New York,* under a flag of truce, by Commander Joaquin de Bustamente. This and all the other information available was obtained by the correspondents on the *Three Friends* who perceived that this was one of the superb stories of the war at sea and were anxious to send it home as soon as possible. The nearest cable bases were Port Antonio, in Jamaica, and Mole St. Nicholas, at the western end of Haiti. As to distance there was little to choose between them. It was more than a hundred miles if you ran southward to Jamaica or crossed the Windward Passage to the Haitian port. Wind and weather were apt to influence the decision.

For this voyage it was decided to run to Mole St. Nicholas.

The sea was rough all the way. The correspondents tried to write, braced in their bunks with pads of paper on their knees, and found that they were performing acrobatic feats. The scene lacked that composure considered essential to literary production. As a rule, not much good prose is turned out by a man who persists in standing upon his head. However, these correspondents solved it by lying flat on their stomachs, having discovered that they could not fall off the floor; and although they slid about more or less they managed to write so many hundred words describing the glorious feat of Lieutenant Hobson and the *Merrimac.*

In the midst of his exhausting labors Harry Brown of the *Herald* paused now and then to inform all hands in a melancholy baritone that he would rather sing a song to a harp of one string. Stephen Crane opined that the sun was over the yardarm and that there were occasions when the corkscrew was mightier than the pen. Toughened as we were to disturbed environments, it was agreed that this was a rotten trip.

All day the *Three Friends* bucked into it, unable to make decent speed, and it was late in the evening when the mountains of Haiti loomed as a dusky landfall. The vessel made her way into a placid bay almost rimmed about by these dark heights and dropped anchor a few hundred yards from the beach of Mole St. Nicholas. The lustrous sheen of the moon revealed a village of huts, whitewashed and thatched, spread among tall clusters of palms. Crowning the headlands were the ruins of stone forts built long ago when the Spanish, the French and the English had fought over the romantic island of Hispaniola. From the jungle across the bay came the thump,

thump of a drum. It suggested the Kongo and naked black dancers and the incantations of witch doctors.

A boat was lowered from the *Three Friends* and two sailors rowed the correspondents to the beach. The curious populace trooped down to the strand, jabbering the corrupt French patois which is the language of Haiti. There was not a white man among them. They shaded off from ebony to gingerbread in color. A ragged, noisy mob it was and strangely excited. They crowded about us as we stepped ashore. Their behavior seemed almost hostile. One of the sailors of the *Three Friends* decided to trail along. The symptoms interested him. He was an enterprising young man whom we christened "the astute deck hand" before the night was over.

It was surmised that the arrival of this big, white towboat, so clearly discernible in the moonlight, might have been misinterpreted. Possibly some one had recognized her as a ship of an unholy reputation, her career linked with that of Captain Johnny O'Brien who had once meddled, in a violent manner with the political affairs of Haiti. This was the first visit of the *Three Friends* as a dispatch boat and she had come stealing in by night. Not much was required to agitate the people of this black republic in which revolutions were casually touched off between meals. At any rate, Mole St. Nicholas appeared to regard us as sensational.

Strangers in a land deucedly strange, we had one fixed idea—to find the French cable office. The crowd on the beach expostulated in a mysterious manner and several tattered soldiers came scuffling their bare feet and lugging guns with long, rusty bayonets attached. The impatient correspondents hurled volleys of bad French to right and left and shoved ahead. They knew not where they were going but they were on their way. They saw crooked streets and vistas of those low, whitewashed houses among the trees and beyond them the overshadowing mountains.

The crowd on the beach trailed after but soon dwindled, too sleepy for sustained interest in anything. The visitors rambled on and presently came to a sudden halt. Where two streets crossed, a small camp fire glowed and around it squatted several Haitian soldiers. Two others loafed to and fro on sentry duty and they were unexpectedly alert. One of them advanced and opened his face to emit a shrill yell of "Qui vive." The cry was taken up and repeated by one invisible sentry post after another throughout the town until it caromed off in faint echoes from the nearest mountain. The effect was startling.

The soldier whose qui vive had set this vocal explosion going was barring the path with a musket of some antique pattern. The bayonet was particularly annoying. It looked like a boarding pike and he handled it so carelessly that McCready was seen to clap both hands to his stomach. The gesture was eloquent. We all felt that way. There was no such thing as argument with this stubborn black warrior. The street was closed to traffic as far as we were concerned. There was a retreat and a consultation during which it was noted that a two-story frame building loomed in the center of the town. At home it would have been about as pretentious as a village grocery story, but in Mole St. Nicholas it was undoubtedly the palace of the governor general or the city hall or something of the sort. This was the logical destination. It offered the hope of coherent information. Otherwise the quest of the cable office was hunting a needle in an insane haystack.

Accordingly the correspondents tacked into another street but again they saw the flames of a little fire and soldiers warming the soles of their feet or watching the coffeepot. There was another interview with sentries and excessively lengthy bayonets and that infernal qui vive which went racketing away from one group to the next beyond like setting off a new kind of watchman's rattle. There was no breaking through to reach the two-story frame palace. But these four newspaper men had been trained to find some manner of beating the devil around the bush, wherefore they executed another detour.

It would be tiresome to explain the next encounter, the camp fire in an open space where the streets met, the bizarre group of black infantry, the clatter of qui vive, the tableau with the voluble sentry and the retreat in good order. For us the thing was becoming monotonous and, with a little more of it, one of those rusty bayonets might damage an expensive correspondent. We drifted in the direction of the beach to talk it over. Of the quartet Stephen Crane only was enjoying the experience. He was a

young man who refused to take the responsibilities of daily journalism seriously. It was the artistic temperament. He had been known to shorten the life of a managing editor.

"It's your move, Crane," said McCready. "Fiction is your long suit. Here it is. Things like this don't happen in real life. Let's have a few remarks from the author of 'The Red Badge of Courage.' "

"Me?" grinned Crane. "If I caught myself hatching a plot like this I wouldn't write another line until I sobered up. Steady, boys, the night is still young and I have a hunch that there'll be lots more of it. This opening is good."

Harry Brown, in charge of the *Herald* war service, was an older man and less frivolous, who kept an eye on the ball. He began to issue commands.

"There must be some way to break through this silly blockade of armed ragamuffins. You come with me, Crane, and we'll work along the beach and try to get by at the western end of the town. Paine and McCready can scout in the other direction. If we are still out of luck we'll meet at the boat landing so as not to lose each other."

The young deck hand from the *Three Friends* listened to this counsel and then wandered off to play a lone hand. He was having the time of his life. Half an hour later the four correspondents were reunited down at the boat landing. Their strategy had been futile. They merely had more tales to tell of sentries and little fires and qui vives. It was their opinion that Mole St. Nicholas was enjoying another revolution. Certainly it was well guarded.

"I tried to bribe the last black that stopped me," said Harry Brown, "but when he saw me stick my hand in my pocket he jabbed at me. And, say, I had no idea I was so fast on my feet! I don't know but what we'll have to go aboard ship and wait for morning. This seeing Haiti by moonlight is getting too dotty for me."

"Stick around, Harry," advised Stephen Crane. "Age has dulled your feeling for romance. We can beat this game yet."

After some more useless conversation the solitary deck hand came sauntering to the beach, wearing the air of a young man immensely well pleased with himself. His serenity was inexplicable. To the disgusted group he announced:

'Sure, I busted the jam. It was dead easy. I drifted through them black soldiers, one bunch after another of 'em, with a fair wind and tide. They saluted me like I was a brigadier general with a feather in his hat. After a while I come to the big, two-decked shack with a piazza on it and I got a couple more salutes outside and they woke up a hefty smoked ham of a man that was the first mate or something and he came rollin' out in sky-blue pajamas and——"

"Stop it, Bill," broke in Stephen Crane. "You make us dizzy. Unravel yourself, for Heaven's sake. Go back to the salutes and start again."

"Oh, didn't I tell you? One of them dark obstructions in the channel had fetched me up all standing—you know—a little fire in the road and these wall-eyed boys with guns qui-vivin' like hell—and I went around the corner and leaned against it to study what next, when along come a shiny big buck of an officer and the soldiers hopped to attention and he gave 'em the password. I could hear it, plain as anything, and so I slid along to the next outfit of sentries——"

"And tried the password on them?" exclaimed McCready. "Look here, Bill, how could you wrap your tongue around this Haitian French lingo? It stumps us and we went to college one time."

"French nothin'," replied the astute deck hand. "It was good United States. All I had to do was to parade up to these chocolate drops and say to 'em, *'I am the boss.'* Just like that!"

"I am the boss," echoed the bewildered correspondents. It was beyond them to guess what phrase of this bastard French dialect might have sounded like the deck-hand's magic sesame.

"Bill, you are a wonder," solemnly declared Stephen Crane. "But, darn you, you are too improbable for fiction. I shall have to get good and drunk to do you justice. And you told them you were the boss and got away with it?"

"Come along and see," answered the deck hand. "I'll show you. And, listen, I met an awful pretty girl and there was mighty little tar baby about her, I could see that. An octoroon maybe. And I made a date with her——"

"That will do, Bill," chided Harry Brown as the official chaperon. "Forget your love affairs and lead us to the palace."

Young Bill moved on ahead with a touch of swagger in his gait. He had this town eating out of his hand. Boldly he approached the nearest flickering fire and the loafing soldiery. Throwing out his chest he sharply proclaimed:

"I am the boss! Salute, you black sons of guns!"

At his heels marched the four correspondents, chanting in unison:

"I am the boss! Salute, you black sons of guns!"

The effect was as extraordinary as the deck hand had foretold. The slouching sentinels rolled their eyes and bobbed their heads in recognition of the password. One or two even attempted to present arms but the result was sketchy. Their hands strayed to their straw hats. A salute was evidently intended. Past them strode the conquering deck hand and the admiring correspondents. Crane was murmuring aloud:

"I wonder if we could blast the secret out of a French dictionary. Probably not. We shall never know."

The cordon was broken. We were inside the lines. Unimpeded the advance was continued to the pretentious frame building in front of which a sentry bawled a challenging qui vive, but Bill told him even more loudly who was the boss and there was no argument. In the light of a lantern hung on the piazza stood a large, round man of a saddle-colored complexion, clad in blue pajamas and straw slippers. He beamed genial good nature and welcomed the strangers as his guests. To their profound relief he spoke English racily, as though perfectly familiar with it.

"Ah, ha, it is a pleasure, gentlemen, you bet your sweet life," he cried, shaking hands effusively. "I am the chief of staff to the governor of the department of Mole St. Nicholas, who is the general of the army also. He is fatigued and have hit the hay. In the morning he will be dee-lighted, *n' est pas?* You found some trouble with the brave soldiers of *mon général?* There is a war, a little one, in Haiti. Poof, we will win in a walk. The soldiers were on the job? You found them awake? Two of them had to be shooted yesterday for sleeping too much on guard. It made the army buck up, you bet."

The urgent errand was explained, concerning the French cable office, and the rotund chief of staff was all sympathy and action. The two cable operators would be in bed at this hour but he himself would summon them *vitement*, in a jiffy. He slipped on a blue coat adorned with tarnished gold lace and fringed epaulets and yelled to a colonel or something, the officer of the guard, who paraded five soldiers as an escort. Thus honored the correspondents ambled along with the chief of staff who imparted the following information:

"You admire how I speak English, eh? Pretty smooth! I twist her by the tail. Why not? Four years I was a butler in New Rochelle, New York."

Stephen Crane made gestures with both hands, then propped himself against a tree while he soliloquized:

"Hooray for the chief of staff! He buttled in New Rochelle! My hunch was a winner. This is a purple night with spangled trimmings."

Thereafter Crane insisted on addressing our host as Alice in Wonderland. We yearned to know what fantastic nudge of destiny had thrust the butler into this martial niche. It could have happened only in Haiti. But he prattled of other things until the procession halted in front of a low-roofed house which nevertheless had an upper story and windows therein. The colonel of the guard was tripped by his sword which was too long for his stature but he yanked it from between his legs and sternly commanded the five soldiers to stand at attention, all in a row.

They were drawn up across the street from the dwelling of the two French cable operators. The chief of staff advanced to shout at the upper windows. He spoke in French and the noise he made was tremendous. It was like pounding a bass drum. He paused to refill those capacious lungs. The house was dark and silent. Again the chief of staff shattered the night with his stentorian alarm. There was never a sign of a cable operator's head at an upper window. It was explained to the correspondents:

"Their ladies have arrived by the mail boat from Cape Haitian only yesterday," said our guide. "I am, what you call it—a damn intrusion, *n' est pas?* I will show them—these two cabbages of the cable company!"

He raised another clamor and by now the jovial chief of staff was quite angry. They were called imbeciles, pigs, and he

swore by the name of a cow. During this outburst a tousled head appeared in an upper window and the voice of a cable operator advised the chief of staff to close his mouth and go to bed. Any business of the cable company could wait until morning. This disturbance was idiotic.

Ah, ha! Name of a name, a million thunders! Was this how these wretched insects defied the chief of staff of the governor, of the general, of the department of Mole St. Nicholas? Of a sacred truth, he would show them! He spoke to the colonel who barked at the five barefooted soldiers. They raised their guns and aimed them at the upper windows. The hammers clicked. Five black forefingers made contact with the triggers. They awaited the word to fire. Of a sacred truth, this chief of staff was no man to trifle with! He addressed the darkened house briefly, conveying the sinister fact to the reluctant cabbages that in two minutes their rooms would be full of bullets.

Here was an argument marvelously persuasive. Its results were instantaneous. In those upper rooms there was the sound of rapid movement, the swift patter of feet. The first cable operator fell down the stairs, emerging into the street with his trousers in one hand. The other followed him by a margin so close that it was almost neck and neck. He seemed to have inserted one leg into *his* white linen trousers while in mid-air. The five soldiers still held their guns ready. They grinned from ear to ear but there was that in the nervous demeanor of the cable operators which convinced one that the chief of staff had meant what he said.

The march was resumed, the colonel now and then becoming entangled with his sword. The path led through the jungle almost half a mile to the building near the shore of the bay where the cable had been landed. There was a sense of gloomy isolation in this shadowy path which caused McCready and Paine some uneasiness. They were not wholly trustful of the Haitian soldiery but Stephen Crane expressed all the confidence in the world in the saddle-colored ex-butler of New Rochelle. We were perfectly safe with Alice in Wonderland. And so it turned out. The cable operators were in a ruffled mood but they consented to start sending the dispatches without delay. While we lingered to see them get under way McCready wandered down to the beach to explore the ruins of a stone fort. One of the soldiers followed him, it seems, and clutched him by the arm. As McCready told it later, he was scared and confessed it without shame. The black ruffian had led him some distance away beyond the ruined fort until they were remote from succor.

"He had a bayonet and a machete," said Mac, "and it looked like dirty work—me with a money belt on—and this ferocious black had seen me take it off to slip the cable operators a gold piece as a tip. But he didn't unlimber the deadly weapons and I guess I was curious or paralyzed, for I let him tow me way down yonder where my screams could not have been heard. Then he spoke for the first time, in English, mind you. He said, *'Gib me one dollah, man.'* Did he get it? I shucked him out two big silver ones and clawed my pockets for small change. It was cheap ransom, a regular bargain. Don't mind that rattling noise. It's my knees knocking together."

With happier minds the correspondents returned to the town of Mole St. Nicholas, having done their duty by their several newspapers. It occurred to them to try in some small degree to display their appreciation of the courtesy of the chief of staff and the soldiery. The natural impulse was to buy the Haitian army a drink. This desire was conveyed to the chief of staff who replied that all the rum shops were closed, for the hour was past midnight. But he would be glad to open one of them.

The invitation was comprehended by the colonel and the five soldiers. Presently by some kind of telepathy the news seemed to spread through the army. Instead of five men, more than twenty trooped along as a guard and the mobilization increased rapidly. It looked as though the reserves had been turned out as a compliment to the four correspondents. The column turned into one street after another and the impression was that it grew longer in passing the groups of sentries at the little fires.

A halt was ordered at the door of a stone-walled hut and the chief of staff shouted one of those mandates of his. The response was too laggard to please him. He spoke to the colonel and the foremost file of soldiers shuffled up, reversing their muskets. With the steel-shod butts they battered that door in, and made kindling wood of its stout planks. It was one way to open a door.

The landlady of the grogshop was in the

act of descending from a sort of loft where she slept. When the door flew from its hinges she was so startled that she missed the ladder and hit the floor with a mighty thud, being a negress of ample proportions and chastely clad in a chemise. It was an unusual welcome, so we thought, and she appeared to agree with us. The chief of staff, however, made no comment. It was all in the night's work. Stephen Crane admired him more than ever. It was an affinity. They were becoming like brothers.

The dazed and ponderous landlady was requested to produce rum. She did so, in bottles, but this was no way to sluice the dusty throats of an army. In a corner stood one of those huge glass carboys in which acids are stored. It was empty. We told her to fill it with rum. Gallon after gallon gurgled into it. The cost would be ruinous but, as Harry Brown said, why be short-card sports when the chief of staff had conferred upon us the freedom of the city?

The landlady demanded three dollars. Yes, that was enough, said she, with rum at forty cents a gallon. It was unique, this entertaining an army at a cost of three dollars. Two muscular soldiers slung the carboy from a pole in a rope netting, and the army moved in the direction of the beach. You could not have separated it from the carboy short of a drumhead court-martial. Soon after that the white beach of Mole St. Nicholas was a scene of life and animation, to say the least. There had been no pay day for the army in several months and it had been a long time between drinks.

The correspondents began to wonder whether three dollars' worth of rum was not too much. They felt this way after the army began firing musketry salutes in their honor. The guns wabbled too much at random. The chief of staff had tarried until the merriment was more like a riot. Then he excused himself, mindful of his dignified station and exalted rank and promised to meet us in the morning. At that time his excellency, the governor, would expect us for an audience at the palace, you bet.

In the morning? It was morning already, with a flush of dawn in the sky, while the enthusiastic soldiery danced on the beach and the astute deck hand sang to them, "There'll Be a Hot Time in the Old Town To-night." There were hoarse cheers for the grand republic of the United States and eloquent eulogies of the peerless republic of Haiti, jewel of the West Indies, voiced with deep emotion by the correspondents. Never was an *entente cordiale* in better form. Harry Brown, having reached the years of discretion and realizing his responsibilities as manager of a newspaper war staff, forsook the party before sunrise and went off to the *Three Friends* to snatch a little sleep.

The other correspondents remained as hosts to the army. Courtesy demanded it. They were hailed as eternal friends of Haiti as long as a drop of rum was left in the carboy. When there was no more rum the soldiery began to dwindle, leaving wavering tracks on the sand as it moved away, still singing. The three correspondents, rather weary, returned to the *Three Friends* for breakfast. The social whirl had not yet released them. They remembered the engagement with the governor at the palace. Three young men, they sat in a row on deck, holding their heads in their hands. The obligations of hospitality had been exhausting. They were aroused by a noise in the town, the blare of bugles, the squeak of fifes, the roll of drums. Showing signs of life they asked the skipper for a boat. Mole St. Nicholas was calling them. They were good for a farewell appearance.

To the palace they trudged, collecting many a friendly but blear-eyed salute en route, and found the vivacious chief of staff awaiting them. He was very much in uniform, crimson breeches and cavalry boots, gold cords on the blue coat, a plumed cocked hat. In Crane's opinion, the ex-butler would have knocked New Rochelle cold. While we chatted with him a tall and dignified black man came out on the piazza. He wore a frock coat with a sword belt buckled on. His face was serious and intelligent. In French he greeted the visitors with an ease of manner that could have been called courtly.

He took himself and his position with deep seriousness. He wished it understood that a review of the troops was to be held. It was a tribute to the distinguished journalists who had so cordially fraternized with his own people as citizens of two sister republics. It was open to remark that his excellency was either deaf or had slept like a dead man. Otherwise he would have mistaken the cordial fraternizing for an attack by the enemy. Revolutions have been started with less racket than that moonlit party on the beach.

The military band straggled past, an odd assortment of musical talent oddly arrayed, and banged and tootled its way to the parade ground. The governor, the chief of staff, and the correspondents moved in that direction, but when you tried to step in time with the martial music of Hayti your feet pranced in a cake walk. It couldn't be helped. Back of the town was a cleared field in which the army awaited its commanding general. A wild flourish of bugles and the troops began to march in review.

There were perhaps two hundred of this black infantry, with brigadiers, colonels, and majors sprinkled as thick as huckleberries in a pudding. For uniform most of the privates were lucky to have a shirt and breeches and a big straw hat. The officers strutted in extraordinary remnants of military trappings but it would have been unkind to laugh at them. It was like children playing a game in absorbed imitation of grown-ups. Solemnly the army shuffled past in review, guns of all vintages carried at all angles, while the officers waved their swords and yelled strange orders.

Then the zealous brigadiers attempted to maneuver the army and got in trouble with it. Across the field, beyond the parade ground, the ragged files of infantry loped along at the double to charge the imaginary enemy but the pace soon slackened and now occurred a perplexing phenomenon. Every few steps the army halted and many men stooped over to pick up one foot in their hands and then the other. Stephen Crane was appealed to as an expert in the tactics of war.

"You can search me, boys," said he. "I never knew an army to stop and take its feet in its hands that way."

"You poor stupids!" exclaimed McCready who had solved it. "If you steer a barefooted army into a field covered with cactus bushes, can you blame it for stopping to pull the thorns out?"

"Quite so," agreed Crane. "I have no doubt you will find it included in the Haitian drill regulations."

From the harbor echoed three long, impatient blasts of the *Three Friends'* whistle. It was time to return to the blockade of Santiago. We bade farewell to his excellency, the governor, but he urged us to wait a little. A dozen soldiers had laid hold of a rope and were dragging an antique cannon which may have been left in Haiti by the artillery forces of Napoleon. They were about to fire a salute with this interesting curio. It was indeed time to put for the open sea. Ralph Paine hurriedly addressed his comrades.

"When that thing busts, it's going to scatter far and wide. Without hurting anybody's feelings, I suggest that we waive this final ceremony."

The governor understood. He had heard the steamer's whistle. It was the call of duty which must be obeyed. The chief of staff came down to the beach with us. Stephen Crane, reluctant to part with him, was asking him for the story of his life—what about that four years as a butler in New Rochelle—when again Captain Montcalm Broward jerked the whistle cord of the *Three Friends*. We shook hands with our genial friend and host who said:

"It was a hot time in Mole St. Nicholas, you bet your sweet life. Au revoir, and stay longer next time. Those cable operators, they will be on the qui vive, *n' est pas?* I think so, by jingo."

Before the ship sailed we sent off to him, in a skiff pulled by the astute deck hand, a case of sardines, a ham, and a tin of cigarettes as slight tokens of our abounding esteem. The *Three Friends* steamed out of the bay set between the lofty, green mountains. Four correspondents kicked off their shoes and crept into their bunks to fall asleep. McCready murmured his favorite bit of Kipling:

> "But I wouldn't trust 'em at Wokin',
> We're safer at sea again."

Harry Brown was humming to himself that mournful ditty of his own invention:

> "A bottle o' rum, the ship's a-sinking,
> *Two* bottles o' rum, we'll all be drowned,
> *Three* bottles o'——"

Stephen Crane raised his voice in tired protestation:

"*Please* don't sing that, Harry, old man. The words offend me. Rum is poison. You ought to know better. This is the morning after."

These personal reminiscences of Mr. Paine began in the issue of November 20, 1921. The next of the series, in the following number, will be about how "The Marines Held the Hill," in Cuba.

The Return of the Spider

By Henry Herbert Knibbs

Author of "Partners of Chance," "Rags," Etc.

The coming back to Showdown of The Spider was in itself surprising. What happened after his return was both surprising and tragic. In this grim but colorful tale Mr. Knibbs has given us another unforgetable picture of the West.

(*A Novelette*)

CHAPTER I.

WHITE EYE was responsible for the rumor that The Spider would never return to Showdown. The Spider had been absent two weeks —an unprecedented absence for the man who governed the destinies of that desert town of ill repute. Jim Ewell, erstwhile card man, gunman, speculator in stolen cattle and stolen horses and questionable mining claims, came to be known as The Spider both because of his physical characteristics and his known inclination to stick to his web, the meshes of which might be said to touch the borders of four States; the center of which was the desert town of Showdown. Sanctuary for the outlaw, the killer, the cattle thief, Showdown had at one time borne a different name, a Spanish name peculiarly suited to its later significance—Sanctuario—but the advent of The Spider had changed the name and enhanced the significance. He became owner of the cantina, overlord of the Mexican inhabitants and purveyor to any and all schemes that promised lucrative returns in cash. Men like Longtree, Pina and White Eye, "Bull" Malvey, "Oily" Johnson and "Peg" Sims took occasional refuge in Showdown, arrived and departed unheralded, found fresh horses when needed, and a square deal so long as they played square.

Crippled by old wounds, with a sidling gait, bow-legged from years in the saddle, lean, dark, small of stature, shriveled by the desert, bitten by rheumatism, The Spider resembled not a little the venomous insect itself. His black, beady eyes were expressionless. He seemed to be without feeling; yet his indifference was positive, not negative. He possessed great virility and a deadly swiftness when occasion demanded. His manner of speech was peculiar, startling. He spoke infrequently, in a thin, reedy voice, not much more than a whisper. Neither anger, resentment, nor absolute hate changed his intonation or expression. He said very little upon any occasion; and even his eyes held no manner of speech for those who sought to read him when he had ceased to speak. He seemed unhuman, uncanny, a living being with the patience of the dead.

Fast guns of the border spoke his name with hatred, yet with a certain rough deference. Sonora knew him as a friend to all Mexicans. It was known he would trust a Mexican sooner than he would an American—so far as he ever trusted any one. The population of Showdown was Mexican. The Spider did not encourage American residents, yet never turned a wounded outlaw away until such refugee had fully recovered from his wounds. For instance, when White Eye, riding in from The Tonto with one arm shattered by a thirty soft-nosed slug, dismounted and walked shivering with fever into The Spider's saloon, The Spider called in his Mexican servant, got out a case of surgical instruments and with White Eye unconscious in the room back of the bar, washed, sterilized and bandaged the wounded arm—eventually saved it, and incidentally White Eye's life; and meanwhile spoke not one word.

Recovered, White Eye found The Spider's silence disconcerting. "Reckon I'll pull my freight," said White Eye one day. The

Spider nodded. "I'll square this thing, some day," declared White Eye. Again The Spider nodded. He knew White Eye as a fast gun, a hard rider, and altogether treacherous. "Your horse is back there in the corral," and The Spider gestured. White Eye rode out of Showdown with food in his saddle pockets and a canteen slung on the horn. As he drew into the low hills to the west he turned and glanced back toward Showdown. Hate, not gratitude, glistened in his pale eyes. He cursed the town and the man who had saved him. Back in his saloon The Spider sat playing solitaire. He glanced at the round clock on the wall. His stringy black mustache twitched. He almost smiled. He knew that White Eye feared him and consequently hated him.

That had been some two years past. White Eye was again in Showdown. The Spider's Mexican was running the saloon. The Spider was away—had been away two weeks. White Eye had money. He spent it over the bar. He tarried, day after day, never drunk, but drinking steadily. He was then the only white man in Showdown. The Spider's Mexican asked him if he were waiting for some one. White Eye replied that he was waiting for The Spider.

Saturday evening of the second week following The Spider's disappearance, Boca Dulzura—"Pretty Mouth" to the inhabitants of Showdown—rode in from Flores cañon. Boca was young, darkly beautiful, a girl to attract notice anywhere. She came directly into the cantina and asked for The Spider. He had not returned, no? That was bad. Something had happened. The Spider's Mexican talked with her in the cool patio back of the saloon. And who was the hombre she had passed, coming through the room? Boca learned something of White Eye's former visit to Showdown. "It is that I know all the Americanos that come here," said Boca. "Bull Malvey I do not like, nor do I like this man with the chalk eyes. As for the others——" Boca shrugged her shoulders. "*Vino blanco.* You have the key, yes? I have ridden far, and it is hot."

The old Mexican, long in the employ of The Spider, fetched the white wine. Boca sipped lazily, affectedly. The caballero at the bar was a stranger—one whom she instantly disliked, yet Boca had a pretty mouth—she had been told so a hundred times—and softly glowing dark eyes. She wanted men to admire her; yet she was little more than a girl, inexperienced in fact, wisely experienced in intuition. Occasionally she rode from the Flores ranch where she lived with her parents, to Showdown, unaccompanied across the desert. When in town she spent her evenings in the patio back of the barroom, laughing and chatting with her countrymen, or singing some Spanish song or other for the chance Americano who happened to be tarrying in Showdown for reasons generally known but seldom advertised.

In spite of her youthfulness Boca had been proposed to more often than she cared to remember. Yet she had never been insulted even by the wildest vaquero spending his loot in the cantina. Obviously Boca was The Spider's ward—it was whispered that she was his daughter. It was evident that she was under The Spider's protection. Consequently Boca did as she pleased when in the cantina, demanded wine or food as though she owned the place, bantered the men who tried to make love to her, teased The Spider to drink wine with her—which, however, he silently refused to do, and withal made herself popular with every hard-riding refugee who knew the place, to say nothing of the Mexican townsfolk. He who knew Showdown knew Boca Dulzura—and remembered her.

White Eye, lounging at the bar, watched Boca sip her wine and catching her eye took off his Stetson and bowed awkwardly. Boca ignored the salutation. Surely this man would not dare intrude himself, even though her amigo, The Spider, was absent. Yet it happened that White Eye had never before seen Boca, nor did he know save through rumor that such a person existed. And still less was he aware that Boca Dulzura was the one person in the world for whom The Spider cared. White Eye smiled. Boca, watching him, rose. "I do not like you—I do not like your eyes," she called across the patio.

"I like your mouth," declared White Eye, laughing.

The old Mexican back of the bar glanced sharply at the Americano, hesitated, and then let his half-raised arm drop at his side. Perhaps after all this man with the chalk eyes had a message for his master. This hombre had waited two weeks and had spent much money in the cantina for drink and at cards. It would be well to wait. Boca could take care of herself. The old Mexi-

can gazed out through the open doorway, out across the afternoon levels of the southern desert. The Spider had been gone two weeks, and no word, no sign of his returning. White Eye shifted round and gestured. The Mexican shoved a bottle toward him. White Eye drank, rolled a cigarette, and leaned on the bar. "The Spider is not coming back," he said, and watched the old Mexican's face.

"And still you wait for him?"

White Eye did not like the expression of the other's deep-set eyes. "The Spider said if he wasn't back by noon to-day that I was not to wait for him. He's got a deal on—down Sonora way—a big deal. Said if he pulled it he was through with Showdown."

"*Si?* I did not know." The old Mexican lied as craftily as had White Eye. The Spider was in El Paso—had gone to El Paso, taking much money with him. He had said he would return within the week. And not a soul knew of this save the old man and The Spider himself. This man with the chalk eyes had lied. Why should a man lie when there was no need?

"The Spider won't be back. He's left Showdown for good," again declared White Eye. Boca heard, ceased sipping her wine and stared at the Americano. "Come here," she said presently. "It is that I would talk with you."

White Eye winked at the old Mexican, coughed and strode to the patio. Boca gestured toward a chair. White Eye drew up to the table. "Tell it all to me," he said, leaning toward her. "Only, make it slow. I'm young, and kind of nervous when I talk to a lady."

Boca ignored the covert meaning of his speech. She smiled. "You spoke of The Spider, yes? He is indeed ugly, is he not? And he is not young. If he does not come back——" and Boca shrugged her shoulders expressively. "But then, you have said he will not come back. You are his friend, yes? That is good."

"I like your mouth," said White Eye.

"I am called 'Pretty Mouth,'" said Boca —they conversed in Spanish—"and you?"

"Well—just White Eye, if you like."

Boca laughed. "I said I did not like you," murmured Boca. 'It was when you first looked at me. It is not that I would offend you, señor."

"Oh, that's all right! I've been told that before."

"And your eyes are not white, but blue, now that you are near," said Boca, smiling.

White Eye felt flattered. He knew how to halter-break a filly so that she would lead! And the ones that fought at the start were often the ones most easy to break.

The old Mexican came from behind the bar and stepped to the doorway, shading his eyes against the afternoon sun. White Eye rose and shifted his belt. "Visitors?" he queried. The old Mexican turned. White Eye strode to the doorway. Across the distant desert, followed by thin wisps of dust, came a buckboard. One man was in the seat.

The buckboard came on slowly. Occasionally the driver turned and glanced back as though to make sure that the load roped on the buckboard was riding easily. "Bottled goods," said White Eye, turning back into the room. But the old Mexican stood gazing intently at the oncoming vehicle. Presently the old man left the doorway, walking toward the team that paced so slowly across the open. The old man's walk increased to a slow trot. He waved his arm, stumbled and trotted on. "Señor Jim!" he called, long before he could have been heard by the driver. "Señor Jim!"

Two weeks he had waited for the return of his master, The Spider. And now one came, driving slowly. The Spider had ridden away on the big bay horse. The driver of the buckboard was a Mexican, a stranger to Showdown. The old man, short of breath, staggered up to the front wheel of the buckboard, leaned against it, and spoke to the driver. "He is there," said the other, gesturing toward a hump of blankets behind the seat. "He has not spoken for many hours. Perhaps it is that he will not speak again."

The old man stepped to the side of the buckboard and gazed down at a white, waxen face, his master's face, yet so drawn and strange—— The Spider's eyes were closed. His lips moved. The old Mexican leaned closer. "Send for Boca," whispered The Spider.

Dazed, the old Mexican began to run toward the cantina. The team followed slowly. Within the doorway the old man caught sight of Boca, standing by a table in the patio. White Eye was leaning close to her. Suddenly Boca drew back her hand and slapped White Eye's face, slapped it swiftly and gracefully, yet determinedly withal. White Eye stepped back. The old

Mexican stopped, hesitated for a word and then: "It is the Señor Jim. He is alive—yet he is as one dead. He spoke your name."

Boca ran across the patio, through the room and on out to where the team stood sweating in the low sun. Not a word as she gazed down at The Spider's ghastly face. Then turning she called to one in the doorway across the street: "Juan!" The other came swiftly. "In his room," said Boca, gesturing—and Miguel, The Spider's man, with Juan, carried the still figure through the barroom and into the room back of the bar. Boca followed, closing the door after her.

"Hell!" murmured White Eye.

While in El Paso, where he had gone to deposit considerable money in the Stockmen's Exchange Bank, The Spider had had occasion to visit an old friend in Juarez. As he turned the corner and limped down a dark street toward the river two figures pushed out from behind an adobe. One of them told The Spider to put up his hands. The Spider had no great amount of money with him at the time and would have obeyed the command had it not been that one of the holdups told him to move quick—and concluded with, "We got you this time, Spider." Instantly he realized that this was more than an ordinary holdup, that the men knew him and that back of their threat lurked some old grudge. The Spider jumped sidewise, fired twice, felt a shock in his side and even as he crumpled down he fired again.

He heard footsteps—some one running. And then he was lying in a cot in the General Hospital in El Paso. He did not know how hard he had been hit—he did not ask, but lay, day after day, silent, hardly moving a finger. The nurse came and went. A portly, smooth-shaven man appeared occasionally—the surgeon, so The Spider thought. Then a familiar face, the face of his old friend Hodges, president of the Stockmen's Bank. "Ed," whispered The Spider, "get me out of this." Hodges shook his head. "You've been here a week," said Hodges. "The doctor says you'll make it, all right—but—can you move your legs, Jim?"

The Spider shook his head. His legs felt heavy, numb, lifeless. "Have 'em freight me to Showdown," whispered The Spider. "My hands are all right—I can sign a check."

Hodges cursed softly. Later he returned to the room. He had talked with the surgeon. "They won't risk moving you yet, Jim. Later, perhaps. Three or four days. Doctor says he won't be responsible. Says if you aren't handled right you may never walk again."

"My funeral," whispered The Spider. "Get me back to Showdown. Have some one meet the train at Enright, with a buckboard."

"That ride across the desert will finish you," declared Hodges.

The Spider said nothing.

Toward the end of the second week The Spider was taken to the train in an ambulance. Hodges accompanied him as far as Enright where a Mexican with a buckboard waited. The Spider was loaded into the buckboard and made comfortable on a mattress and blankets. Curious passengers saw a small, lean figure, clothed in black, carried gently to the buckboard—saw the waxen face with its livid scar running from chin to brow—and they wondered just what had happened or was about to happen. "T. B.?" queried a passenger as the train moved on.

"T. B. hell!" snorted a stocky, sombreroed ranchman. "That's Jim Ewell, of Showdown. Some folks call him The Spider. Half his back is shot away—gun fight in Juarez. Don't you ever read the papers?"

CHAPTER II.

Black-shawled Mexican women, black-hatted men clustered about the doorway of the saloon, talking excitedly. Something had happened to the patron. It was said he had been shot—would not live. The driver of the buckboard was questioned. He knew nothing, save that he had met the train at Enright and had driven many weary miles across the desert, stopping at a rancho for the night, and resuming his slow journey the next day, fearful each time he glanced back that he would find he was driving a dead man to Showdown. Yet the patron was alive—had spoken once or twice since arriving.

Others asked questions, ventured opinions. The talking ceased as White Eye strode from the saloon and across the street to Juan's house, where White Eye slept and took his meals. Juan was among the Mexicans round the doorway. Presently old

Miguel, The Spider's man, beckoned to Juan who stepped into the barroom. Two or three men were drinking at the bar. Miguel called Juan aside and talked with him briefly. Juan nodded and presently returned to his home across the street. Juan passed through his doorway casually, glanced at White Eye's vacant room and stepped cautiously to the rear of the house. Through the kitchen window Juan saw White Eye saddling his horse. It was almost dark. That a man should ride at night, when there was no cause for haste—— Juan shook his head. He turned to prepare supper.

In a short time White Eye came in. Juan placed a wicker-covered jug on the table. White Eye, squatting on his heels, smoked and gazed at the opposite wall. At Juan's invitation White Eye rose, stretched and took a seat at the table. He said nothing about leaving—in fact he was unusually silent. Juan had had instructions from old Miguel to watch White Eye. For what reason Juan could not surmise. Yet the Americano had saddled his horse, even before he had eaten supper. And the nearest human habitation was a good ten hours' hard ride from Showdown. The Americano had told old Miguel that he was waiting for The Spider. Yet now that The Spider had returned the Americano had not spoken to him, left any message for him, but had saddled his horse——

White Eye turned in his chair as some one clattered up to the corral in the dark. Juan rose and stepped out into the night. "You never can tell," muttered White Eye —and he tipped the lamp toward him and blew out the light. Presently Juan came in. "It is good," he said quietly. "The light?"

"She went out," declared White Eye. "I haven't got a match."

Juan, standing in the doorway, struck a match. In the flare of it he did not see White Eye slip his gun back into the holster. Juan stepped to the table and lighted the lamp. "Who is it?" queried White Eye in Spanish.

"One who has ridden far and fast," replied Juan. "He asked if he could get another horse, to-morrow. He gave no name. He is an Americano."

"Where is he?"

"Even now he is in the cantina."

White Eye nodded and clumped to the front of the house. Juan began to clear away the dishes. White Eye stepped out and walked round to the corral. He knew every horse in it. Singling out the tired horse in the starlight White Eye ran his hand across the animal's back, then wiped his hand on his overalls. "Mebby so," he said to himself. "Mebby so this hombre choused along easy most of the way, and then ran his cayuse a mile or two to sweat him. You never can tell."

That evening White Eye and the stranger drank together and conversed with extreme caution, each seemingly suspicious of the other. The stranger gave a name—Jones—and intimated that he was traveling north. Jones made inquiry as to The Spider. He seemed surprised when he learned that The Spider was in the room back of the bar, either desperately wounded or desperately ill, and not expected to live. "Must have been a tough journey across the flats from Enright," said Jones.

"You ought to know," said White Eye.

"Didn't he come in from the south?" queried Jones.

White Eye laughed. "I been here two weeks."

"You ought to be posted," remarked Jones. "I've been busy."

Miguel, back of the bar listened, watching them covertly. Jones and White Eye talked casually. Presently Jones said he was hungry. Miguel directed him to Juan's house across the road.

As Jones left the saloon Boca entered from the doorway behind the bar. She glanced at White Eye as she would have glanced at one of the chairs had it been in the middle of the room, out of place. She spoke to Miguel, who presently turned to White Eye. "It is that the cantina will be closed, till to-morrow."

"How is The Spider?" queried White Eye.

Boca ignored the question. Miguel, when she had returned to The Spider's room, shook his head. "The patron is very weak. He would rest. The cantina will be open to-morrow."

White Eye took the hint; and with it a flask of whisky for which he gave Miguel two dollars—a stiff price, even in Showdown. White Eye had come to a sudden resolve. He wished to convey the impression that he was leaving Showdown at once. He purchased tobacco and papers and took a handful of matches from the box. "Give my regards to The Spider," he said. "Tell him I'll be back some day."

The old Mexican nodded. He knew that White Eye was acting—that there was no sincerity in his pose or speech. And the stranger, the heavy-set, dark-featured, quiet man—he had never before been in Showdown, he also had appeared to be acting a part. He did not have the look of a hunted man, but rather the appearance of one who was hunting for something or some one. Perhaps for White Eye? Miguel shrugged his shoulders. He did not care to bother The Spider with his suspicions, yet he determined, if another gringo showed up in town within the next twenty-four hours, that he would let The Spider know of it. Miguel, old, battle worn, shrewd, had come to be The Spider's confidential man simply because of a surprising ability to anticipate the need of caution or secrecy long before he had been warned by his master to do so. Miguel watched a man's hands as well as his eyes, and often caught the lie in a gesture, the slight twitch of a thumb, or even in the way a man struck a match and lighted a cigarette, for Miguel said little and thought much—and appeared to be rather stupid.

As he closed the doors and locked up the old Mexican glanced across the way. There was a light in Juan's front room, the room allotted to such transients as White Eye and his kind. Miguel stood on a chair and turned out the hanging lamp. He went softly to The Spider's room. Boca was sitting by The Spider's bed, her hands listless in her lap, her eyes wide and fixed on the santos on the wall. "He sleeps," she said, forming the soundless words with her lips. Miguel nodded and drew back into the darkened barroom.

From where he stood he could see the lighted window in Juan's house, but the lower half of the window was blanketed. Miguel almost allowed himself to smile. No men, hard pressed, would allow themselves the luxury of a light—and that White Eye and the stranger were in the room together was as obvious to Miguel as had been their pretended indifference to each other when in the cantina. Miguel stole cautiously to the kitchen back of the patio and made himself some strong coffee. He did not eat much, but he drank several cups of the black coffee. Later he came back to the saloon and finding a chair placed it back of the bar, close to the door behind which Boca Dulzura watched and The Spider slept. "And who else?" asked Miguel of himself as he leaned back and rested his grizzled head against the wall. "She is his daughter. She does not know that, yet it is well that she should be here. If the saints love a pretty mouth, perhaps they will listen to the prayer of Boca Dulzura for her friend. I do not pray. The prayers of the old are not often heard in heaven. As for me, I wait—and I think—and I see things that others do not see. That the patron should live, who knows? He has called me 'The dog at the gate'—and he has paid me well."

Miguel rose presently as a tiny spot glowed in the darkness of the patio. The red spot was Juan's cigarette, not smoked because of any special desire, but used as a signal. No man of Showdown would dream of stealing into The Spider's patio after the saloon had been closed, with a lighted cigarette in his mouth. Both man and cigarette were too apt to be suddenly extinguished. Juan stood next to Miguel in The Spider's confidence.

"The White Eye has unsaddled his horse. He talks with the other Americano." Thus Juan in the darkness. "I did not hear, much," he added. "But there will be others," he concluded, "gringos from the south. To-morrow they come. That I have heard. Adios."

The tiny red spot glowed again and Juan was gone. Miguel moved back to his chair. The low moon cast a long shadow across the road. Once Boca came to the door and asked Miguel to get some fresh water. Two hours later the moonlight drifted obliquely across the swart face of the old Mexican. His chin was on his chest. He seemed to sleep. Yet when a rat shot across a patch of moonlight on the floor Miguel's head came up. He shifted his position a little. Presently he rose and gently opened the door to The Spider's room. Boca was asleep in her chair. Her young face was flushed. Her slender hands lay palms up in her lap. Beyond her the gray-white face of The Spider. His mouth was open. He breathed heavily.

Miguel closed the door softly and stole out to the kitchen to make some more coffee. Miguel returned to his vigil. As he entered the barroom a rat scampered across the floor. A grotesque shadow drifted lazily down the street—a stray burro. A dog barked and the burro disappeared with a faint patter of hoofs. Slowly the moonlight

faded from the windows of the room. An hour—two hours and Miguel would see the first dim light of the dawn flutter across the reaches of the eastern desert. Meanwhile he would watch. Many strange things had happened between the hour of moon down and the dawn.

CHAPTER III.

When Miguel opened the doors of the cantina that morning, to a red haze in the eastern sky, he found several of his countrymen waiting to speak with him. They inquired about The Spider. They wanted to know if the patron would live, and what had happened to him. While The Spider had been despotic, had ruled Showdown with a heavy hand, he had always been just, and liberal when poverty or sickness threatened some inhabitant. The people feared him and, in their way, liked him.

Miguel answered all questions briefly and cautiously. That Miguel summoned young Ramon Baca to the cantina, later that morning, did not surprise any who had knowledge of the fact. Ramon, a lithe, smiling young Mexican, a tireless rider and withal good-natured and rather fond of excitement, had often acted as messenger when The Spider's errand demanded speed and secrecy. No doubt Ramon was to ride to Enright and fetch back the doctor. And that was what Ramon was told to do, in the presence of several Mexicans drinking at the bar, and among them White Eye and the stranger, Jones. "Yes, The Spider was worse," declared Miguel, in answer to White Eye's question. He had had a bad night and seemed much weaker. This for White Eye's benefit. The Spider had passed a quiet night and had slept much of the time. Meanwhile, Miguel suggested, it would be possible to drink without getting drunk, and to speak softly. The patron was irritable, and noise disturbed him.

"We're bucking a queer game," declared Jones as he left the cantina with White Eye.

"How?"

"I don't like the way that old cholo acts," said Jones. "He's got something up his sleeve."

"Ever see a Mex that didn't have?" queried White Eye.

"That's all right. If I'd got here last week instead of last night we might have cleaned up and made an easy get-away. The Spider is down, but he ain't dead. If Porter and Booge hadn't bobbled it, in Juarez——"

"Porter and Booge are out of it. But I guess Jake and Peg and you and me can put it through. Got cold feet?"

"I'm here, ain't I—after getting hung up near two weeks at Verde? It was a close call for the bunch of us. They say The Spider ain't got friends. I say he has."

"Mexicans, mebby. A nickel a shot."

"That's all right. But if Peg and Jake don't show up about noon, I'm going to pull my freight." Jones spoke as though he meant it.

"I would, anyway. If you think old Miguel suspicions we're here on business we ought to put that idea to sleep."

They entered Juan's adobe, where Jones arranged with Juan for a supply of grub—"Enough," said Jones, "to last a couple of days."

White Eye meandered over to the saloon. He took a seat in the patio and called for a drink. Old Miguel fetched it grudgingly. White Eye drank, and smoked leisurely. If The Spider had gone to El Paso to draw money from the bank to finance the scheme that Peg Sims had outlined by letter to The Spider several weeks ago, it would seem that the money must still be in the bank, judging by the present circumstances. Booge and Porter had bungled their part of the scheme. Instead of following The Spider to Enright and making sure of getting him between Enright and Showdown they had held him up in Juarez. The Spider had been too fast for them. White Eye reasoned that something like this had happened. Booge and Porter had tried to get it all—to double cross Jake and Peg Sims and Jones. And now The Spider was back in Showdown, hit hard, but still alive. Did he have the money with him? White Eye was inclined to think that such was not the case.

He was correct in his surmise. Upon receipt of Peg Sims' letter The Spider had suspected a trap and had—because he was at the time carrying more money than he deemed safe—straightway turned the cards by journeying to El Paso and depositing this money in the bank. Booge and Porter were dead. And The Spider—so he thought—crippled for life.

"I made a pretty good guess," soliloquized White Eye. "He come damn near not getting

back here. Wonder why Peg and Jake didn't spot the buckboard at Enright and follow it up and make a job of it?"

Boca opened the door back of the bar noiselessly. She saw White Eye in the patio and gathered from his attitude that he was thinking too hard for a man of his caliber. *"Buenas dias!"* she called softly. White Eye jerked round. *"Como le va?* How's the old man?"

"It is of him I would speak to you. He is very weak. Ramon has gone to Enright for the doctor." Boca came into the patio and seated herself opposite White Eye. "You were rough, yesterday. I forgive you. It was the *vino*. No, you may not take my hand. It is no time for that—now. If you would be as a friend, as a brother——" Boca's appeal, enhanced by her eyes, flattered White Eye. He nodded. "Sure! I'll stick around and do what I can to help."

"And your friend?" queried Boca, smiling.

"You mean Jones? Never saw him till last night. Guess he's all right. He got in trouble down on the border. He's headed north."

"I am weary," said Boca, yawning and stretching as naturally as a young animal.

"Hard work, sitting up with a sick man," asserted White Eye. "Can he move around any, or do you have to feed him?"

"He is helpless. He cannot move his arms or his legs. I give him water to drink, and the medicine. He is very weak."

"Hard luck. He's a pretty tough hombre to down. Must have been all shot up."

Boca studied White Eye, wondering how he happened to know that The Spider had been wounded in a gun fight. Miguel knew, and she knew, yet no one else had been told. How did this Americano know that it was a wound and not sickness that accounted for The Spider's condition? Presently Boca nodded. "Yes, it is as you say." She rose. "Now I shall sleep a while. It is good to know that you are my friend."

"Got her cinched," murmured White Eye as Boca disappeared behind the door to The Spider's room. "Guess I'll go see Jones."

Jones, in the corral back of Juan's adobe, was saddling his horse. White Eye stepped close and spoke cautiously. "Been talking to that kid—the girl—and seems The Spider is all in; can't wiggle a finger. She's friendly. Now I figure to stick around and watch this end of it. Mebby you better ride west, then swing south after you're out of sight of town, and head off the bunch. That old Mexican behind the bar don't act right. He's got an idea there's something wrong. If Peg and Jake come drifting in about noon it'll look like too much of a crowd to suit him—and he'll be on the lookout for trouble. Suppose you three fellas camp over in the arroyo west of town, and drift in about midnight. I'll be on the job. The girl likes me. I aim to have a talk with her, out in the patio, this evening."

"I guess you been double crossed by wimmen often enough to know what you're doing," said Jones. "Me, I ain't strong for wimmen in a deal like this, any time."

"She'll never know she's in it, till it's all over," declared White Eye. "I'll be in the patio, talking pretty to her when you fellas ride up. Old Miguel sleeps in that room off the kitchen, at the back. If he shows up, I'll get him. That leaves nobody in the place but the girl—and a man that's so near dead he don't count. The rest is easy."

"I'll be telling Peg how you framed it," said Jones. And with no other word, save a gruff farewell, he mounted and rode past Juan's house, and swung west. Old Miguel saw him go. The other Americano was still at Juan's. Miguel in his battered armchair, leaned back and closed his eyes. He may have been asleep. A flurry of wind rose in the street and spun a thin column of dust.

CHAPTER IV.

Far out on the desert young Ramon lay on the top of a low hill watching the distant town. Ramon's horse drowsed in a hollow below the hill. The young Mexican saw a tiny figure riding from Showdown into the west. The horseman presently swung toward the south. Ramon watched him ride past the hill, recognized him as the stranger he had been told to keep an eye on, and wondered why the other had ridden so far west before turning. When the other had ridden out of sight beyond a desert ridge, Ramon rose and followed. Topping the ridge he saw that the stranger had stopped.

Far to the south two riders appeared. Ramon waited until the three met, saw them sitting their horses, evidently conversing, saw them swing and ride together back over the course the stranger had taken. Ramon swung his horse down the ridge and spurred him to a run, riding swiftly into the broken

country toward the west. "It is as Miguel said: 'Others will come, riding from the south.' Yet how did he know?" Ramon was puzzled, perplexed. It was nothing unusual for one or two Americanos to ride into Showdown. And these men—— Ramon's perplexity was changed to youthful surprise when, after having ridden into the seclusion of the arroyos, he dismounted and crept to the edge of the hollow down which he had come.

The three men had not turned on the trail into Showdown, but had crossed it and were riding north, into even more rugged country than that from which Ramon watched. They rode slowly, occasionally pausing to survey the surrounding country. Ramon dropped back into the arroyo and making himself comfortable, rolled a cigarette and smoked. From the attitudes of the three men, from the way they rode, Ramon surmised that they were not leaving the country but rather seeking a hidden place in which to camp. He had been told to watch. People in Showdown supposed him to be on his way to Enright to get the doctor. Old Miguel was very clever—— Ramon dozed in the noon heat. After his siesta he would ride out and take up the tracks of the three men.

CHAPTER V.

The Spider's room, which so few had ever seen, was in rather startling contrast to the bare and unpromising exterior of the adobe. Vivid Mexican blankets hung on the walls, and against the blankets silver-studded bridles, a magnificent saddle, hand-carved and heavily decorated with silver, a Mexican sombrero edged and banded with delicate gold work, a santo from some old church, Navajo trinkets, beaded moccasins, quirts whose handles were of braided silver wire, a reata of rawhide as supple as a snake and as strong as an inch rope—and upon the adobe floor rare old Navajo and Oaxaca blankets; a curiously carved Spanish table, contrasting strangely with the modern armchair and plain kitchen chair: and against the wall a long and wide bench of some dark, time-polished wood, evidently taken from an old Spanish church—and the narrow iron bed under the high window, covered with a bright crimson blanket of fine weave and ancient design. These things reflected both considerable value in actual cash, and also The Spider's taste in the matter of furnishings and decorations. Severely businesslike, a carbine stood in the corner near the head of the bed, and The Spider's age-blackened and worn holster with the polished butt of a short-barreled forty-five gleaming in the afternoon light lay on the table.

A heavy chest of dark, carved wood, with wrought-iron hinges and a lock and hasp of peculiar design, stood against the wall nearest the door. Boca, seated on the end of the chest was intently studying the cards which were arrayed in rows before her. The Spider's still eyes watched her. A ray of afternoon sunlight struck through the high, narrow window above the bed and fell upon her head and shoulders. Presently she glanced up, smiled and rose, stretching her young lithe body. "The cards have said there is nothing to fear," she declared. "Three times I have tried, and each time they——"

The Spider's pallid lips moved. "Where is White Eye?"

"Oh, he is in the cantina. I think he waits for me. It is good that he should wait. Ramon has not returned."

"Has White Eye bothered you?"

Boca shrugged her shoulders. "As much as he dare. He has said that I am to be his wife, yes? That to-night when the moon is high we will ride south together. He says there is a priest in Enright. I know there is not. Oh, it is nothing," continued Boca as The Spider cursed in Spanish. "He is a fool. He thinks that I am a child."

"Call Miguel," said The Spider.

"*Si.* And I will go to my lover." And Boca's pretty mouth twisted in a scornful smile.

Miguel, always close to the door, answered her summons. As the door closed behind him, Boca crossed to the patio where White Eye sat moodily gazing at an untouched glass of whisky. His pale eyes brightened as Boca appeared. She drew up to the table. "We will read our fortunes," she said. White Eye watched her slim hands as she spread the cards before her. This was a girl worth taking a risk for. No—not a girl, but a woman that looked like a girl. White Eye gazed at her flushed cheeks, her dark eyes shadowed by curving lashes. Boca seemed oblivious to everything but the cards. White Eye seized his glass and emptied it. "Good luck! Good luck on the trail south." Boca nodded, still busy with the cards.

"How's the old man?" queried White Eye.

Boca, still arranging the cards, shook her head. She did not glance up.

"Looks like he wouldn't last long?" White Eye's intonation seemed to express that wish.

Hot color surged into Boca's cheeks. She masked her hatred for White Eye by a pretended interest in the cards. "We await the coming of the doctor," she murmured.

"It will be two days before he'll get here. A whole lot can happen in that time."

"Yes; a great deal," concurred Boca.

Miguel, in The Spider's room, was bending over the open chest upon which Boca had been seated. Carefully he drew out such garments as The Spider directed; a black coat and vest and trousers, a white shirt with starched front, an old-fashioned stiff, low collar, a narrow, black silk tie. He laid these things on the table. Meanwhile The Spider, propped up on several pillows, watched him. "Shave," whispered The Spider.

The old Mexican departed for the kitchen, returning with a pitcher of hot water. Laboriously, with clumsy gentleness he shaved The Spider's waxen face. Then he fetched the little leather case containing The Spider's meager surgical outfit. The Spider's slender hands were deft as he dissolved a tablet and filled the little hypodermic syringe. "What time is it?" he asked with the syringe poised above his lean upper arm. Old Miguel drew a heavy silver watch from his pocket. "It is six, señor."

Slowly the influence of the drug became manifest. The Spider raised himself on his elbow and gestured toward the clothing on the table. Miguel, astounded, hesitated. The Spider's lips moved. "I wasn't as weak as you thought I was. Legs no good—rest of me is all right."

"These also?" queried Miguel indicating the trousers.

"Yes, and my boots."

Old Miguel knew that it was useless to argue. Patiently, carefully he dressed The Spider, fetching a small looking-glass that The Spider might see to tie the narrow, black necktie.

"Legs no good," said The Spider, in his thin, reedy voice.

He lay back on the bed. Miguel drew the crimson blanket over him. As yet Miguel had no idea of The Spider's intent. The old man thought that his master was mildly delirious.

"Ramon ought to be back," said The Spider.

Miguel understood. He nodded and left the room. He strode on out and across the street. If any one came into the cantina, Boca was there and could attend to them. In a short time Miguel was back. White Eye had just gone out to get his supper. Boca sat in the patio, chin on palm, gazing at the cards on the table. Miguel stepped into The Spider's room. "He is back," said the old man. "Three men are camped in the Barranca of the Coyotes. One of them is the man that left this morning. The others——"

"Keep the cantina open till twelve to-night," interrupted The Spider. "If any one wants to see me, show 'em in—in here. But not before ten. If White Eye makes a crooked move—get him. I'll leave that to you. I'll take care of the others."

"*Si,* Señor Jim. And Boca?"

"Boca will take care of herself."

'I will bring something for you to eat, and some *vino?"*

"No, brandy. You've got the key."

Miguel shook his head as he puttered about in the kitchen, preparing supper for Boca and The Spider. There would be a killing—he knew that. The men camped in the barranca—that meant trouble. White Eye's attentions to Boca, attentions she did not seem to resent, also meant trouble. Miguel knew his own kind. If young Ramon knew White Eye had but spoken one suggestive word to Boca, Ramon would kill him, sooner or later. If Ramon knew? Miguel hesitated. His plan was formulated slowly, even as he stirred the chili and beans and set the coffeepot toward the back of the stove. It hurt his pride to think that The Spider had not taken him more into his confidence. But no; he was The Dog at the Gate, to do as he was told. Boca would take care of herself. The patron had said so. And yet——

Boca herself solved a portion of Miguel's problem. When he fetched her supper she sat back, frowning. "Pig! A white-eyed pig!" she exclaimed. "I could have killed him for his lying. There is no priest in Enright. And he would have me go with him——"

Miguel questioned her with his eyes.

"He would have me ride south, to-night. He has made many promises. He thinks that I am a child, a fool!"

"There are fast horses in the corral," asserted Miguel. "Faster than the horse the white-eyed one rides. Perhaps it is that were you to go a little way with him, a very little way, something might happen in the night. Who knows? You have no fear of the desert, and you do not fear men." Miguel leaned close to her, as though fearful that his whisper would be heard. "They have planned to rob the patron. Yes, three men camped in the Barranca of the Coyotes, and this man with the eyes of chalk. They will come to-night. He will be here to help them. That is four—and I am but one. If you were to ride a very little way with the White Eye I am sure something would happen to him. Do not speak of this to the patron. I have ever been your friend. I am his friend. If the fool should offer to harm you, you have your knife."

Boca's dark eyes widened. So that was what the presence of White Eye and the stranger, Jones, meant? They knew that The Spider was helpless and had planned to rob him, to murder him. To lure the gringo away from the cantina—that would be easy enough. And finding him gone the others might lose courage. "Does he know that they will come?" queried Boca.

Old Miguel shook his head. "The patron knows nothing, and he knows everything. Even now he has on his best black suit, as though he were to receive a guest. I could say nothing."

"But he cannot walk, nor sit up——"

"He has taken strong medicine, señorita. Then, too, he can use his hands and arms. Think well of what I have said to you about the White Eye. Once the patron saved his life. Now it is that the White Eye would rob the patron, who has always been your friend."

"I know a song," said Boca, smiling. "A song of betrayal. It may be that I shall ride south to-night, but only a little way, a very little way. Of a truth, there is no padre in Enright."

Miguel nodded. "Should one who lies hidden along the trail hear the song I am very sure something would happen to the White Eye."

Boca said nothing to this gentle intimation. She ate heartily. Miguel shuffled to the kitchen to return with food for his patron. Miguel reasoned that the plan was a good one. If there was to be trouble it would be well that Boca should not be in the cantina. And Miguel knew that to request her to stay away for that reason would be futile. Boca would laugh at him. She was fearless and willful. But now there was a very good reason that she should go.

When Miguel came from The Spider's room White Eye was in the patio, talking to Boca. As Miguel passed them on his way to the kitchen White Eye asked him to fetch some wine. *"Vino blanco,"* said Boca. "I do not drink the red wine," she added, addressing White Eye.

"Anything you want," said White Eye, "and that's a promise."

CHAPTER VI.

Young Ramon, returned from tracking the three riders to a camp in the Barranca of the Coyotes, was eating supper when Miguel entered the adobe, with a word of greeting to Ramon's mother. "Juan told me what you had found out about the Americanos," said Miguel. "You have done well. Do not let any one see you. Here is a gift of money from the patron."

Ramon's mother immediately appropriated the money. Ramon smiled. He always gave what money he managed to make to his mother. They lived alone together, and she was exceedingly kind to her only son, whose father had been killed several years previous, down on the border. He had been killed in a gun fight, while in the service of The Spider. Ramon and his mother were in a measure pensioners.

"Your horse is tired?" queried Miguel.

"As fresh as the morning," asserted Ramon. "The ride to-day was nothing."

"Bueno! The gringo with the white eyes will ride south to-night. It is said that Boca Dulzura will ride with him. No; it is not as you think. You must not come to the cantina. If you do the gringo will know you have not been to Enright for the doctor. But there is a place of stones where one might lie and watch the trail and—— I do not say that you should go. That is with you."

Still smiling, young Ramon rose from the table and stepped outside with old Miguel. "Is it that the patron——" Miguel shook his head. "He knows nothing of this. It is with you."

"Gracias, amigo. I shall wait for them."

Miguel nodded, waved his hand and disappeared in the dusk. It was a good plan.

Ramon was in love with Boca. White Eye was an Americano. How simple an arrangement. The patron himself could not have done better.

About a half hour's ride, and Ramon turned from the southern trail and led his horse round a ridge of rocks where he had planned to wait for White Eye and Boca. With his rifle and a serape, Ramon climbed to the top of the ridge and glanced down. The dim trail was almost directly below him. He made himself comfortable, his back against a rock, the serape round his shoulders. When the moon rose he would have to lie down, else he might be seen from the trail. Meanwhile he smoked a cigarette, wondering why Boca had consented to leave Showdown with the Americano. There must be a very good reason, even as there had been a very good reason for watching the three strangers that afternoon. Miguel did not send men upon needless errands. The patron was sick, perhaps dying. Three gringos were camped in the Barranca of the Coyotes, waiting—for what?

Well, it did not matter. Ramon argued that he was also waiting, and he knew for whom he was waiting. It was dark. He could scarcely discern the trail almost below him. Yet the moon would shine before midnight. Then the desert would be silver-white, and a man on horseback—— It would be almost impossible to miss, at such close range. And not even Boca would know who killed the gringo. Only Miguel would know, and Miguel was a friend. Ramon watched the slow moon round up over the far eastern edge of the world. The desert became beautiful, mysterious, a place of dreams. The young Mexican changed his position, easing himself round until he lay facing the trail. His rifle was still warm to his hand. The rocks were still warm. Yet Ramon's hands were clammy with a cold sweat. He was not afraid—yet he had never killed a man.

The cantina doorway was open to the still night, even past the usual hour of closing, ten o'clock. Old Miguel, behind the bar, conversed with a countryman who drank little but talked much. Others in the cantina were seated at the tables along the wall, drinking, or playing cards, or merely gazing into the smoke eddies in the room. In the patio White Eye was talking with Boca, who occasionally laughed, and while pretending to listen to the other's coarse flattery, hummed a tune that finally caused White Eye to ask her what the tune was.

"Oh, a song of one who betrayed a woman," said Boca.

"Hell of a time to sing that," declared White Eye, who had not been too careful about the amount of *vino* he drank. In fact White Eye rather scorned white wine —a drink for Mexicans and women—but drank it because Boca did.

"Yes," said Boca, "it is as you say. There is also a song of a woman who betrayed a man."

"Every time!" declared White Eye.

"And yet you say you love me?"

"Sure, *-niña!* But I'm willing to take a chance."

Boca's face flushed and she veiled her eyes with her long, curved lashes. "You are brave, *amigo.*"

"Trying to string me?"

"I have said I would go with you, to the padre. Does the wine make you ugly? Am I less beautiful than I was?"

"By God, no! You're the prettiest woman I ever seen. And that goes!"

"Then I am content. You have the horses ready?"

'Sure. Got 'em out back, like you told me. I saddled that big bay. Didn't know The Spider ever let any one ride his horses."

"Oh, I do as I please," and Boca shrugged her shoulders. "Then, he is too ill to know."

"I'll just slip out and see that everything is set. You can follow later. No one will notice." And White Eye rose and stepped to the door in the wall of the patio. That door opened directly onto The Spider's corral—a matter of expediency—and beyond the corral, tied to the bars were two horses, vague shapes in the soft moonlight. Boca immediately crossed the patio and stepped into The Spider's room. She checked an exclamation as she saw The Spider dressed and sitting in a low armchair, the low black armchair that used to stand near the doorway of the cantina. Boca noticed the white edge of the pillow at his back—The Spider's only concession to his condition. His face was dappled with a fine sweat. His black eyes were expressionless yet exceedingly alive. "Help me get this off," he said, indicating his coat. "No, just this sleeve."

Boca watched him as he filled the tiny

bright hypodermic and forced the needle into his arm. "What time is it?" he asked.

"Eleven, señor."

"You better get to bed. I'm all right. I won't need anybody."

"But—your wound——"

"Better. Legs no good. Arms and head all right—and that's all I'll need. *Buenos noches.*"

Suddenly Boca's heart filled with pity for this strange and silent man. He seemed so utterly alone, so apart from his kind. She even pitied his great courage, his isolated pride. Boca swept her arms about him and kissed his cheek. "My friend!" she whispered. "My good friend!"

"Like your mother," said The Spider in his thin, peculiar voice. "Help me get this sleeve on again."

Boca saw the shoulder holster and the polished grip of the six-gun beneath his arm as she gently helped him into his coat. And he was sitting up in the old black armchair, when he had recently been in bed, and apparently so weak and exhausted. It had been said among Boca's superstitious kin that nothing could kill The Spider. And what had he meant by "Like your mother?"

The Spider waved his hand, a gesture of farewell, a gesture indicating that she should go.

White Eye, leading the horses, met her as she stepped into the corral. Boca noticed that the corral bars were down. "The patron's horses!" she exclaimed.

"Turned 'em loose," said White Eye. "Them thoroughbreds of his could run us down in no time. I ain't taking one little chance."

"Oh, they will come back," declared Boca easily.

"You ain't dressed for a long trip," said White Eye.

"My serape is tied back of my saddle. It is warm to-night. Then, I have clothes at the rancho."

"What rancho?"

"The Flores, where I live."

"Well, step up on your horse. We better ride north a spell, and then swing round the town."

White Eye had no intention of riding down into Flores cañon where Boca lived, but rather, to ride directly to Enright and there take the train for El Paso. Nor had he any intention of marrying Boca, who, through her intuition, was quite aware of the fact. White Eye had also betrayed his companions, in that he had promised to be at the cantina when they arrived, knowing that they depended upon him to warn them in case their plan was suspected. Had he been without money White Eye would have stayed. But he had money—and he wanted Boca.

Far south of the town they rode through the still, warm night, White Eye in the lead and in evident haste. Boca held in The Spider's big bay thoroughbred as it tried impatiently to overtake the other horse. Presently she called to her companion. Her arms were tired trying to hold the bay from breaking into a run. "I am not an Indian woman, to forever ride behind my man," she said as White Eye reined up. White Eye laughed. "We can take it slower," he said.

She thrust out her hand against him as he leaned in the saddle to kiss her. "Not now. After we have seen the padre——"

"This is great!" said White Eye. "We sure made a quiet get-away. Sing something, *niña.*"

"But no. I am sad."

"What's the idea?"

"Perhaps it would be better if I were to ride back—and forget——"

"Forget nothing! You needn't to looked scared. There's nothing out here to get scared at."

Boca shivered as they drew near the ridge of rocks. Miguel had said something might happen to White Eye should he ride south that night. Boca felt that she was leading him into a trap. She was not sure of it, yet Miguel's word had been significant. As much as she hated White Eye she hesitated to become a party to murder. If he had tried to be rough with her she could have knifed him without flinching. Then, suddenly, Boca saw The Spider's lean white face, the suffering in his eyes, the grimness of his attitude, his isolation. There was a man! And this loose-mouthed and treacherous Americano who had lied to her—— The shadow of the rock ridge lay across the trail. Boca shrugged her shoulders. One might as well sing as weep.

Ramon heard Boca's voice—knew it was Boca riding with the Americano, long before they came within the shadow of the rocks. They rode too close together for Ramon to risk a shot. Nearer, and slowly nearer, and they were within the deep

shadow. To shoot a man down, without warning, without giving him a chance—Ramon's blood throbbed in his throat and temples. It was said that the patron had never killed a man without giving him a chance to pull his gun. Ramon centered his rifle on the larger of the two shadows. They were almost opposite him now, and almost directly beneath him. "Put up your hands!" he called in Spanish.

White Eye, instantly aware of the ambush, jerked his gun up and fired at the sound of the voice. The flash of the shot was crossed by a spurt of flame from the rocks. Boca whirled her horse and quirted him across the shoulders. White Eye grunted as his own horse jumped forward. "The damned snake!" he said as he felt a dull throb of pain shoot through his shoulder. Then he was beyond the rocks, riding swiftly in the moonlight, riding south. He pressed his hand against his shoulder and drew it away. A dark smear showed on his palm. "Must have got him at that," he said as he pounded on across the desert.

Boca fought her horse to a walk. As Miguel had said, something had happened to White Eye. Yet the other? He had fired but once. And the Americano had escaped. Boca recalled the voice from the rocks. "It was Ramon," she whispered. "But he does not come."

It took all her courage, all her fidelity to her own people to ride back to the ridge. White Eye might be there, wounded, or he might be unharmed. "He would kill me," she murmured. Yet she had heard him curse and had heard the beat of his horse's hoofs across the southern desert. He would not dare ride back, now.

"Ramon!" she called as she neared the shadow. From back of the ridge came the nicker of a horse. Boca rode round to the moonlit side of the ridge. She found a horse tied to a clump of brush. Glancing up she saw something shimmer in the moonlight. Slowly her eyes discerned a figure huddled among the rocks. "Ramon!" she called again. Still fearful of White Eye she tied her horse beside the other and climbed to the crest of the ridge. She stooped over a still figure, a white, upturned face that smiled. Even after she had seen the round black spot in his forehead she could not believe that he was dead. His boyish mouth smiled up at her. The moonlight touched the staring eyes with a semblance of life. So it had been young Ramon who had lain in wait to kill the Americano! Miguel had not told her that. Shuddering against her will she kissed the quiet face. It was for her that Ramon had died. Often he had told her that he loved her—would marry her when he became rich, like the patron.

"I will get Miguel—and Juan," murmured Boca. "But who will tell his mother?"

CHAPTER VII.

Peg Sims, in faded blue overalls, a faded brown shirt and dusty sombrero, leaned against the bar, occasionally mopping his round, oily face with a soiled red bandanna. His mouth was shaped in a continuous grin, but his eyes were as hard as blue agate. Near him stood Jones, stiffly erect, dark-visaged, somber. Down at the end of the narrow bar the man called Jake was talking with old Miguel. Against the wall a few Mexicans sat at the battered tables, paying no special attention to the three at the bar. "You say you don't know where that hombre White Eye is?" queried Jake.

"No, señor."

"Kind of funny. We had a date to meet him here."

"Si?"

The man called Jake glanced sidewise at his companions. "How is The Spider making it?" He addressed Miguel, while not looking at him.

Miguel affected deep concern. "The patron is very sick. Perhaps it is that he will not live. I have sent for the doctor. The patron cannot move his legs or his arms—he is like one that is dead. I give him food, like one would give it to a child."

"That's hard luck," said Peg Sims, mopping his face. "Sounds like he was paralyzed."

"Si! That is what he say when he talk to me," and Miguel nodded gravely.

"Well, let's have another drink," suggested Peg Sims.

Miguel served them whisky. "You have come back," he said, addressing Jones.

"Yes. Changed my mind, after I met up with my friends, here. They wanted to see White Eye. I told them he was here."

"Something funny about that," whispered Jake as Miguel stepped to the other end of the bar.

"He was stuck on the girl. Mebby he had a date with her."

"That don't worry me none, Jonesy. Wish these cholos would beat it. Then we can talk to The Spider."

"Same as if White Eye was here?"

"The same. That's what I came for." The man called Jake had a mean, lean-jawed face blotched heavily with freckles. His eyes were rimmed with red and the lower lids sagged.

"Let's sit down," suggested Peg Sims, gesturing toward the patio. They drew up to one of the tables.

"Nothing doing till the bunch clears out," said Jones.

"How about the old man?" queried Jake.

"I'll take care of him," asserted Peg. "He'll be closing up soon. Then you and Jones want to see The Spider, on business. White Eye said The Spider was down and out—all shot up. You fellas can step in and find out where he keeps his roll. I'll see that the Mexican don't bother you none."

Miguel spoke to a Mexican at one of the tables along the wall opposite the bar. He nodded, and rising shuffled out, followed by the rest of the group. "I will tell the patron you would talk with him," said Miguel.

Peg Sims nodded. "Dead easy," he whispered as Miguel entered The Spider's room. Miguel returned immediately. "The patron is glad to see his friends."

"That's us," said Peg, rising. Miguel opened the door. Peg Sims and Jones stepped into the room. The lamp on the table was turned low. Beyond the table was the bed, and a vague huddle of blankets. The door closed behind them. As the two heard the click of the lock The Spider turned up the lamp.

Miguel turned to find the man called Jake standing close to him. Slowly the old Mexican raised his arms above his head. "Don't move, or I'll blow your head off," said Jake. "What was the idea, your locking that door?"

"The patron would not be disturbed," said Miguel quietly.

Jake laughed. "You'll unlock it when I tell you to."

"*Si,* señor," said the old Mexican gravely.

A puff of hot wind caused the lamp in the cantina to flare and smoke. The horses at the hitch rail moved about nervously. Miguel, near the door, heard the voice of one of the others. Jake's red-rimmed eyes never flickered. Miguel gazed at the black muzzle of the gun, three feet from his chest.

The Spider sat stiff in the black arm-chair, one hand resting on the edge of the table, the other fingering the lapel of his black coat. He did not speak. Peg Sims felt the hot sweat start and trickle down his forehead. Jones, a little behind and to one side of Peg Sims, stood like an iron statue. "We come to see how you were making it," said Peg presently. Still The Spider said nothing, but gazed at the others with eyes burning black, unreadable, like the motionless eyes of a snake.

"Heard you were sick," said Peg.

Still The Spider did not speak, nor in any way acknowledge their presence. "Doped," said Jones as he noticed the little hypodermic syringe on the table. Yet Jones' explanation of that grim, ghastly silence did not satisfy him. Slowly Jones' hand slid down toward his belt. The Spider saw the stealthy movement, yet his expression did not change. Peg Sims brushed the sweat from his eyes. He stared at The Spider, clothed in black, with the stiff, white shirt and low collar and black string tie. Evidently the old Mexican had spoken the truth —The Spider was paralyzed. Yet who had turned up the lamp as they entered? Not Miguel.

Suddenly a premonition of danger overtook Peg—an unlooked-for danger. It came to him with sickening intensity, that they were trapped—locked in the room with the fastest gunman in the Southwest. Peg saw his own death written in that pallid, expressionless face. If Jones would only get the drop——

The Spider's lips moved. He said but one word—"Juarez."

"We come to see how you was making it," mumbled Peg.

Almost before he saw the flicker of The Spider's hand, Jones, his own fingers resting on the grip of his gun, felt the shock of the slug that took him just above his belt, heard the imprisoned roar of The Spider's gun, and grew numb in his fingers as he fumbled to draw. Peg, watching The Spider's face, pulled almost on the instant The Spider fired. Cursing, he threw a shot at the lean, black-clad figure in the arm-chair. The bullet creased The Spider's stiff white collar and burned his neck. Peg jerked back as a forty-five slug tore through his upper arm. His hand went limp and

his gun dropped to the floor. A scream came from Peg Sims' lips.

"You, too," whispered The Spider; and he shot Peg Sims through the forehead. The oily-faced, heavy-set Sims went down, one arm striking the table as he fell. The table tilted. The lamp toppled and dropped to the floor. Jones, who had staggered back against the wall, fumbled for his gun. The burning oil spread and threw a ghastly blue light on The Spider, sitting stiff in his black armchair. Slowly Jones sank down, his hand clutching at his stomach.

"Jones!" called The Spider, softly.

"I'm done for," muttered Jones. "Damn White Eye!"

Juan, across the street in his 'dobe, heard the muffled report of the first shot. He had been sitting in the doorway of his house, smoking and watching the cantina. He stepped back into the room and reappeared with a rifle. Slowly he began to cross the street, pausing as he saw the figure of a man holding a gun on some one in the cantina. Juan peered until he made sure that the man was one of the Americanos who had ridden in that night; then deliberately he raised his rifle, as he stood in the middle of the street, hesitated for a second, and pressed the trigger.

Miguel, watching the muzzle of Jake's gun, saw the other suddenly stiffen and jerk upward as though he had been hit by a sledge hammer. He pitched forward. Miguel jumped back. From the room back of the bar came another shot: then a voice high-pitched in terror—then a third shot. Miguel crossed himself. His hand shook as he fumbled the key into the lock. He flung the door open. "Get me out of this —the fire," said The Spider. "The game is closed."

Miguel ran forward, dragged the chair away from the creeping flames and beat them out with a blanket. The room was heavy with oily, sickening smoke. He fetched the lamp from the barroom. "Are you hurt, señor?" he queried, his voice trembling.

The Spider shook his head. Miguel noticed that his master was reloading his gun, punching out the three empty shells, slipping in three cartridges in their stead. What a man! It was said nothing could kill him, even as nothing daunted him.

Juan slowly crept round the cantina, entered the patio and called. Miguel answered, telling him to come in. Juan stared at the two men on the floor of The Spider's room, stared at The Spider and then: "There is another," and he pointed toward the open doorway.

"White Eye?" queried The Spider.

"They called him Jake," said Miguel.

"Where is Boca?"

"Boca rode south, with the White Eye, señor. It was so arranged. One waited for them on the trail. He of the chalk eyes will not come back."

Juan whirled as he heard some one running across the floor of the cantina. He lowered his rifle as Boca, white and breathless, threw herself on her knees and buried her face in her hands. She knelt at The Spider's feet as though to implore something which none other could give. The Spider spoke sharply to her. She raised her head. "Ramon, young Ramon, is dead," she sobbed. "It was for me——"

The Spider questioned her, quieted her as she told the story of her night ride. When she concluded he pointed toward the still figures on the floor. Slowly Boca turned her head, realized what had happened, and slowly she got to her feet. She shuddered as Miguel led her past the other figure prone beside the doorway. "We will get Ramon when we have done with these," said Miguel. "You will go to his mother?"

"Yes! And I shall tell her of these," and Boca gestured toward the Spider's room.

There was much to do. Miguel and Juan labored silently. They called no one to help them. Dawn found no trace of either the horses or riders that had entered Showdown that night. A week later three half-starved horses strayed into Enright, many miles south. White Eye, recovering from a bullet wound in his shoulder, saw the strays, recognized their brands, yet offered no information as to their owners. Later he drifted to El Paso.

Several months passed, and one morning a stranger rode into Showdown and tied his horse at the cantina rail. He was a tall, alert man, bronzed, clear-eyed, clean-cut. There was none of the indescribable tang of the outlaw about him. He strode into the cantina and up to the bar. "Jim Ewell?" he queried as The Spider, sitting in his black armchair, turned his head.

"That's me, hombre."

"I'm Waring. Been trailing four men all

over four States. Heard they left Enright a while back, and headed toward Showdown."

"Want me?" asked The Spider, in his thin, reedy voice.

"Not this trip," laughed Waring. "But if Peg Sims and a man called Jones, and another——"

"White Eye is in El Paso," asserted The Spider.

"Thanks. I figured none of 'em were exactly friends of yours."

"Don't waste any time looking for the others," said The Spider. The man who called himself Waring nodded thoughtfully.

"Seeing you say so—I guess I won't," he declared.

Then the talk drifted to other matters. A noted gunman himself, Waring had always been curious about The Spider, and, accepting the other's invitation, he stayed that day and night. Next morning, as Waring was about to mount his horse, The Spider rose from his armchair and hobbled to the doorway. Waring paused, his gloved hand on the neck of the big dun animal. "I heard about that Juarez tangle," said Waring. "And how they freighted you back here, just about all in. Somebody in Enright told me that Peg and his bunch trailed you pretty close."

"Pretty close," echoed The Spider.

"Thanks!" said Waring, smiling. "You saved me a hard job."

In an early issue will appear "Benito—and the Other Man," by Mr. Knibbs.

PUTTING THINGS OVER

IN Washington, year in and year out, you may always find ten or twelve men—and perhaps one or two women—who make a specialty of "putting things over." They deal in what is vaguely called "influence." They hold no government positions. Some of them are wealthy and interest themselves in public affairs for the fun they get out of it or for the feeling of importance that comes from having one's hand on the levers of large affairs. Others have professions and swell their incomes with the fees that drop their way.

It is the latter class that has but a fleeting day. When they go into this sort of activity for money they have to do some discreet advertising in order to attract new business. They are careful and shrewd about it, intimating here that they are close to the Honorable John Smith, dropping a hint there that they have "friends" who can affect the fortunes of certain kinds of legislation. But that sort of thing travels and the talk of their being hand-and-glove with the inner circles becomes too public. It annoys the lawmakers or the department officials who are being used unknowingly. As soon as a congressman or an official wakes up to the fact that he is being capitalized he puts an end to the "friend's" graft by cutting his acquaintance.

The longer-lived and more effective "fixers" are those who keep their mouths shut. In fact they fight shy of the possibility of publicity. A senator or even an ambassador, sick of the boring run of public functions and formal dinners, appreciates an invitation to a cozy apartment where there is a game of cards or a cool bottle with a few clever men and charming women. A pleasant evening is had, everything is free and easy—"just like folks"—the outside world is none the wiser and the host sees to it that the great man will be glad to come again. Of course, a few weeks hence, if the host's old friend from Chicago wants a favor done in the matter of foreign business or something like that, it is easily arranged. Why have friends if you can't accommodate them? But the friend from Chicago is not too numerous and the favor is not suggested too often. Thus the game is good for several years.

The Fang Mark

By Theodore Seixas Solomons

Author of "Vassals of the Ice," "The Extra Warm Cabin," Etc.

In endless visions renewed Fawcett was doomed to die not one but many deaths

OF the two young men who sauntered out of the dining room of the St. François Hotel it was only the elder that might have caught the eye. One would likely have noticed his slight limp and the solidity of his jaw. Between those extremes of the fellow there was nothing unusual, though he was exceedingly well built.

As they stood waiting at the little counter of the check room the man with the limp was observant—with the unconsciousness of fixed habit. While he talked leisurely with his friend, his eye—deep-set, very gray—was roving the boxes and hangers. Suddenly its look matched the determination of his jaw. As their coats and hats were handed them by the attendant, he turned with repressed excitement to his friend.

"Beat it, Bill!"

The younger man looked at him in quizzical bewilderment. He couldn't imagine why Kelton should suddenly want to be alone, especially in such an odd place. But they would be separating in a few months anyhow, so he smiled, shrugged and went about his own affairs.

The gray-eyed fellow fumbled in his pocket for a coin and laid it in the hand of the attendant. Then he stood back, looked uncertainly about him, walked toward the dining room again and slowly returned to the wall opposite the check room. It was nearly eight o'clock, the dining room was rapidly emptying and the attendants were too busy to notice the loitering man.

One after another, couples stood for a moment at the little counter, received their hats and wraps and walked away. But the gray eyes did not see the people. They rested on a certain part of the check room; steadily, continuously, they focused on one hanger. It was only when the attendant, glancing at a check, reached up to that particular hanger that the big fellow with the limp turned his gaze upon the couple who were being served.

He saw a neatly pretty, blue-eyed, fair-haired girl of character accompanied by a very handsome, dark-haired, dark-eyed, well-set-up young man of about his own age—which might have been thirty. Her escort adjusted the girl's fur, seized his hat and coat, and the two walked rapidly out of the hotel. After a few discreet moments the man who had been watching the check room limped after them.

The couple walked around the corner and got into a private car. The man hailed a taxi and followed them. After a few blocks of devious traffic threading the couple parked their car, alighted and entered the lobby of a theater. The man hastily dismissed his taxi and applied for a ticket at the box office. The lower part of the house was sold out. Undismayed, he entered into negotiations with a likely looking, unaccompanied man in the entering line, the result of which was an exchange of the ticket held by the stranger for a bill of a denomination absurdly larger than the price of the ticket.

Ushered to his seat, the man with the slight limp instantly began a search for the two he had followed. From left to right along one row, from right to left along the next, the gray eye traveled until it found them. Then the man paid no further attention to the couple and tried to interest himself in the play.

In vain! To him on that stage no actors walked. Its counterfeit of city mansion, of country house and grounds bleached and faded to a scene remote, slowly moving, changing, but ever white and drear and suffused with an aural light of horror!

A stirring brought him to himself; the jaw tensed; again he sought the couple. In spite of his limp he made progress through the outgoing crowd by an insistence that barely escaped rudeness. The girl was hid

but her escort stood sufficiently above the average height of the pressing throng to make his hat a mark.

Again the private car, again the following taxi. When the car came to a halt in the better residential part of the city the man in the taxi noted the house. At the next corner he signaled the driver and told him to return to the theater district, where he paid and discharged him, took another taxi and went home.

At nine o'clock next morning he appeared as usual in the office in which he worked. He was certainly not the head of the office; yet he was far from being the tail of it, for he left that afternoon—and many afternoons thereafter—an hour sooner than the others. Yet he did as much work as before by cutting his lunch hour to thirty minutes and using his very adequate jaw and his keen eye to force from himself at least the other half hour's difference.

From four until whatever hour it might be, he followed up the affair of the check room, completely forgoing all social life for that purpose. He first made the acquaintance of the girl. This took him two months or until November. It took him so long because he was slow and sure—and very wary! First, of course, he had to find out who lived in that house in front of which the couple had stopped. That was comparatively easy. But it was far from easy—the girl being who and what she was—to find people who knew other people who could make him acquainted with her in a perfectly natural and proper manner.

Not that he was interested in the girl—at first. True, she was a very taking girl. But he knew many attractive women; and in spite of the size and rigidity of his jaw he had never experienced difficulty in socially and personally attaching himself to them when he wished to.

What he wanted to do with the dainty, blue-eyed Miss Marsh was to take her somewhere, or rather anywhere, in that garment of unique and wondrous beauty which she had worn about her shoulders on the night of her little dinner and theater party with the handsome, dark-eyed man. Not that he was in the least interested in the man—at first!

Within a month after he met her he had seen her several times in her own home and elsewhere. And on most of these occasions he had also met the handsome fellow, whose name was Fawcett. But it was not until early January that circumstances enabled him to take Miss Marsh out; and then, as ill-luck would have it, the weather was warm and she did not wear the garment. Two weeks later fortune favored him. It was cool; he took her out again; she wore the garment; he threw it about her shoulders; he took it from her shoulders and he was able to glance at the little satin label sewed on the inside of it!

But for one circumstance he would thereupon have dropped the girl—gradually, of course. He loved her—though he was unaware of it.

The garment? Again for many, many days he took to leaving his office at four o'clock. He had to make the acquaintance of numerous other people of quite a different sort now, of distinctly humbler station—workers in a very large establishment which manufactured the garments it sold. It would have been arrant folly to have gone to the proprietors and questioned them. They would have politely refused to furnish the information Kelton sought. And quite likely they would have sent word of the request and the refusal to Miss Marsh, with whom it would have been a stroke of business to ingratiate themselves.

Instead, Kelton went his very circuitous course among the lower downs. He had to become personally friendly with a cutter or something of the sort. He had almost to flirt with a certain not unstylish and eminently clever saleswoman and to hobnob for a while with an accountant who for a consideration used off time to search through the back records of the big establishment. There was immense luck for Kelton in the result.

All that he had hoped to accomplish was to ascertain whence and when the raw material of the garment—the fur itself—had come to this establishment. Then, having arranged with his associates in the office for a midwinter vacation, he had purposed journeying to this other place, whether it were Seattle, Minneapolis, New York or even the great London fur market, and further trace, if possible, the origin of the material—a more than dubious quest!

Imagine his delight, therefore, when on comparing the name and date given him by the accountant with the name and date already furnished him by the saleswoman he found that the man who had paid for the

garment and sent it as a present to Miss Christine Marsh was the same man who a few months previously had brought the fur into the establishment to be tanned and made up. That man was Eugene Fawcett. For a whole evening, alone in his bedroom, Kelton considered this astonishing information.

With the growth of his regard for Christine he had been conscious of an increasing dislike for Fawcett. But he was uncertain whether this was personal and instinctive or due merely to the fact that the man saw a great deal of Christine Marsh. Kelton understood that it was an old affair and the information he had just received certainly tended to confirm it.

But this merely disagreeable hue of the man now darkened perforce in the newer possibilities. The *probabilities,* Kelton well knew, were all upon the side of Fawcett's having purchased the skin in the ordinary channels of trade from a dealer in raw furs there in San Francisco, or in Seattle, or somewhere else. Nevertheless, he might have purchased it from a private individual and that would narrow the search; that would be real luck. Yet it was the further possibility that this man had *not* purchased the skin at all, it was the bare, remote chance that Eugene Fawcett himself was the end of the trail, the being he sought, that brought blood turgidly to the face of Kelton!

Concentratedly he visualized him, recalling as best he could their casual converse, trying to gain a new impression of the man. What was he, a broker or a merchant? Some sort of business man, he remembered. Not wealthy, yet, like himself not poor. An energetic man, quite evidently, and an ambitious one, at least in a social sense, for Christine Marsh's family represented something more than mere wealth.

But what did these things matter since one thing was clear—that what he had to learn he *must* learn from Eugene Fawcett. He could go to him and frankly ask him. That would be the quickest way. If the man said—and said it convincingly—that he had purchased the fur from such a firm or such an individual in a certain place, then Kelton would be squared away on the next leg of his self-compelled voyage of discovery. But suppose Fawcett resented the inquiry? What should he tell him? What would it be *safe* to tell him in the unlikely event that Fawcett himself——

Kelton's jaw flinted, his eyes became gray points of steel. He rose, his bony fists clenched, his heart beating. Oh, it was absurd that the man could be implicated! And yet, even if the chance were but one in a hundred, he dared not take it—dared not ask him a direct question. There was only one avenue by which he could approach Eugene Fawcett with safety and that was through Christine Marsh.

At that thought a pang seized him. It was the first glimmering to him of the truth of his attachment to this girl whose sweetness and charm were as rare as the beauty of that garment she wore. She had served her purpose. As the wearer of the fur she had been a link in the chain that led—so far—to Fawcett; and it was repugnant to Kelton to make her serve him further. But his purpose—from which he was unswervable—demanding it, he knew—and any who knew him would have known—that he would go through!

As he walked the floor a plan came to him. The three of them must be together—and at their leisure. The place must be one far from other people, for there must be no chance of interruption. He was confident that Christine would be agreeable to such a meeting; indeed, that she might even relish it for the occasion it would afford her to compare or to contrast them—a tendency of hers of which Kelton believed her to be keenly conscious of late. But Fawcett! There was the difficulty. For such a triangular party there would certainly be no relish on his part.

Well, then, Kelton would use strategy. There was Eleanor Forsyth, the sister of good old Bill who had been dining with him that night at the St. François. She had met Miss Marsh several times. He perfected his plan and next day went ahead with it. It was February and the hills were already green and the weather, between spells of rain, warm and dry. He selected the following Sunday; and when he turned to it in his calendar he was stricken with a dumb amazement to find that the date was exactly two years from that awful day! He sounded out Christine as to a little excursion in the woods near the beach—herself and Fawcett, Miss Forsyth and himself. How did that strike her? Miss Marsh took to it most cordially. She even agreed, with an amused laugh, to "wear that lovely fur."

He sought out Bill and said to him,

"Eleanor will tell you that she is going on a little excursion with me and some friends of mine—perhaps you know them, Eugene Fawcett and Christine Marsh. There's something I want you to do for me. After luncheon, we'll be strolling down the beach from the tavern. Come looking for us in your car with a hurry call for Eleanor. Your mother wants her or—oh, anything! Explain that you'll bring her back later and insist—this is very important—that the remaining three of us stay just where we are until you bring her back. But *don't* bring her back! Get me?"

Good old Bill did not exactly "get him" but he understood what he was to do—which was the main point; and he promised, with his usual good-natured grin. And next day Christine telephoned Kelton that Mr. Fawcett would be delighted to go. On Saturday night Kelton, retiring early, looked at his lame foot for a long time before putting out the light.

The four of them, motoring to the tavern next morning, decided that the day was "too heavenly"—in the phrase of Christine, echoed by Eleanor—for indoor dining, and that they would picnic instead. Their meal was prepared and packed snugly in a hamper. They took it down the beach and ate it with a gayety in which Kelton forced himself to share. Then, quite suddenly, from the deserted road in the woods back of them, came an anxious "Hullo!"

In the pause that followed Kelton answered the call, after remarking to the others, "Some fellow is looking for some one, evidently."

To them came Bill Forsyth with rapid greetings and a glibly murmured message for Eleanor which was as vague as it was peremptory.

"Don't all come. Absurd! No use breaking up the party. Too fine a day. I'll probably be bringing her back in an hour or two. Don't know exactly what's up. Make 'em say they'll stay, Nora!"

Eleanor did and the two Forsyths glided away.

Immediately Kelton felt queerly. In all else a man of iron nerves, in this colossal thing that had lain back of his every thought and action for two years he was nerveless, like a man shell-shocked. Then impatience seized him. He was about to broach the subject with an abruptness which, if Fawcett had the slightest intimation of the content of Kelton's mind, would have been fatal, when Miss Marsh saved him.

A tree shadow had crept to her. A breeze ruffled her hair. She drew the fur scarf around her neck!

Kelton exhaled his breath in a sigh of infinite relief.

"What a beautiful thing that is," he said—and wondered if the sound of his voice was *really* strange. "The fur is so deep and long. It must surely have come from the Far North."

"It did," replied Christine, looking pleasantly at Fawcett. "It was a gift of Eugene's. I've always been a perfect nut about rare and beautiful fur." She was a little shamefaced in the confession. "But mother doesn't believe in spending so much on anything to wear."

"Knowing that amiable weakness of Christine's," laughed Fawcett, "I promised her the finest piece of fur that could be obtained in Alaska."

"Why, any one would think I had asked you for it," chided Miss Marsh.

"As if you ever would! No, it was my idea exclusively. I promised *myself* the privilege of obtaining it for her. There, that's better, isn't it?"

"It was *very* kind of you and I was *awfully* glad to have it!" She stroked the fur thoughtfully. "'A thing of beauty——' What is the quotation?"

"'Is a joy forever,'" supplied Fawcett solemnly.

"A joy forever!" exclaimed Kelton. For a moment he partially lost all self-command as he repeated almost groaningly: "A joy forever—*that fur!*"

They raised puzzled eyes to his face.

"Do you happen to know anything about furs?" inquired Fawcett none too politely.

"Something."

"Then you surely know that this is a very wonderful specimen of the black fox type, called a silver-gray; very large, the fur primest of prime, the color unusually deep and fine and the silver hairs unusually long. If I hadn't presented it to Miss Marsh I'd tell you how very many hundreds of dollars it would have cost—that is, assuming that one had been lucky enough to find such a skin for sale!"

"Then you—did not—buy it?" said Kelton. Inwardly he prayed for a stilling of the tumult in his breast, of the pounding in his veins.

"Tell him the story, Eugene," suggested Christine. "He doesn't know you've mined and trapped in the wilds."

"Oh, well, I was in Alaska a few years ago," began Fawcett in a manner of polite boredom. "I spent eighteen months in the country—more for the adventure of the thing than anything else, you know. Christine and I were old friends even then and I'd promised myself the pleasure, as I said, of bringing her back something unique in the way of fur. I spent most of my time prospecting and hunting in the region around Circle City. That's a famous old mining camp on the Yukon not far from the arctic circle—about as high as the mighty river climbs in the direction of the north pole. From time to time I picked up skins, but never the pelt I wanted—the one I had sworn to myself to secure. So in the dead of winter I loaded my dog team with all the supplies they could pull and struck out for the Chandelar River where very few Indians and hardly any white men had ever penetrated. I knew it must be a virgin fur country. Well, sir, I went deliberately to work to learn the habits of the critters. I've always liked hunting, but trapping was a bit new."

He paused, lit another cigarette and went on leisurely, almost languidly, as though he had told the story many times.

"I had an old Indian with me—nobody else. You see I didn't want to share my find with another white man if I should be fortunate enough to capture the great prize I was seeking. We got a lot of skins, of course—more than enough to pay the expense of the journey and the several months' time I devoted to the quest. And many of the pelts were excellent. But this fellow, probably as fine a silver fox as was ever known, did not come to me until I had about given up hope of finding him and was going down the river and out of the country. I saw him before I trapped him. I can remember the place as if it were yesterday—a roundish flat on the Chandelar River with timbered hills on the west and bare, rocky slopes on the east. I just hated to kill him, he was so exquisitely beautiful!"

"And do you remember the date as perfectly as you remember the place?" asked Kelton with peculiar quietness.

"Why—yes." In Fawcett's black eyes there was as yet only a lazy, half-amused curiosity as to the inquisitiveness that could prompt so barren a question. "It was about this time in February. Come to think of it, it was just two years ago. I know we hit the Yukon on the twenty-sixth and we were just three days from the time we left the little round flat."

"How well you seem to remember the length of that run to the Yukon—and safety!"

Their eyes met levelly. In Fawcett's there was a shade of perplexity.

"The safety of the trails and road houses—yes," he interpreted.

Yet the perplexity remained. He was uncontent, it seemed, with this interpretation; for after a moment's pause he added, gropingly: "You seem—in a way—familiar with the North."

"I am," replied Kelton. "I am even familiar with the Chandelar."

A great relief, a great exaltation had seized him. He felt himself some sort of fountainhead of immense and liquid power about to flow forth in a torrid stream. His brain, in unison with his body, tingled with a ripe inevitableness of disclosure. No human being knew that which was now to form itself into words. Even to his nearest he had not dared intrust it, though their sympathy in the outer story of his misfortune had rendered the suppression doubly hard.

As in a dream, the two figures dancing in a haze before the heat of his eyes, his voice sonorous yet measured and controlled as perfectly as were his thoughts and words, he knew himself to be saying:

"You were in Alaska a year and a half. I was there five years—my partner, Jerry Collins and I. Our last two years were spent upon the Chandelar—at first on the head streams near the arctic divide. The second year we built a cabin farther down. Just where, you shall be told directly! We struck gold there. We were doing well. And we were busy. Yet we found time to make the rounds of a short trap line occasionally.

"The day you speak of, two years ago to-day, Jerry and I were up the creek, as usual, taking out pay dirt from our shaft. Our sled was down at the cabin, for after working all day in the cold we liked to *walk* home. But our dogs were with us—just for company. Do you follow me?"

"Of course I follow you, my dear fellow." Fawcett was in fact keenly interested!

"Why Jim—Mr. Kelton!" uttered Christine in an uncertain voice.

He heard them, saw them—still in the near-far haze of the unfocused eye.

"We worked until the light failed. Then, in the dusk, we walked homeward down the creek trail so familiar to us, never trod by other human feet than ours. Around the bend and—we missed the loom of the cabin against the light remaining in the sky! We thought we were dreaming. But no. There *was* no cabin! We ran forward—and into the ashes of it!

"Just wood ashes and the remains of once familiar things of metal—a warped, twisted sheet-iron stove; the metal parts of two rifles, their locks half fused, the steel shoes of our sled runners. All our remaining food had been in the cabin. Do you still follow me?"

"Certainly I do," replied Fawcett from somewhere in the near distance. There was petulance, real or simulated, in the voice. "But I fail to see why you should become so excited over it. It happened——"

"Two years ago to-day. We were ravenously hungry, very tired and perspiring from our rapid walk down the creek. We happened to have in our pockets only two or three matches and it took all of these to make a fire. After a little fitful sleep we started before dawn next morning down that river, afoot through the deep snow, empty-handed, freezing, starving. A cold spell gripped the Yukon valley. You will remember it, no doubt.

"The next day I tried to nerve myself to kill one of the dogs, our companions for five long years. It was mainly for Jerry who was much the weaker of the two of us that I wanted to kill him for his blood. The dog licked my wrist while I bared his throat to my sheath knife; and Jerry struck my hand and sent the knife spinning.

"'There's the six of us,' he pleaded. 'Let's take chances together!'

"Jerry fell at the end of the third day. I carried him for a little way but he fought me with the little strength that remained to him, whispering that there was still a chance for me—and to take it. But I can say I didn't let him go while there was breath in his body. I slept with Jerry in my arms, the dogs lying close about us, trying to keep us warm; and I didn't know Jerry was dead until nearly morning.

"I couldn't stand and keep my balance —my feet were too far gone for that. But on my hands and knees I made the Yukon next day. I must have made it, for I was found lying across the trail, guarded by four gaunt, growling dogs. I came out of it, finally, with only part of one heel and four toes missing. You've probably noticed I'm a cripple."

"Yes," said Fawcett. The petulance had gone out of his voice. He was looking on the ground, and the girl, deathly white, was looking at him.

"When I left the Circle City hospital—you may remember that unclean shack—I set about trying to find *the man who burned our cabin!*"

"Burned it!" from Christine.

"Burned it. By two things we knew it had been intentionally burned. Our sled had been put into the cabin. And there were sled tracks on the river—not our own and not those of an Indian sled. On that last night, in the delta of the Chandelar, as we lay miserably huddled in the willow brush, the famished body of my lifelong friend slowly stiffening, I told Jerry that if I lived I would find that cruel man and tear him!"

"Oh! Oh!" sobbed Christine.

"The track we had followed down the Chandelar, emerging upon the broad Yukon, was lost in the beaten trails of that great winter highway of the North. And no man knew any party that had come out of that little-known tributary called the Chandelar. My search was useless. Yet in my dreams, daydreams and night dreams, I have had that miscreant's throat in my hand, and have told him the story of what he did. I limped out of Alaska, came home, got a job and tried to forget!"

"And I sincerely hope you will succeed," murmured Fawcett, unsteadily; whereat, abruptly, Kelton raised his tawny head and laughed.

"Your sincere hope is vain!" He transfixed him with his gray eye. "The horror only slumbered, like a deadly bacillus. It leaped to my brain one day—at sight of the clew."

"Yes—the clew!" It was a faltering whisper from the girl—as though it was only for this that she had been waiting.

"The moment I saw it in the St. François Hotel that evening, I realized I had been a fool to think only of the sled track. The horror must have dulled my memory. *I saw* —and followed where the clew led—to the

theater with you two, then to Miss Marsh's home; later to many places. Finally *to you!"*

He had risen and pointed his finger at Fawcett.

Instantly Christine rose. "What *was* the clew? For God's sake, tell me!"

For answer, he reached out his left hand and placed it upon her fur neck piece, and said: "This!"

Fawcett sprang to his feet and with a kind of indignant incredulity exclaimed, "That fox skin!"

"This fox skin. This beautiful silver fox that you found—true enough—on that round flat of the Chandelar, with the timbered hills on the west and bare, rocky slopes on the east. What poverty of imagination could have led you, with all of Alaska to choose from, to *use* in your tale the very place where our cabin stood—and so give me the last and final proof that *you are the man!* A lazy brain and a sense of security. That was it. You could not *imagine* that I, the last person to whom you will ever repeat that infamous fabrication, could suspect its falseness; least of all that you were talking to the one person in all the world who knew that the skin was stolen—to the very man from whom you stole it and whose cabin with all his belongings you ruthlessly destroyed to insure your safety!"

Holding him, boring him with his gleaming gray eyes, inch by inch he had moved up to Fawcett whose trembling limbs and panting breath were witness of a great perturbation.

"If you had stolen the furs, but had not dragged the sled inside the cabin; or if you had burned the sled to cripple our pursuit, but had spared us a little food or just the guns—anything to sustain life, to give us some chance—I could perhaps have forgiven you, even if through accident or weakness poor Jerry had gone. But you—you who would take the lives of unoffending men to lay a trinket at the feet of a girl—— You! You cold-hearted enemy of life and kind, you black-visaged monster in the shape of man—what right have *you* to pollute the air of God?"

An instant outthrust of the arms and Kelton had him by the throat. Though but little larger a man he seemed inspired with a crumpling strength. Fawcett, wordless, gasping, flailing the air in a blind impotence of terror, was crushed downward to his knees; and there, his throat still clutched in one iron hand of the Nemesis that blazed above him, was struck killing blows upon the head and face, once, twice, thrice——

And then, emerging at last from the spell that had bound her, Christine threw herself in the narrow space between them.

"Jim—stop! For Heaven's sake, don't kill him!"

"You love him?"

"No! *No!* But wait! Wait!"

"I *have* waited!" groaned Kelton. "Jerry is waiting!"

"Wait!" she sobbed again. "I do not doubt you, Jim. But let him speak. Let him confess or deny. You have not said just what *is* the clew."

"Clew?" gasped Fawcett out of his strictured throat. "What clew? Silver fox—plenty of them. My word is—just as good as yours——"

Kelton flung him on his side and turned to Christine.

"Look at the dark fur of the back. See how it runs down the head—the long hairs shading to silver-gray—the short, fine fur dark right to the tips of the ears. Now look at the right ear, at the very tip—a little tuft of white hairs—just a few, yet visible—you see them! That was where the fox was wounded long before. A fang tore the edge of the ear and a few hairs with it. And when the new hairs grew they were white—a mighty small disfigurement, yet noticeable to the eye of an architect used to perfect symmetry. Jerry and I remarked it. I would have recognized the pelt without that, for I had gazed at it many a night in the cabin and knew its design perfectly. But those tiny white hairs make its identification absolute. They mark this pelt among all the fox skins of the world!"

Round-eyed, the whites showing circularly, Christine turned to stare at the recumbent man, "Murderer!" quivering on her lips. But at Kelton's last words Fawcett had lost consciousness.

"Is he dead?" she cried, starting toward him. But Kelton detained her.

"I'm afraid *not,"* he muttered. Then, suddenly, as one emerging from a trance he cried in bitter humility, "Forgive me, Christine—this violence. My hate and horror of that man, that *thing,* betrayed me. I ask your pardon. You say—you say you do not love him!"

She grasped Kelton by the shoulders.

"'*Do* not!' Of course I *do* not. Even if I *had* loved him, really loved him, it would now be dead. I *never* loved him. I tried to, as a young girl will when touched by a seeming great devotion. Devotion! It was *relentlessness!*" She shuddered. "For he *was* relentless!"

"And must pay! Only for you, Christine—if you had loved him—could I forget——"

"Hush!" Her hands were on his shoulders. "He is coming to. You must promise——"

"The Indian!" muttered Fawcett, his black, bloodshot eyes rolling. "I gave him the other skins and at noon he went back—must have been afraid you'd follow and—it must have been him, as God is my witness!"

"As God is *my* witness!" cried Kelton, lunging forward. But Christine's gentle hand stayed him, and he turned to her and said:

"No Indian ever had so black and cowardly a heart!"

"You will never know," she answered.

"He must not, he *cannot* live!" groaned Kelton. But she took both his hands, which were impotent against her, and said to him, looking steadfastly in Fawcett's eyes:

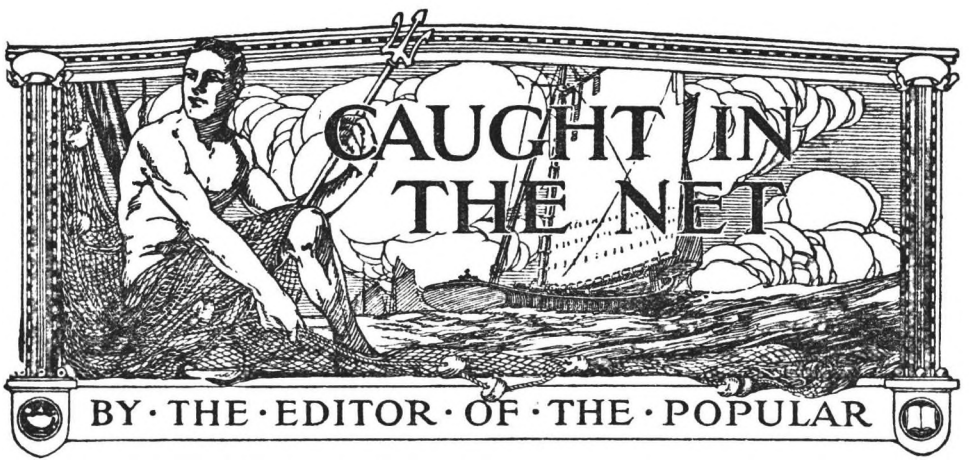
"He will *not* live. He will die—not one but many deaths. I know him. He is a struggler with himself; and the vision of Jerry, endlessly renewed, will be expiation. But, greater punishment still, one that will gnaw his vitals, will be the knowledge that by the very crime he committed for her, he gave to *you*, his victim, the one woman he had loved with all the light and fervor that was in him!"

ABOUT THE BOLL WEEVIL

A LITTLE over thirty years ago an army of invaders crossed the Rio Grande near Brownsville, Texas, and started a campaign of destruction that last year cost our Southern States $200,000,000. This army was composed of boll weevils, little insects of the beetle family that look like small flies; they carry drilling machines in their jaws and feed only on the inner substance of blossoms and bolls of the cotton plant. The cotton plant, as every one south of the Mason and Dixon line knows, grows from two to seven feet high, and produces three growths of fruit, known as the bottom, middle and top growths. The first growth, the bottom, blossoms in July, and the plants may produce until frost. The lint is contained inside a husk or boll that cracks open when it is ripe. A plant produces from twelve to eighteen bolls a year and a fair yield is 150 to 250 pounds of lint an acre, although as much as 500 pounds an acre has been produced.

This is how the boll weevils go about their work of destruction. Beginning about the first of June the female boll weevil starts to lay her eggs in the cotton buds and small bolls. She lays five eggs a day throughout the summer. This means that in a long summer countless weevils may be destroying the cotton crop. The larvæ is hatched inside the boll and feeds upon the immature lint. Often the boll is entirely destroyed, and even if it does blossom the cotton it contains is stained and damaged.

Since these unwelcome guests appeared in Texas they have spread steadily to the north and east until they have covered almost the entire cotton belt. A few districts north of the southern part of North Carolina escaped last season but probably will suffer next year. During the winter the insect hibernates, having sought shelter beneath stalks or leaves. They have been known to withstand cold as severe as fourteen degrees below zero. Of course the department of agriculture has been studying this expensive pest but so far there seems to be no way of preventing its ravages.



THE FARMER AGAIN

THE farmer's troubles continue to be very real and pressing. While the comparison is not exact, it may be said of him, roughly speaking, that he is forced now to give two bushels of corn, or two hogs, or two horses for the units of manufactured goods which formerly he could get in exchange for one bushel of corn, one hog or horse. According to calculations published by the department of agriculture only three or four out of twenty-nine farm products, in June, 1921, had a purchasing power in excess of that of the five-year average for the period ending 1913. And obviously his troubles in this respect are a matter of concern to a large part of the country besides himself. This decrease in his purchasing power is bound to be reflected in a decrease of production in manufactures and consequent aggravation of business depression.

Without any carping desire to add to his troubles, the question arises if the farmer is doing all that he could to remedy his troubles. In other words, as he expresses himself through those who claim to represent him in Congress, is he acting as wisely as he might? While not the whole cause of his ill fortune, it is becoming widely believed that the two factors upon which the low purchasing power of his products largely rests are freight rates and taxes. Freight rates clearly affect him both as seller and as buyer. And heavy taxation, in the shape of the excess-profits tax and the income tax, by tending to drive capital out of business and cripple it, is calculated to discourage production of manufactured products which he needs and so still further raise the price of them. Is the agricultural "bloc" in Congress, purporting to act in the farmer's interest, really acting in a manner likely to cure or lessen these two great causes of his present predicament? It would not seem that they were when, as we understand, they swung Congress into approval of the continuation of the surtax on large incomes. The farmer is bound to feel the effects of this in its lessening of productive enterprise. It would seem only wise for him to realize this and influence his representatives accordingly. Likewise it would appear to be expedient for him to put more of his weight than he seems to be doing behind efforts looking toward a reduction of freight rates. If he would give more attention to trying to influence his congressional representatives in these ways perhaps his troubles would be mitigated sooner than they seem likely to be. Certainly taxes are costs and freight rates are costs and the manufacturer who was rash enough not to take them into account would soon disappear from the scene without having conferred any benefit upon the farmer in these vexed times—or on the community in general.

It is precisely because the business community in general and the farmer are so mutually interdependent that we take the liberty of suggesting to the latter that it might well pay him to take thought about these things. After all, in the long run, we all sink or swim together in these matters of national economics.

DOCTORS AT A DOLLAR A CALL

THE question of whether there should be an upward limit to even a highly qualified doctor's charges has been discussed pro and con, in the past, with more or less feeling. What seems to offer a reasonable solution of this rather delicate problem is the project launched by the Cornell University Medical College. The idea is expressible in the one word "coöperation," and is aimed to benefit that large class in any community which, while unable to afford to pay "fancy" prices for medical service, is equally unwilling to accept charity service. The project in question is estimated as calculated to benefit a multitude of such people—the medical college referred to being, in spite of its name, located in New York City.

The operation of this idea has been made possible through the establishment of a "pay" clinic under the direction of the Cornell medical faculty, which includes some of the most distinguished physicians and surgeons in the metropolis—a clinic in which the officiating doctors will all be salaried, their salaries to be met through the operation of the old business principle of "low prices but many sales." For each visit for examination and treatment a charge of $1.00 is made—medicine, laboratory tests, X-ray photographs and other supplies being charged for in addition at cost. For a thorough health examination to discover possible defects and obtain advice regarding personal hygiene, the rate of charge is $2.50. For such as wish special examination and study, with consultation of specialists, a fee of $10.00 is fixed.

This promising work, to quote the dean of the Cornell University Medical College, has been undertaken "in the spirit of. fullest coöperation with private physicians, for we are trying to supplement their service with an attack on a phase of the public health problem which is not solved by private practice."

The possibilities of such a common-sense idea as this, if instituted at suitable points throughout the country, are easily realizable. So much could be done in the way of preventive treatment and advice for many who through pride obtain little or no advice or treatment in time. It would be particularly valuable in making more common that "annual look-over" which we are so often told is no more than wise after forty is reached—the matter of the "stitch in time" which we are inclined to neglect as being a little too expensive in view of our "feeling fairly good anyway." The greatest opportunity for good, of course would be in the fields of those great scourges, tuberculosis and pneumonia—and organic diseases of the heart. These three ailments according to the current census bureau reports were responsible in 1920 for respectively 8.7 per cent, 10.5 per cent and 10 per cent of the total of deaths in the registration area of continental United States.

The beauty of this pay-clinic idea is the businesslike principle underlying it. Through the very extent of the "business" the fees cover the cost of the service aimed at and self-supporting persons of moderate means cannot but feel encouraged to avail themselves of such service by reason of being able to feel that they are "paying their way."

HEROISM IN THE DAY'S WORK

UNOSTENTATIOUS heroism as part of the day's work in different sections of the United States is often manifested and lately has begun to attract attention. Among the unobtrusive heroes are those in the fire departments of some of our large cities; among others are the official life-savers at beaches where there are bathers, and the United States Coast Guard men. The firemen in the cities at big fires often, as a mere detail of their work, rescue, at the risk of their own lives, people who are helpless with panic and the life-savers at the bathing beaches save bathers from drowning and at the same time often have hairbreadth escapes themselves. Many lives are also saved by the United States coast guards under circumstances which make their own escape seem little short of a miracle.

A report recently submitted to the secretary of the treasury states that during the last fiscal year the lives of over sixteen hundred people were saved by the United States coast guards. The value of the vessels and cargoes assisted during the year 1921 was over sixty-five million dollars. Among the happenings in the fiscal year were the saving of

eight young children adrift in an open skiff. Fighting fire on an oil-soaked pier, rescuing a workman buried alive by debris in an old well and rescuing five men and nine girls from a sinking power boat at Arundel Cove, near Baltimore; were all part of one day's work for the coast guard. One thrilling rescue during the year was that of a man, marooned on a cake of ice, west of Cape Nome, Alaska, when the thermometer was 14 degrees below zero. For many hours the rescuers were at sea in a small boat amid floating young ice, in constant danger of the boat being sunk before the man was saved.

At the same time the crew of the coast guard cutter *Ossipee* was rescuing two men who were drifting on a derelict barge in a terrific snow squall some distance from Portland, Maine. After three days of perilous work in tempestuous weather the rescue was effected. Meantime the rescuing party had a number of almost incredible escapes from destruction. The miscellaneous service of the United States Coast Guard includes warnings to vessels running into danger, medical and surgical aid to the sick and injured, assistance at fires on shore and on board vessels and the sheltering of wayfarers overtaken by storm.

Since the impressive services took place in memory of "the unknown hero" after the war, the feats of unknown civilian heroes of the United States departments, State, Federal and city, are attracting more and more attention. They work modestly, however, as part of their regular duty, without regarding themselves as heroes.

A DROP IN THE STEEL BUCKET

THERE should be comfort for those who have lately been moved to tremble for our steel business in the declaration of Judge Gary who at a recent meeting of the American Iron and Steel Institute said that "suggestions by some that there will be less steel manufactured as a result of armament limitation are unworthy of even passing notice." Perhaps the head of the United States Steel Corporation had in mind what is stated to have happened in Germany where, it is reported, the famous Krupp works at Essen, in the manufacture of such comparatively peaceful products as cash registers, talking machines and motion-picture apparatus, are furnishing employment for twelve thousand more workers than the cannon factory employed prior to the war.

That our steel industry is quite independent of the god Mars, however, should be easily graspable by the apprehensive for themselves after a very little thought, without any foreign corroboration of the fact. What many have failed to realize in this connection is that of the tens of millions of dollars spent on a battleship comparatively little is for steel. The warship, for instance, is to an ocean freighter what a limousine of refined make is to a freight car—the limousine containing a fraction of a ton of steel, with much nonferrous metal, and costing two or three times as much as the freight car containing twenty tons of steel.

Assuming that there was no ten-year-naval holiday, it is estimated that naval steel requirements, unless our latest "pre-Conference" naval program were radically increased, would not have called for much more than 200,000 net tons of steel annually up to the end of the ten-year period. This amount of steel, ample for all ship construction, guns, machinery, et cetera, amounts to considerably less than one per cent of the country's steel production. The loss of this amount of business would not seem enough to particularly worry any established industry. Nor will the scrapping of American battleships throw any appreciable amount of steel back on the market at the present time because, as already explained, of the comparatively small amount of steel that goes into battleship construction. And the result of the release of such comparatively little steel as the war and navy departments are holding in reserve obviously would only be temporary.

Regarding the question in general, it is interesting to note that the Bethlehem Steel Corporation, the largest merchant manufacturer of munitions and builder of warships in the country, has less than 5 per cent of its entire plant investment in plants producing war material. Only one plant of the United States Steel Corporation, that owned by the Carnegie Steel Company at Homestead, is used for war material, and it is stated that this plant could be more profitably employed in producing commercial steel. In fact with very few dissenting, it is the opinion of steel men in the Pittsburgh district

that the naval holiday may actually benefit business through reduction of taxes, the release of steel for peace purposes and the advancement of foreign demand for our steel through the establishment of more cordial world relations. At any rate, almost before it started, it seems to be rapidly going out of fashion to particularly "view with dread" the coming Hughesian holiday in any business sense.

BUSINESSLIKE UNCLE SAM

IT is a decided pleasure, under the operation of the Budget and Accounting Act as put into action by the approval of the president last June, to see our national house in a fair way to being financially put in order. It is distinctly a star to which our "budget wagon" has been hitched—the goal of the administration being the getting of our national expenditures down to $2,500,000,000 as compared to actual expenditures in 1921 of over $5,500,000,000. But the sage Emerson seems to be being proved correct in his well-known advice. Exclusive of postal expenditures which are met out of postal revenues, Director of the Budget Dawes, under direction and with the backing of presidential authority, has presented a budget for national expenditure for 1923 which is only about 60 per cent of the 1921 expenditure. Even his budget of expenditure for the current fiscal year is not more than 70 per cent of the 1921 amount. These estimates all include the items of reduction of the public debt and the meeting of interest on it, as well as the ordinary governmental expenses.

Regarding the latter branch of expenditure, it is amazing, according to estimates made, how little a part of the ordinary governmental expenditure goes for purely "civil" purposes. In 1922, subtracting outlay on account of the war and navy departments and for pensions and the veterans' bureau—all "war" expenses—purely civil expenses amount to only about 40 per cent of the ordinary expenditure. In 1923 they will amount to only about 30 per cent. Looking at the field from even a broader angle, of the total budget for 1922 nearly three quarters is for purposes connected with war—including interest on the public debt. Of the total budget for 1923 more than three quarters is for purposes connected with war. These figures—in fact, all of Director Dawes' figures, it is to be noted—take no cognizance of any limitation of armament. But the comparison is none the less interesting as showing how great a drain war in its various manifestations puts on the public purse.

In regard to national expenditure in general, however, we seem to be on the upward road, and the budget system to be well justifying itself. Coördinating, as it does, the activities of the several governmental departments which used to operate under no unified policy and giving them the benefit of well-informed direction by a central authority, the president, government business seems to have its chance to be run like any other properly organized business—as long as our presidents continue to assume their rightful responsibilities as the country's business head.

How long, we wonder, before we begin to approximate those happily penurious pre-war annual governmental expenditures of a mere six or seven hundred million!

POPULAR TOPICS

AT a conference held recently at the department of commerce the first step was taken toward the reduction of costs of important commodities by the elimination of waste caused by the manufacture of needless varieties. Users and makers of vitrified paving bricks agreed that they could get along without fifty-five out of sixty-six varieties. Conferences affecting other industries will be held shortly.

REPLIES to a questionnaire sent to 753 farmers in the Eastern States show that 90 per cent of them consider time saved to be the greatest advantage they derive from the use of motor trucks. Almost a quarter of these farmers are selling at better markets than

before they had motor trucks, and 95 per cent of them consider the vehicles to be profitable investments.

THE Revolutionary War battlefield at Princeton, New Jersey, where on January 3, 1777, Washington and his ragged army defeated a force of British and Hessian troops after a desperate fight, has been marked by granite shafts bearing bronze tablets telling of incidents of the battle. The markers were erected by the Oregon Society of the Sons of the American Revolution.

A CHANGE in public sentiment and ideals in Germany seems to be indicated by that country's new postage stamps. Instead of the portraits of crowned heads the new stamps bear designs showing blacksmiths, miners and farmers at work.

NEXT time you have occasion to use a ladder remember this: Whatever the height of the ladder, maximum safety will be obtained if it is placed at an angle of 75 degrees.

THE next Federal Highways Act, recently signed by President Harding, makes available to the States an appropriation of $75,000,000 for the building of roads. An additional $15,000,000 was appropriated for national forest roads. The larger sum will be expended under the supervision of the bureau of public roads, and to receive this aid the States must match Uncle Sam's donation dollar for dollar. It is estimated that the continuance of road building made possible by this act will keep a quarter of a million men employed.

A PLAN for a "superpower" system of generating and distributing electric power in the region between Boston and Washington, which contains 22 per cent of our population and 96,000 manufacturing plants, most of which now make their own power, has been outlined by engineers of the geological survey in a report to the secretary of the interior. It is estimated that by 1930 the proposed unified system would save fifty million tons of coal, and $190,000,000 a year to the industries of the region. The "superpower" distributing system would include, in addition to the 1,200 miles of line now carrying 33,000-volt current or over, 970 miles of 220,000-volt lines, and almost 5,000 miles of 110,000-volt lines. The cost of this system is estimated at about a billion dollars, including the territory's present investment in electric plants and lines of $400,000,000. An additional feature of the plan is the electrification of 19,000 miles of the region's 36,000 miles of railroad at a cost of a half billion dollars, with an average annual saving of 14 per cent of the investment.

IF you are out of a job this year, and will follow the advice of Colonel Arthur Woods, chairman of the emergency committee of the unemployment conference, you will look for work in your home town rather than wander afield in search of it. Local committees say, almost universally, that they cannot find work for out-of-town men. The unemployment situation is improving rapidly. When the conference was called there were three million out of work, but a month later a million of them had obtained at least part-time jobs, and industries were reviving rapidly.

PORT ETIENNE, French West Africa, has found a use for a "scrapped" warship. A former French cruiser riding at anchor in the bay now serves as a fish-drying factory. Fishing boats bring their catches to the discarded sea fighter and sixty tons of fish can be dried at once on her formerly spotless decks.

Mrs. Kadiak's Fortune

By Calvin Johnston

Author of "Whistle: The Flagman's Dog," "Crossed Records," Etc.

There was no denying that Percy McTabb's ward was a member of the best arctic circles—even if said ward did do what no gentleman would

"LIFE is life, but people will have it," Augustus H. Gump IV. said as we looked out of the club window on Fifth Avenue.

Augustus and I are very close, for his life holds a secret which I share. The middle H in his name stands for Hortense, after an old aunt from whom he inherits. He must write it down in full on papers before witnesses to obtain money from the estate and I was the one selected to witness his signature with his counselor at law. I believe his name accounts for his morbidity as he sits all day in the club window, looking out and drinking claret and water.

"Life is life," he said of the people pushing each other about on the Avenue, "but they will have it."

It was the first time he had spoken that day and something about his philosophy made a shiver run up my spine, so that I was roused at last to investigate life on my own and know the worst at once.

It was not long since that three of the house committee had devoted themselves to the same mission and, I understood, had gotten as far as Second Avenue in their evening clothes before being turned back.

After trying to think of some other direction to take, I went, by an inspiration, to the zoo where people and the animals chum together as in primitive times and where I could make my deductions at the source of things.

There I came to a fellah on a bench and, dusting a place with my kerchief, I sat beside him leaning on my stick.

He was young and well tailored, with his hands thrust into the bottoms of his trousers pockets, his soft hat on the bridge of his nose. He had an air of moodiness but when I addressed him he shifted sparkling blue-green eyes to their corners and his nose twitched as if actually scenting me. In brief there was an alert inquisitiveness in his manner, and expression, from that moment.

We engaged in conversation. I stated the purpose of my mission and that I was not one to be turned back like the house committee.

"My word, no," he agreed. "You must not permit that. Here is the schoolroom of nature. I exploit the zoo weekly for my Sunday editor. I am what is known as a cub reporter."

"And are the cubs more interesting than the bears?" I asked, knowing of course that each writer fellah has his specialty but rather surprised at so fine a distinction.

Again his nose twitched and he looked at me rather more directly. "I should say it was fifty-fifty," he answered reflectively. "Now you perhaps noticed my dejection as you moved up?"

I nodded.

"It was not a pose, sir. In fact I have cause for dejection, having obtained at first-hand the story of a cub—a most distinctive story—which my editor is sure to turn down as out of my assignment."

"But I thought you were the cub reporter?"

"This is the story of a cub who grew into a bear."

Then I understood.

"Who is the bear editor?" I asked.

"He holds down the city desk," replied my acquaintance, with a curious show of teeth. "But to my story—it not only involves bruin as cub and bear but also a reduced gentleman. It is a story sometimes melancholy but rich in life. It will reward your search. As the editor will not permit it to see the light unless I write it in collaboration with the bear editor—which I will never do—I should like to tell it to an appreciative student of people and things."

Upon my eager permission he told it to me as follows—always with a most astonishing memory for details and sometimes with an éclat that was fascinating.

Some years ago, sir, there existed in an abandoned Alaskan mining camp a man named Wampus Waite. I say existed, for in fact his days of living were at an end. His pick and shovel stood idly against the wall, his snowshoes were unstrung and thrust under the bed, never again to be touched by his hand—or feet. The last bleak light of day stole over the mountain and into the cabin window, and Wampus, making use of that final spark of the arctic autumn which for him would end in eternal night, sat braced up on the pillow, so to speak, of his couch, writing his will. His only companion sat on his haunches in the corner washing his face and growling even as a human cub does over the same operation.

Wampus had no candles, the cub having eaten them up; he was low with laryngitis, that fatal plague to prospectors north of fifty-three. But he was thankful for the stub of pencil and sheets of paper which he had carried in his pack all these years in the expectation that some day he would write a letter. He did not know to whom he would write, having no home or friends or relatives, and he had never received a letter himself. Still it marked him as civilized and human that he should hold on to pencil and paper, as distinguished from the barbarian who is content to pile up stones on a trail or draw the caricature of a snapping turtle on a tree as a means of correspondence.

Wampus could hardly be called a cultured man but he must have been possessed of an indomitable conscience to sit there in his dying moments working out a will under which the orphan of the wilds would inherit.

I said Wampus had no friends. Yet there had been two—one a young gentleman who was a son of the owner of the packing house where he had worked when a boy.

This young man, Percy McTabb, had discovered the boy Wampus sitting on a rail and counting sheep as they came up the runway from the stockyard into the packing house. The boy Wampus had a wild, tired expression which drew an inquiry from young McTabb. The explanation was simple. Whereas most people will on a restless night count sheep to put them to sleep, Wampus, counting sheep all day when he could not sleep, was obliged to stay awake all night because they were not there to count. McTabb had at once transferred him to the bologna department; and so, far from forgetting the only favor ever done him, Wampus had cherished it in all his lonely wanderings. "There is a real gent, Mr. McTabb," he would tell his camp fire.

Now the light failed in the cabin but the will was finished and Wampus settled himself to fighting off death till the return of the Indian hunter, an old acquaintance who had been with him all season. In the dreary interval he amused himself by congratulating the little heir to his riches who was tied up in the corner. Of course I do not know what he said to it. This cub's mother was Wampus' other friend. They had met on a mountainside and during the fracas which followed she had overturned a bowlder and uncovered the pocket of gold.

Wampus had beaten her and the bowlder to the bottom of the mountain; then she turned to go back to her cub and he had shot her from behind with the Indian's rifle—the game hunter, who had been with him, having dropped it and gone on. Presently he found the cub at the pit of gold and in gratitude adopted him.

Now as to McTabb. For Wampus died almost immediately after the Indian's return, fumbling at one of the ninety-pound sacks of gold which he had asked to see and which the Indian had set down on his breast.

Percy McTabb had used up his money having a good time after his father's death —even selling his packing-house stock to make sure that he would have enough. Wherefore he had been reduced to living in second-floor lodgings—he who had once been a star in the society of Midwest City. My word, it was a cropper, sir, but Percy did not flinch when the crash came. He paid all his dishonorable debts like a man and cast about for means to pay the others. But he met the usual reception of the good spender who has gone on the hummer; everybody loved him just the same but they were not with him. The most offensive of all the friends who grasped his hands with a sidestepping movement were his father's old partners in the packing house—the peak of offensiveness being reached by Weevil, the president.

"It was great teamwork," said Percy.

In his grief, more over the behavior of his friends than the loss of his money, Percy had one gleam of consolation. "My poverty won't make any difference to Molly Connor," he reflected. He knew very well that Molly hadn't cared for him when he was rich, and yet the poor fellow took satisfaction in reflecting that she couldn't care any less for him now that he was poor. It had been a strange one-sided love affair with the little vaudeville artiste who with her pretty trick goat had played the circuit as far as Midwest the season before. He had fallen in love with her in the audience and had sought an introduction and finding her as sweet and wholesome off the stage as in her act had asked her to marry him after a week's acquaintance.

"Marry ye? And what would become of Esmeralda, the goat?" laughed Molly. "No, Mr. McTabb, you are hitting the high spots at present—and a show girl is always part of that program."

"We could live happily married," urged Percy.

"But not married to each other," she laughed. "Marry in your own set and I'll marry in the profession and we'll both be happy."

That was all there had been to his love affair with Molly of the brown hair and laughing little face.

He sat in his lodgings with his chin in his hands. This was on the very spring morning when the ice pack was breaking, up Bering way, but he recked nothing of that or the effect it was to have on his fortunes.

The fact of the matter is that the Indian game hunter had obeyed his friend's wishes just as loyally as when he set the ninety-pound sack of gold nuggets down on his chest. He had made his way to Nome with his treasure and the heir and delivered them with a note to the bank. Now, while the ice pack moved, drafts in the care of the bank's messenger—representing the gold treasure, and the cub in care of the Indian, were both already on their way to the guardianship of Percy McTabb.

Along in July McTabb was sitting in his lodgings with his chin still in his hands as if he had never moved since May. "Curse the conscience," he was saying, for being refused the chance to make an honorable living by his friends he had been tempting himself with a shady stock-selling proposition. He even had a sucker, but when it came to a show-down Percy could not bear to frisk him—if you know what I mean.

"It is the only temptation I never yielded to," groaned Percy, "and the only one which would net money instead of trouble." Still he could not yield, try as he would, and so was cursing his conscience when the two messengers arrived from Alaska and came on upstairs to him.

The game hunter who was carrying the cub set him down in the hall with some remark in freckled Siwash, and the messenger went in to Percy and, having delivered Wampus' letter and will and the drafts, made some remarks in plain English about the Siwash himself. Then he tried to run away from his traveling companion and lose him but Deerfoot caught him at the door and started him back to arctic circles on the run.

Wampus reminisced in his letter and Percy recalled the boy counting sheep with a tired wild face. The gold-discovering experience was given as you know it.

The will was on a separate sheet of paper and ran:

I appoint Kadie Kadiak my heir and Mr. Percy McTabb guardian and executor. When Kadie deceases, Mr. McTabb to inherit all.

There was a codicil which no doubt Wampus had added in delirium after the daylight faded and the aurora borealis came up.

The money to be invested in S. W. Packing Company stock on condition that Kadie be made a director on his majority in about three years.

"Suffering Genevieve," said Percy, for the heir entered the door at that minute. Though no larger than a pup hippopotamus at this period, Kadie already gave promise of that unique physical development which was to awaken a sudden desire for athletics in the circles he was destined to enter. He rose on his pudgy baby hind legs and with a gurgle of joy sharpened his nails on the soft pine door, then reached his paw through it as one dipping a hollow tree for honey.

After his one violent exclamation Percy sat gaping in the hazy realization that this was indeed the heir of Wampus. A glance at the drafts had shown them drawn in his own name for the total of eighty-six thousand dollars. The will of Wampus was to be probated only by McTabb's conscience, and to such an iron test had he put it that the temptation to hand Kadie over to the zoo and enjoy his fortune, was so brief as to be negligible.

"Stop it," cried Percy, and Kadie regarding this product of a refined civilization with curiosity came up to investigate him. But these later days of penury had made Percy full of expedients; he mounted the bed and next the dresser. Kadie whetted his claws on the dresser and then sat down to lick off the varnish. "At any rate he must not chew up these drafts," reflected Percy rapidly, and escaping from the room he locked the door and soon had them on deposit.

It being already evident that the ordinary apartment would not long survive the investigations of Kadie, Percy called up a real-estate firm and secured the option on an old brick mansion on the edge of the city. Then returning in a cab with a stout chain and collar he boldly unlocked the door of his room. Kadie had finished with the dresser and was so intent on chewing a patent-leather shoe that he hardly noticed when the collar was snapped on his neck and permitted himself to be led downstairs in great good humor. He seemed to enjoy the cab ride and arriving at the brick mansion was conducted to the basement.

The investment of Kadie's fortune under the stipulation of the will was a problem of four knots. These were the four directors of the S. W. Packing Company, a close corporation. The president, Weevil, a huge domineering man, was the hardest knot; and McTabb seized upon him the following morning and began to tug.

"The investment to be made on condition that this client of yours be made a director? It is insolence," roared Weevil, but durst not roar aloud, for S. W., not a large concern, was devilish hard up for money. "Who and what is your client?"

"He is a bear," explained McTabb.

"A Bear! And buying stock?"

"As I said," replied McTabb, who having stated a truth was willing that it be understood according to each hearer's intelligence.

Weevil reflected in stockyard vernacular with a low chuckle; "A Bear, and buying stock! McTabb has brought another goat to the chute," and he said aloud, "Show him in."

"He is, for the time being, a minor, and engaged in educating himself," replied McTabb. "I will represent him."

So it was settled, the stock being transferred to McTabb in trust for George Kadie, minor. This name was the result of Percy's reflection: "My ward should have a Christian name, such as George, in a Christian country." No reflection was necessary to cause him to drop the Kadiak. A meeting of directors was called, where, after the money was paid over, the Kadie-McTabb interest was treated with great contempt by Weevil and his fellow directors—this being the only policy they ever agreed on.

"I knew just what sort of deal they would hand us," Percy explained sadly to George Kadie, "but what could I do under the will? When you come to take your place as a director," he warned, "I hope you will not be too sensitive."

George, as I will hereafter designate him, rolled over on his back and waved his paws at Percy. The appeal of the little chap was irresistible and Percy tickled his ribs. They indulged in many a romp thereafter, Percy wearing a pair of boots on his hands after this first game in his nursery.

"Old fellow, I'm not a teething ring, you know," he said.

What a world of companionship he found in the little bruin after a year's loneliness among his friends. Once he thought with a shock. "Is it possible that I cultivate George because of his wealth?" But at once rejected the suggestion. "Never!" he said. "It is gratitude draws me to him. Of all the rich chappies I know, George is the only one to fraternize with me in my poverty."

He had of course held out enough money from the estate to furnish the lower floor of the house decently and provide for a year's economic living. Alas, civilized bachelor that he was and pathetically unequipped with data on nature's nursery, he had not allowed for the ratio of expansion between the Kadiak and human baby. No nursling, mewing and gurgling, was Georgie when he had arrived in the arms of the scratched Siwash who had abandoned his stoicism long enough to speak in freckled dialect to him. But at the time of his installation in the basement he was at least content with a man-size sirloin three times a day.

In two months he was eating six a day, in four months he lost his pretty ways with less than fifteen a day. Percy was aghast. "A sporting appetite, what?" he would say, politely. "But where will it lead us?" The S. W. dividend would not be declared till June. And he would spend days in the base-

ment—denying himself to the friends who returned en masse at the report that Percy had made a killing and was keeping bachelor's quarters in the mansion—watching Georgie grow.

"It is a disease," Percy decided at last. "It is pellagra!" And confessing the inadequacy of guardianship in holding a ward to anatomical limits he sought an alienist at the zoo.

The zoölogical gardens at Midwest City had a number of the specimens and all of the aroma of the den and jungle. One Tom Izzard was keeper and he listened to Percy with the intense concern of a man whose heart is in his profession.

"Rum will do it," he said. "Rum and tobacco. They give jockeys that to stunt 'em. It ought to head off this pellagra in a bear."

"But they are habit-forming drugs," objected Percy.

"Not if scientifically administered," corrected Izzard.

There was no going behind the decision of a specialist and Izzard reported that evening with the prescriptions filled at Percy's expense—two jugs and a plug of tobacco. No sooner had George, who had been chained up to receive a visitor, caught a whiff of Izzard than he recognized in him all the creatures of the wild with a snarl of welcome.

"I wouldn't prescribe anybody what I'm afraid to take myself," said Izzard, and swigging out of both jugs he bit a chew off the plug. "Now for the prescription compounded," he said and took two more. "That's what I call animal spirits!"

Then he prepared a pannikin of water and sugar and poured in the rum sparingly. George looked at the Izzard nose and cheek aglow with the family tints of aurora borealis and lapped confidingly. Then he mopped up the pannikin with his paw and sucked that.

"I begin to have a respect for that b'ar," said Izzard. "He has tastes; it would be a pity to see him outgrow 'em." He said that the treatments should be given three hours apart.

Percy, who had been persuaded to drink a goblet of the keeper's bear toddy as an example to George, said, "Fawncy, keeping my bear in a basement which goes round like a squirrel cage!"

"You should have a pit in the back yard," advised the keeper, and finding a hoe in a corner among some picks and shovels, Percy seized it and went out to dig one.

He did not return till daylight, brushing the frost off his features. Izzard had of course departed and George greeted him with a deafening growl as he came in the door. It was his usual before-breakfast growl but raised to the *n*th pitch.

After the experience of that breakfast, Percy hastened back to the zoo. "That prescription is hardly the thing. I do not believe we have disagnosed correctly at all," he explained. The rum had in fact whetted George's appetite so that he had eaten all his fifteen steaks at one meal and still conducted himself in his before-breakfast manner.

"Tell me!" said Izzard offendedly. "I know about animals. All kinds. Take snakes, for instance." He led Percy to one of the glass show-case cages and pointed with pride. "See that little old worm in the corner? Python! I stunted him. Some stunt! And the pretty cobra," continued Izzard, placing his hands on his knees and peering, "with his little hood. And the diamond-back rattler. Don't be a rattlin' at me," he exclaimed angrily, "or I'll crown you!"

Percy gazed into the cage, rubbing his eyes. "Where are they?" he asked. "My word the case is empty!"

He observed that Izzard was scanning him with moist melancholy eye. "I felt it a-comin'," he said resignedly; and excusing himself he climbed into the lions' cage. "It's them snakes, Nero. Keep 'em off," he said to the senile occupant of the cage; and he looked out at Percy through the bars.

"Specialist! Alienist! Bah!" said Percy.

He wondered that he had not perceived yesterday the man's bulbous nose and eyes constantly out of focus. He thought, going away from there: "If rum would stunt, Izzard wouldn't be knee-high." And so he took his revenge.

He could not help being angry with George and told him, as between guardian and ward. "It's monstrous; but have it your own way and grow ten feet high! Fawncy! But if I were you I'd respect my bearhood and not try to be an elephant."

Then he sat down in a chair to sleep off his hang-over. He was awakened by the loud sniffing of George in search of food.

"He has grown a foot while I slept," thought Percy, but steeling himself to the

inevitable, he phoned the butcher for a side of beef. "Write your own ticket," he told George, "but we will be in the poorhouse before the winter is out."

A survey of conditions revealed only one form of retrenchment.

"Nature has given you a set of furs calculated to shed icebergs," Percy told his ward. "But you have nothing on me. I have lived two winters in an apartment house. Food we must have, but we will economize on fuel."

He began reducing the heat gradually at first, but as George's appetite suddenly increased Percy put out the furnace fire in a panic and thereafter lighted fire only to cook his meals on the laundry stove in the basement.

Colder and colder grew the basement, a frosty rime covered the walls. A blizzard blew in one day and zero was recorded. George and Percy sat together in the corner with blankets around them.

"This is indeed cold," said Percy, "but we at least eat." Not once did it occur to the conscientious fellow to desert his ward and seek a neighbor's stove.

But one morning George did not begin whoofing for food at daybreak. And at breakfast, after several nods, he fell asleep with his mouth full. Terribly alarmed, Percy shook him but awakened no response. In his desperation, he phoned for Izzard who came at once.

"Rum——" he began.

"Never!" exclaimed Percy, "George has never behaved rationally at table since the last treatment."

Izzard diagnosed more closely. George sat hunched up in the corner, a blissful grin on his greasy face.

"He is hibernating," pronounced Izzard.

It was true. The hardy apartment-house dweller had put the shaggy giant of the wilds to sleep in an endurance test. The situation was saved, for George slept naturally during the winter, and by storing the cellar with ice at the beginning of March Percy induced a cold-storage hang-over till the end of the fiscal year. On the day the S. W. dividend was declared he woke him up.

"Never must this happen again," vowed Percy, delighted to see George himself again. He had during those long months been astonished to discover himself missing his ward's companionship more and more. He had known of men, forsaken by the world as he himself had been, to strike up the warmest friendship with a dog. "How much nobler is the partnership with a bear," he reflected.

One lonely day in March, hearing a hand organ in front, he had looked out the window to see a foreigner with a dancing bear of the cinnamon species, and had called him in. Himself and the foreigner had dinner together in the kitchen, exchanging reminiscences of their furry friends, and the latter had been made to promise that he and the cinnamon would drop in and make it a party of four on their next tour through that locality.

It was the cinnamon's accomplishments which had first impressed Percy with his æsthetic responsibilities toward George. "I must not let the little fellow grow up without those refinements which belong to wealth and good society," he had repeated over and over. And from the day of George's awakening he began teaching him to fox trot to the French harp, to seat himself in a chair, and even instructed him in the rudiments of table manners and the use of the napkin. "The cinnamon will have nothing on us when he comes back," he said.

It was about this time that reading the vaudeville announcements as he always did Percy saw that Molly Connor was booked the current week and hastened down to call on her at the theater. He told of his loss of fortune and wanted to make sure that she would think none the less of him because he was poor.

"I do not," replied Molly, making the goat jump through a hoop with ribbons.

"I thought it would be impossible," said Percy. "Are you still determined on marrying in the profession?"

"I am."

"Well, I must go now," said Percy. "I don't mind a disappointment, you know, but there is no use hanging around and nursing it so it will grow." In fact, the thought of growth frightened him since George had come into his life.

"Good-by," said Molly, willingly enough. And yet a curiosity which she could not account for and which stuck with her all season made her run to the stage door and watch him out of sight.

It was the same on the next season when she was playing Midwest and Percy called. And on the third season she studied him with a sort of despair which made Percy ask ear-

nestly, "You're sure you're not making a mistake in not liking me more?"

"I am sure of that," she replied firmly.

"Then why do you look at me that way?"

"There is a mystery about you; you don't seem to be what I know you are."

"Then take a sporting chance that I am not."

But she shook her head and said with finality that she would marry in the profession.

Now, three years had passed from the date of Wampus Waite's letter; and Percy, being of no mind to hang around a disappointment, hurried from Molly to the packing house on business connected with George's majority.

"My ward is of age," he told Mr. Weevil, "and will sit in on the annual meeting of directors to-night."

"He needn't trouble himself," growled Mr. Weevil.

"He's had his share of trouble and won't mind," answered Percy.

Weevil shifted his body and glared at him under his bullock's scowl. "I suppose you have made a sport out of him."

"He doesn't drink, smoke, gamble or swear."

"Been much in your company?"

"He can't bear me out of his sight."

"What does he think of that tie—and hat?"

"He doesn't growl."

"He must be a fellow of quiet tastes. To think," bellowed Weevil, "that old Tom McTabb's son would wear such a tie in my presence."

"Well, he does and calls it classy. And now, Mr. Weevil, my ward wishes to celebrate his majority by giving a dinner this evening to the directors, if you will call the meeting at his bachelor's residence." He presented an engraved card, "George Kadie, 275 Chilton Road."

Weevil reflected. Once more the S. W. Packing Company was devilish hard up and it was not unlikely that an extravagant young man keeping "bachelor's residence" would fall for another block of stock. He accepted with surly condescension.

On the way home Percy halted before a shop window, intrigued by a waistcoat of pale yellow with maroon spotting. "Classy," he said, "and modest." A man of natural elegance in his deportment and tastes, he could only smile pityingly at the criticism of clowns like old Weevil. But he conceded this much: "If my tweed hat and my scarf drew his attention it is because the rest of my dress is too drab and monastic and not in keeping with them." So he purchased the waistcoat, and hastened to present himself before George.

Now he had long been acutely conscious of the Kadiak's appraisal of his raiment, George no doubt regarding as a superior animal one who changed his pelt with the seasons. And at a time when his ward was inclined to give trouble over the fox trot it was noticeable how much less refractory he became on beholding Percy in a scarlet scarf. From the time the latter affected a checked suit he was docility itself, but this day he gave Percy's sartorial tastes a boom never to be forgotten, rearing up among the rafters at sight of the yellow vest with his paws before his face in the salaam of a colossus. And afterward he went through a lesson in drawing-room and table etiquette like a grand seigneur, Percy counseling him with a peculiar, new fluency which had come to him of late, his tweed hat over one eye.

"I'm anxious for you to make a killing at your début," said the conscientious guardian after it was all over, and he released George into the back yard, which since nursery days had been surrounded with a fifteen-foot concrete wall.

A redoubtable chef had been secured to prepare the dinner and Tom Izzard to serve it. The four directors arrived, one with the book of minutes under his arm, and were ushered into the basement by the proud McTabb. There even the depreciatory Weevil must be impressed by the decorations like the aurora borealis and the mighty table built of bridge timbers and sparkling with the impedimenta of the banquet hall.

"Come, George! Dinner!" said Percy, tinkling a little bell, and with the movement of an avalanche George rose on his hind legs and advanced from the corner. He seated himself in the mighty chair at the head of the table with a dignity which should have assured his début. And yet a bellow of protest rose from Weevil above the chatter of the other directors huddling against the wall.

"Our new director, Mr. Kadie, gentlemen," announced Percy, not unaware of the angry glance which George shot at the ill-mannered Weevil. Without further preamble he told the story of Wampus Waite's legacy and begged them to be seated.

Weevil denounced Percy, convulsed with rage.

"We've been tricked——" he began.

And then his shouts died in his throat as he encountered the inflamed orbs of George, seated between himself and the stairs.

"In all the laws and statutes," replied Percy, "which have been passed against everything else, there is not one against the condition confronting us." He tilted the tweed hat which he still wore at the dining table and transferred his cigar from one corner of his mouth to the other. "The only condition of life and affairs," he said sonorously, "which the lawmakers have overlooked passing upon is that of a bear sitting in as a director."

To the astonishment and delight of the speaker, George, as if inspired by his tone or words, rose up nodding his head and executed a huge frisk of the fox trot, then seated himself again, gazing steadily at Weevil. The president mopped his brow.

"If necessary, we will go to court to protect our rights," continued Percy, "under the constitution of the commonwealth, and demand an accounting."

A shudder passed through the group of directors at thought of so terrible an exposé of the S. W. Packing Company's affairs. George moved uneasily; "I withdraw my objections," said Weevil.

"Gents, be seated," said Percy, beaming hospitality. And he called up the stairs for service.

The directors seated at table drank a health and looked at George, but George looked only at Weevil. Presently he crashed down a paw upon the table.

"It's his appetite coming up," explained Percy.

"Let's eat," said Weevil hoarsely. But upon calling again for service Percy was informed by Izzard that George's dinner had not yet been delivered by the butcher. George slammed down his other paw.

"Not delivered!" exclaimed Weevil, aghast; "I never heard of such a thing. Is this the way you treat George?" But at this moment a truck was heard in the drive, and in a moment Izzard appeared with a leg of beef.

George sent out a rumble that shook the walls. "Napkin!" cautioned Percy, and the bear attached the article to his collar. With George eating, the others fell to, and after the feast a directors' meeting was held without any of the usual disputes. Then they adjourned, bidding their host good-by till the next annual meeting.

"I will represent him at the monthly disagreements," said Percy.

It is worthy of note here that George appeared in the rôle of host again that season, this time to the foreigner and his cinnamon bear, and again conducted himself in a way which fulfilled all the hopes of his tutor. "He is a credit to a refined civilization," Percy said afterward.

The ensuing year brought no changes to our friends, except that Percy purchased a suit of some brindle wire-haired cloth and began smoking cigars with a spiral in them like a cornet. Then a double calamity fell on them with crushing force. George went into a sort of decline with moody spells and loss of appetite, and the S. W. Packing Company failed, through the scoundrelly activities of its president. All that Percy saved out of the crash was a stock of mutton in the cold storage.

The two had lived on this mutton for a month and were becoming more and more easily reconciled to the prospect of going without food entirely. "I have not flesh on my bones, but tallow," sighed Percy, "and I do not blame you, George, for going into a decline rather than eat."

One morning he came down to the basement early to console his friend and found George proudly licking two cubs. For hours Percy sat like a man dazed. "How could you do it?" he reproached. "I never would treat you this way, George!" Alas, George no longer, but Georgina. "Curse the cinnamon," said Percy, and had thoughts of suing for nonsupport.

It was perhaps a week after this disaster and Percy had sat brooding for hours past mealtime over a mutton chop in his hand when there came a ring at the bell and he tottered upstairs to admit—Molly Connor.

"With the big top—the circus this season—top liner," she told him; "Esmeralda is a knock-out!"

The circus was only one day in Midwest, and she had started out to look him up.

"Is it love?" asked Percy.

"It could not be love—for any man out of the profession, you know," she replied without hesitancy. They sighed and Percy told her of his good and ill fortunes from the time of Georgina's appearance. "Now,

I have a family to bring up, and educate," he said; "you have no idea of the butcher's bills for a nursery these days." The honest fellow never thought of deserting his friend and her family, even though he had to go to work. He led Molly to the cellar where Georgina reared up to receive them.

But Molly looked at Percy. Perfectly groomed even in the hour of misfortune, he had on the wire-haired suit, the mottled waistcoat; his plaid sport hat was tilted and he chewed a cigar with a spiral like a cornet. Instinctively, she kissed him. "It is only in good-by," she declared desperately, "I must never see you again, and——"

She halted breathless. Georgina was fox-trotting and the two cubs were tottering after on their hind legs.

"This is Georgina Kadiak, lady," Percy was saying; "and her family—members of the best arctic circle than which there is no higher on the globe——"

Breathless, the girl listened and looked, exclaiming solemnly, as he paused: "I have been blind—blind—and deaf! What a spiel, what a get-up, what an act!"

In that moment all was made plain to them. Percy was in the profession!

An hour later Percy and Molly and the Kadiaks were on their way to the show grounds hard by and in an hour more were booked as one family in one monster act.

There was no thought of this at first, Esmeralda being a dainty morsel for any carnivorous animal. But, upon her approach to the wedding group presently gathered in the dressing tent, Georgina began trembling and whining so that it took some time to quiet her.

"I feel that way toward Esmeralda myself," explained Percy. It was the result of the mutton diet; but upon this being made plain to Georgina that she did not have to eat the goat, the intelligent Kadiak received her into her family and guarded her as fondly as one of the cubs.

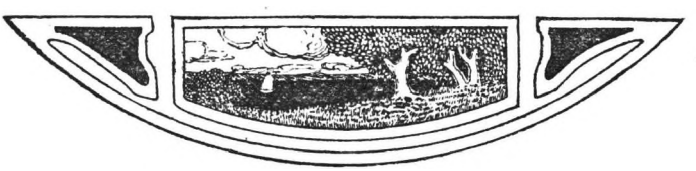
My zoölogical writer friend paused and sighed thoughtfully.

"And so was the grateful and assiduous Percy McTabb repaid," he said presently, "and is now a happy married man and a top liner with the big show." He was then called aside by a tall, red-nosed man, who had come over from the reptile house and had been listening in.

I heard the latter say that the rest of the story was all right, but to cut that part where Tom Izzard described the snakes in the glass case, when there were no snakes present. This man himself was of the Izzard type and maybe the reptile keeper; he may have spoken from a guilty conscience, and with a desire to cloak the profession from publicity. Who knows?

But I do not see why this incident should be omitted; neither does Augustus IV., who has been less morbid since my investigations have opened to him a view of life beyond the horizon of Fifth Avenue.

In the next number will appear "Easiest Money," by Mr. Johnston.



GREAT IS THE MELTING POT!

IN all the present-day talk about "Americanism," it is refreshing to recall the toast given years ago by John Hay at a banquet of the Ohio Society in the city of New York. Said the great statesman:

"I was born in Indiana, I grew up in Illinois, I was educated in Rhode Island, I learned my law in Springfield, my politics in Washington, my diplomacy in Europe, Asia, and Africa; I have a farm in New Hampshire and desk room in the District of Columbia. The first ancestors of whom I ever heard were a Scotchman, who was half English, and a German woman, who was half French. My mother was from New England, and my father from the South. In this bewilderment of origin and experience, I can only put on an aspect of humility in any gathering of favorite sons, and confess I am nothing but an American!"

Texas Burke: His Father's Son

By Frederick Stuart Greene

Author of "The Living Past," and other stories.

Fanny felt that it was worth paying that little bet to be made to feel for half an hour that she truly was Lady Frances Something-or-other

OCTOBER sunshine glistened on the choppy waves out on the Hudson and flooded the rooms of an over-furnished though comfortable flat perched at the very top of the Claremont Apartments. To Mr. and Mrs. "Texas" Burke —widely different types, yet both finished products of that master workshop, New York City—this flat, touching the clouds on Riverside Drive, was all to the good. Fanny herself had so described it and Mrs. Burke had a pleasantly final way of saying things that banished contradiction.

Texas Burke, the subboss of the flat, tossed the sporting section of the *Morning Telegraph* aside and stretched his big arms high above his head.

"Fan," he said, "I think, on our way to Havana, we'll stop off an' see father."

"That's some little idea of yours, Tex," Fanny answered, without turning from the endless double stream of motors far below. "But since you've sprung it, who's father?"

"Why, Fan, didn't I ever break the news to you that I've got a father?"

"Not so loud that I could hear. What track does he train on?"

"No kiddin', on the level, Fan, I've got a father."

Fanny looked at her husband with her gray eyes widely open. Before she had become Mrs. Burke those same eyes had flashed across the footlights in several Broadway productions where, to the people out front, she had been known and applauded as Lola Lorette; to her fellow players behind she had been Fan O'Connor—Fan, the jolly, wise little skirt who knew how to take good care of herself and who took good care never to miss mass on Sundays whether it sleeted or shone.

Before answering her husband Mrs. Burke drew her silk-covered foot from a quilted slipper, tucked it comfortably beneath her and settled far back in the deep chair.

"Mr. Burke," she began demurely, "when I was a poor, destitute girl, living on only one-forty per and wardrobe furnished, and you offered me the protection of your stalwart arm, I asked you just two questions, didn't I?"

"Yes," Burke grinned, "but you've asked two thousand since, all right, all right."

"They don't count." Mrs. Burke waved his statement aside. "But before bestowing my hand I only asked you if you already had a wife and if you'd ever been up the river. Since then I haven't tried to climb no branches in your family tree, have I? I took a chance on you at face value—and a pretty good old face you've got, I'll tell the audience." She kissed her finger tips to him. "Now, Tex, if you really own a pa that you ain't ashamed of, the curtain's up. Go ahead and speak your little piece."

"Ashamed! Why, Fan, my father's got real class."

"I felt it, Tex," Fanny cried dramatically. "I had a regular intuition the very first time I lamped you that night at Claridge's. Is your pa the Duke of Burkeshire or only a lord?"

Texas picked up his paper. "If you had stopped kiddin' me I'd have given you the whole works."

Fanny rose quickly, hopped across to her husband on her slippered foot and sat beside him in the big chair.

"I didn't mean to hurt you, old dear," she said penitently. "I'd love to hear anything about you that you want to tell. I always thought you kind o'—that you didn't like to talk about your folks."

"Good Lord, Fan, I'm right down proud of my father!"

"All right, deary, go ahead with your lines. Your father's a regular swell down in Texas."

"Texas! I've never seen the place. That's only a name the boys at the track

gave me because they say I've got a Southern way of talkin', which you know ain't so."

"Of course not. You talk just like that Harvard kid that was crazy about me once." A frown brought her husband's brows together. "But of course I never could see *him* for a minute." Through her lashes she saw his frown smooth away.

Burke settled his big frame more comfortably in the morris chair. "Well, if you're all set, here goes. My father lives in Lexington, a little kerosene town down in Virginia. We lived in a fine brick house on a bluff over the river; I reckon the old man was rich for down there. Anyway I had a pony. My father an' me jogged along together only soso; somehow I didn't naturally take to him, an' seems like he took no great shine to me. An', Fan, you know I'm a good mixer, that I've got a lot of friends at the track?" Fanny agreed vigorously, "Well, somehow I can't seem to remember a single kid in that town who was ever chummy with me. I sure was a lonesome little cuss."

Fanny pressed her brown head against his shoulder. "How about your mother, Tex?"

"She died before I can remember." He paused, frowning. "An' that's another funny thing; my father never talked about her. I never even saw a picture of her."

He thought over this for some moments before continuing.

"Well, except for bein' lonely," he presently went on, "I got along, I reckon, about the same as other kids until one day I got into a scrap. It come about over a dog of mine. We was comin' home from school, me an' Jack, when I met a feller named Sam Buckner. He was 'poor white trash,' an' lived on a tumble-down farm, had a booze fighter for a father, drank himself when he could get it, an' chewed more natural leaf than any grown man in the county.

"I can't just remember how the argument started but when he began yellin' Jack showed his teeth. Sam turned on Jack an' gave him a terrible kick in the ribs. The next minute I had clinched with Sam. A second after an' his bony leg was wrapped back of both mine an' I went down like a ton of coal. Then while we was poundin' away I got a hold with both hands on one of his skinny arms an' twisted it so far I believe his bone cracked. Anyway I threw him off me an' jumped on his chest with both knees. There was a big sharp rock lyin' near his head. I raised it high up with both hands an' I'll swear, Fan, I was so crazy mad that a second more an' I'd have caved in his skull. But just then my wrist was caught an' I was dragged up standing.

"It was my father—an' I never seen such a look on any man's face. He didn't look mad; his face was like it had been whitewashed an' his eyes registered more terror than you ever seen in a close-up at the movies. We was a half mile from home but he dragged me the whole way, keepin' a tight grip on my wrist an' never opened his mouth. Jack limped along behind with his tail between his legs.

"The old man fairly threw me through the open door. 'Sit in that chair,' he said. Then he folded his hands behind him an' walked up and down before me. At last, when he began to talk, each word came like it was cut out of ice. 'Edward,' he said, 'I shall pass over the fact that you were fighting with a rough. Though a gentleman should use a dog whip upon a fellow of his sort, I can understand that when suddenly attacked one has no choice!' "

At Burke's utterance of the name "Edward" Fanny had stirred, her lips silently repeating the name. Now her brows arched. For a moment her husband's usually careless diction had gone.

"Tex," she said, "I never heard you talk that way before."

"It happened nearly sixteen years ago, Fan, but seems like I ain't forgot a word he said or how he looked. He went on like this," and again Burke's manner and tone changed. "My father said, 'Unfortunately, though, you permitted yourself to give way to blind rage. It becomes a gentleman to fight hard, but even though fighting to the death a true gentleman should meet that death cold as steel. Your conduct matched the vulgar fellow you were fighting. And you, Edward, had I not prevented, would now be a murderer.'

"I was only fourteen then an' I began to cry. I remember blubberin' out that it wasn't murder—that he had kicked my dog. 'It would have been murder,' my father said, cold again. 'The fellow was down and you were in the act of striking a fallen man. Go to your room and stay there, sir, until you can tell me that you know the evil of losing your self-control!'

"I couldn't never forget it. Just then Jack set up a long howl outside the door an' I asked if he couldn't come up with me. The old man bit out the words: 'No! You will reflect alone and in darkness upon your evil conduct.'

"And Fan, as I sat up there in that big, lonesome room an' the hours just crawled by an' I couldn't stop crying, I began to hate him."

Fanny's arm crept about her husband's neck, her cheek pressed against his.

"You see I couldn't figure out how I'd done anything so evil, as he said. An' the longer I stayed in that dark room an' heard only the clock tickin', what he'd said an' the way he said it hurt more an' more. An' then all at once it come over me that he hadn't ever treated me—you know, petted me—the way I'd seen other fathers do. And right then I knew I never wanted to see him again.

"Lookin' back on it, it don't seem now that just a bawlin' out was enough to make a kid that had a nice home do what I did. Anyway, about two in the mornin' I crept downstairs, opened the door an' there was Jack. It looked like he knew an' was waitin'. We both broke into a run an' never stopped till we hit the Staunton Pike. Then I looked back just once at the old house an' turned an' walked away down the long road. That was fifteen years ago, Fan, an' I haven't seen or heard from the old man since."

Fanny went quickly to the window and stood there, her face turned away from her husband.

"Why, what's the matter, honey?" Texas asked.

Fanny's eyelids fluttered rapidly over her gray eyes. "I don't mind saying, Tex, that that's some sob story of yours and it's got me," she answered brokenly.

"Forget it, Fan—it's old stuff now." Burke reached for his paper but Fanny caught his hand.

"No! I won't let you stop, you've got to play the piece through"—she hesitated, then said softly—"Edward."

With both hands he gently turned her face, as she leaned over him, until he looked squarely into her shining eyes. "Not that, honey. Cut out the Edward—I couldn't never stand for it since that night. Texas, what the boys at the track named me, is good enough for us, ain't it?"

She nodded her pretty head and settled again beside him. "Go on, run it out," she pleaded.

"Well, in about two weeks Jack an' me hit Washington an' right away I found out that jobs were scarce where they wanted a boy-an'-dog combination. I remember when we was in Winchester a feller offered me ten dollars for Jack but I turned him down.

"After I'd been in Washington two days I heard they was racin' at Bennings. As about the only thing I knew was how to ride I hoofed it out to the track. I was little then—didn't weigh more'n ninety pounds."

Fanny, surveying the full length of Burke's big frame, smiled incredulously.

"Yes, I was little," her husband repeated, "an' it wasn't no trouble at all for me to get a job exercisin'; an' what made things just all right, the trainer didn't mind Jack about the stable."

"Ah! The plot congeals!" Fanny interrupted. "Our young hero, through diligent aptitude, rose rapidly to fame and as the star jockey of the year won the Derby amid the thundering applause of the crowned heads of Europe."

"Not so you'd notice it," Texas replied seriously. "I put on weight faster'n I could learn the fine points. So after two seasons I was out of a job. It was hard goin' for the next three years. Sometimes I sold programs an' sometimes I got a bit of change by toutin' off a good thing. Say," Texas interrupted himself, "sure this story ain't beginning to go stale?

"No? All right, then. I was eighteen but looked twenty-five the first time I got a job writin' sheet for old Mat Quinn. He gave me a ten-spot every day we worked. But you know how it is. All of us on the book was always broke. It took me two years to get wise that I couldn't pick six winners every day. Then for three or four months I turned tightwad an' kept my eyes on the ponies. One day a skate I'd seen win down in New Orleans showed up in stake company at Sheepshead an' he dogged it from start to finish. They run him twice after that, each time against classy horses and over a distance, an' he finished nowhere.

"Then at Saratoga they slipped him in a five-eighth sprint. The company couldn't have been worse; it looked like that race was specially tailored for the old nag. When the bettin' opened I got busy. I'd saved up

over five hundred bucks an' I planted a ten-spot in every book that showed forty or better. I kept goin' until I stood to win over seventeen thousand. By that time he was marked down to twenty an' the price didn't stop skiddin' until four to one was the best in the ring. At this short price I got Quinn to lay sixteen against four hundred for me, and I went out on the lawn, easy in my mind. If my horse won, I stood to drag down sixteen thousand six hundred; if he lost, I'd break about even."

Burke paused and knocked the ashes slowly from his cigar.

"Oh, for goodness' sake," Fanny cried, "keep going! Did you win?"

"There wasn't nothing to it, honey. That mud-hound got off flyin' an' just breezed home all the way. The next day Tex Burke had men workin' for him in a book of his own."

"Whoa!" Fanny cried. "Stop right there! Wait till I signal the orchestra." She ran to the phonograph. "Now, Tex, sing the rest," she said.

"Here Comes the Bride," began to wail faintly from the cabinet.

"What's the idea, Fan? I can't never keep pace with your kiddin'. There ain't nothin' more to tell except that that was the last time anybody ever caught me broke."

"Oh, isn't there more to tell? How about the princess?"

"Princess? Banker, you mean," Texas smiled. "But I've gotter hand it to you, that was some clever deal you put over."

"Prenuptial arrangements they're called at Newport, my dear," Fanny drawled. "But all the same it'll keep us out of the poor-house some day."

They referred to an arrangement that Miss Lola Lorette, née O'Connor, had invented and insisted upon before giving her hand to her bookmaker husband—a business agreement that would have done credit to Morgan & Co. After the wedding Texas was to turn over half the profits each winning day to Fanny, which sum was to be banked for their joint account and never again used for betting purposes. On and after a losing day Burke was to stand all charges until he had either lost his entire bank roll or had regained the amount on hand at close of business of the last dividend day. "Sooner or later you all go broke," Fanny had wisely said. "By my scheme, if you don't smash too soon, we'll have enough when the day does come to open a movie house and live happy ever after." But the smash had not come as yet; on the Sunday morning that Fanny first learned her husband's history both his working capital and their joint account had grown to comfortable size.

For a long time after Texas had finished his story Fanny was silent, a small frown wrinkling her forehead. "How is it, dearie, after all these years, you get a sudden hunch to see your father again?" she asked.

"Met a guy yesterday who come up from Virginia with the Ellerslie yearlin's. He didn't know me but he tipped me off about things. The old man, to hear him tell it, is broke; went on some kind of bond for a friend who ran out on him, so I kind o' thought I'd give the place the once-over."

"Are you sure he's alive—that it's the same man?"

Texas smiled. "Alive! Say, Fan, they never die down there. The place's so quiet and healthy that the old people just shrivel up and blow away. Listen, they say little old New York's a nine-day town. Well, Lexington is a ninety-year town! Why I remember there was a murder—it must have happened before I was born—the Shaw murder they called it—and they were talkin' about it yet, when I was fourteen."

"A special-feature drama, eh?" Fanny asked.

"Never heard any details; the old folks always soft-pedaled whenever I came near. But I'll bet they're talkin' down there about the Shaw murder to this day."

"You're on, Tex," Fanny took him up quickly. "A box of real cigars against a fur coat."

One week later an antiquated locomotive drawing two small coaches and Mr. and Mrs. Burke clattered across the wooden trestle spanning the James River and climbed the steep grade that ends in the mountain-bound village of Lexington.

Some time after they had reached the hotel, Texas, who had been making inquiries, returned to their rooms. "I reckon that was straight dope that feller gave me," he said. "I've been talking to the proprietor. He tells me my father has closed the big house an' lives in a little frame cottage. He's got a bum job as librarian at the college an'

makes something on the side translatin' French."

Fanny, seated before a dingy mirror, was having difficulty not to overdo her delicate make-up. She hastily pushed aside her artist's materials. "Tex, we've had a bully season, the best ever," she said impulsively. "If your father's up against it I'll just slip him a check from our reserve."

Burke sat down heavily on the bed and caught his head between both hands. "It can't be done," he said gloomily and stared at the floor.

Fanny flew to him. "Why, what's wrong, old boy? Sorry you come?"

"It does get me kind o' hard," Texas answered. "Bein' here brings back that last damned night; but that ain't all." He had the look of a schoolboy called upon to recite an unstudied lesson.

"Come on, Texas, get out what's on your mind." She caught his hand and held it against her cheek.

"You know—you know, Fan, I ain't no swell or anything like that. Except for figures I ain't educated or nothin'——"

"Goodness gracious Miss Agnes! What's coming?" Fanny cried.

"You know that for me there ain't nobody or nothin' in this world that can class with you?"

"Yes, but go on, Tex," Fanny urged.

"Well, what I'm trying to put across is this. Though it's a long time ago an' though since then I've been rubbin' against nothin' but stableboys an' touts an' that kind o' stock, till I met you, still I ain't forgot that my father was different—different from what I am now. An' Fan—he's different even from——" Burke's cheeks were hot.

"Yes, Tex, I get you," Fanny said quietly, "I got wise to all this when you told me about him Sunday. So go right ahead."

"Well, we've got to go easy. We don't want to make the old man feel bad, do we?"

Fanny wrinkled her short nose at her husband. "You don't want him to know who we are, ain't that it? Then what are you going to do about our name?"

"Fan, my name ain't Texas, an' it ain't Burke either. Somehow when I hit the stables at Bennings that day I just changed it. My name's Edward Claiborne."

"And I," Fanny made as low a curtsy as her modern skirt permitted, "am the long-lost Lady Frances Claiborne."

"Anyway," Texas continued more cheerfully, "his being broke takes us easy over one jump. I've been trying to figure out what kind of excuse I could work up for buttin' in on him."

"Sure he won't recognize you?"

"Not a chance," Texas replied confidently. "I was just talkin' to two old birds that I remembered. They didn't know me. I've grown too much."

"Then, Tex, since you're all set, come along. Let's make our entrance."

The cottage door was opened by a small colored girl whose generous smile of welcome was only exceeded by her open admiration for the fur-clad lady who wished to enter. The attraction was entirely mutual. If Susy the maid looked with delight at the smart toque that so well suited Fanny's well-shaped head, Fanny showed equal delight in Susy's head adornment—a porcupine thicket of pointed spikes, created by shoe strings wound closely about tufts of Susy's kinky hair; each spike, rising fiercely from its own square pedestal, stood neatly separated from its neighboring spike by four even lines of yellow scalp.

"Yas'm, Mistah Claiborne's right in his settin' room. Won't you-all come in, please? Th' gem'man kin rest his coat on this chair."

Susy opened a door, thrust her spiked head through the opening and without further formality announced the guests. Then she walked down the hallway, leaving Mr. Claiborne's callers to their fate.

The man who rose from his writing desk was tall and straight. The first impression Charles Claiborne gave was that of vigorous, white age. Above a pale, high forehead his head was crowned by a mass of soft hair of that snow-whiteness that comes only to hair once night-black. His shaven lips were straight, tight-locked at the corners; white eyebrows overhung his deep-set, undimmed eyes.

The study, a neat, plain room, was furnished only by a secretary, the writing table and a few chairs. The bare floor had been waxed and rubbed until the boards glistened where the firelight struck.

Texas, closely followed by Fanny, stopped awkwardly just beyond the threshold. "I'm —my name's Burke," he said, "an' this is Fan—I mean Mrs. Burke."

With the tips of his long, white fingers touching the desk, Mr. Claiborne bowed low. "It is a pleasure to see you, sir. I am

honored, madam. Be seated, I pray." Neither his enunciation nor his voice showed age.

Texas took the nearest chair; their host hastily moved another toward Fanny and held it until she was seated.

"Do you find the room chilly, madam? Shall I add to the fire?"

"No, thanks, I ain't cold a bit."

Both Fanny and Texas were plainly uneasy. Burke confessed afterward that the first moments of that meeting were the worst he had known since the night he had left his father's house. "If he'd only asked a question, sort o' give me an opening, I'd have breezed through."

"I know just how you felt," Fanny replied. "The air at first was so full of the politest ice crystals it made me think I was doing a winter act at the Hippodrome."

During this uncomfortable period Mr. Claiborne talked chiefly to Fanny but his brilliant eyes flashed often toward her husband. At the end of five long minutes Texas plunged abruptly through formalities.

"I come to see you, Mr. Claiborne, on business."

"It is long since I have talked what you active men would consider business, but if madam will permit, I trust you will proceed, sir." Claiborne was seated now, his hands resting idly upon his lap.

"It's just this. I and my wife wants to have a place that's more homelike than what you can get out of a New York flat. I heard you had a house that ain't used an' we thought we'd like to look it over."

No line of Charles Claiborne's face moved. He sat silent for long moments before he answered. "Am I to understand, sir, that you wish to purchase?"

"Surest thing you know," Texas answered, gaining confidence.

"And you, madam?"

"I'm just in love with this country," Fanny said. "But we ain't even seen your place yet."

A shadowy smile lighted the old man's eyes. "You show, madam, commendable business caution." He turned to Burke. "It is quite impossible, sir. I cannot consider an offer."

"But at a price? Price cuts no ice with me—anything in rea——"

Mr. Claiborne checked Burke by merely raising his white hand.

"Your pardon, sir, but I reiterate, no offer can be considered."

For an instant Texas showed defeat. Then determination grew.

"Well, there's another proposition I've got," he said. "I know a feller in New York what's in the book business. He said to me just before I left—didn't he Fan"—Fanny's decided nod spurred her husband to further invention—"he said he was tryin' to find some guy what could put the French books he wanted to print into—er——"

Inspiration had fled. Fanny flew to the rescue.

"Don't you remember, Tex, he said that if you could find anybody in this college town that could translate——"

"Yes, that was it," Texas interrupted. "He said that if I run across any one what could handle a translatin' job in a classy way he'd pay real money for it. Do you get me?" Texas settled back in his chair. Fanny beamed her admiration.

The deepening wrinkles about Mr. Claiborne's eyes made his smile more sure. "I quite understand and thank you, sir," he answered in his precise manner. "But again I regret that I must say no. My present duties here engage all my time."

Both his visitors showed disappointment. Burke's lips moved in an effort to reply, but further invention was beyond his powers. During the pause that followed, the old gentleman sat in deep thought, a trace of his smile lingering. It was he who finally broke the silence.

"There is a place next to mine, the Nelson estate—perhaps you might care to see it?"

Relief flooded his visitor's broad features. "Thanks, I'll go right now." Texas started for the door. "Come on, Fan, we can be back before it gets too dark."

Charles Claiborne's brilliant eyes were fixed on Fanny; they asked a question. Fanny, returning his steady gaze, nodded assent.

"The road at this season is rough and muddy," Mr. Claiborne spoke to Texas. "You will pardon me if I say that madam's boots are frail"—he bowed—"and small for the journey. Should she care to wait your return here, I shall be honored."

Texas looked uncertainly from his wife to his father, then back to Fanny.

"Yes, Tex, I'd like it that way," she said. "You give the place the once-over and if

it sizes up right we can both go to-morrow."

Mr. Claiborne left the room with his guest. Upon his return he carefully closed the door and, after walking to the fireplace, said in a voice altered, strangely softened:

"I thank you, madam, for granting my request. I have much to say to you."

"I thought you wanted me to stay, but I can't guess what for," Fanny answered.

"I wish to tell you," Mr. Claiborne said, smiling, "that it gratifies me to see that you and your husband are both inept at—if you will pardon me—falsehood. But one could forgive even the greatest lie were it told for the purpose of giving aid to perhaps a lonely man." His tone had lost its coldness, his manner was friendly. Fanny moved to a nearer chair. "You may tell your husband that I have all that I need. One requires so little here." He looked steadily at the fire for some moments before he said: "You will forgive me, I pray, madam, if I ask you some questions whose purport you will understand later."

"Oh, Mr. Claiborne, when you talk to me like that I don't mind one bit anything you say," Fanny answered impulsively.

"Then first of all," he asked earnestly, "is your husband kind and gentle toward you?"

"Who, Tex? Why, Mr. Claiborne, Tex is the best ever. We've been married two years and he hasn't never crabbed about a single thing." Fanny leaned toward him and said confidentially, "And I'm some little spender, believe me! But no matter what I bring home, Tex always says it ain't good enough for me."

Mr. Claiborne placed a chair near Fanny, the corners of his mouth now unlocked by a smile that softened his stern face.

"Does he—I pray you again to pardon my seeming rudeness—have you ever seen him in temper"—he grew suddenly grave—"or become enraged?"

"Temper?" Fanny asked in surprise. "Tex ain't got a temper. He's too easy! His motto is, 'Temper and business can't run on the same track!"

For some moments the old gentleman leaned back in his chair, thoughtfully silent. Then without warning: "Your husband has told you that I am his father?" he asked.

After two futile attempts Fanny managed: "Yes! How did you know?"

"The resemblance is unmistakable." Mr. Claiborne spoke as if to himself. "It is better he should never know that I recognized him." He turned again to Fanny, a kindly, serious look in his eyes. "I think I see my way clearly now. Will you listen to an old man while he tells you a story of the past? I ask your forbearance, dear child, believing that though my words may bring some sorrow, in the end they will be a safeguard to your happiness." He leaned toward her. "And with your help what I have to say may mean your husband's salvation."

"Oh, please—please go on!" Fanny cried. And the mystified girl in that meager room, sitting tense, anxious to hear what the white old man had to tell, was once jolly, dashing Lola Lorette of the theater!

"Nearly a hundred years ago—it seems that long to me," he began, "there was a young lady—yes, my dear, even men as old as I have known them—who was like no other. She was not merely one of those amiable creatures of early Victorian days; her father was a great scholar, a gentleman, and she had a mind capable of receiving the learning he gave her. I tell you this because, being both well-bred and wise, makes what befell her the more incomprehensible."

Mr. Claiborne paused and sat looking into the fire for some moments. His story was not easily told.

"They came to us here," he continued, "she and her father, from the Eastern Shore, and within the week there was not a young dandy in the county who was not heels over head in love. Then, after a time—on a wonderful June night—she told me that which made me happier than I had thought it possible to be on this earth."

Again he fell silent. The dusk of an autumn day was closing in. Flames rising and falling in the fireplace sent shadows hurrying across his white face.

"Oh, please don't stop," Fanny begged.

"Yes, my dear, I shall hurry. We were to be married as she wished on the coming Christmas Day and, as was the custom here, we were to keep our engagement a secret until shortly before the wedding."

Mr. Claiborne rose and stood by the window. "You can see yonder, that mountain?"

A mountain towered in the west, its singularly regular outline edged with gold by the sun, now dropped behind its crest.

"That is House Mountain. It is twenty odd miles from here. The people who live there—all told, not more than two hundred

souls—are practically cut off from civilization. They are big, hardy, and I fear a lawless folk, and all related or connected by some family tie.

"One Monday morning in September a party of students, who had gone out the day before to climb that mountain, returned bringing with them a young giant." The locked fingers of his clasped hands tightened. "He carried himself recklessly, this mountaineer, looked straight out of his bold eyes, and had a booming, good-natured laugh. Yes, my dear, he was handsome, as uncouthly handsome as he was huge. They somehow managed to place his name upon the college register so that he might play on the football team.

"There was no resisting his weight and strength. His rushes across the field left always a wake of bruised and hurt men on the ground where he had felled them. You have doubtless surmised the result; this reckless, handsome mountaineer became the rage, the hero of college. There were a few of the older men of the town who, knowing the record of his family, frowned; but their protests were disregarded.

"When the football season ended and the day of my great happiness drew near, this giant, unable to study, unwilling to work, had full time to—full time to make mischief."

Mr. Claiborne turned from Fanny and placed a new log on the fire; when he spoke again his words came from set lips.

"I was to dine with—Anne and her father. When I reached the house he told me Anne had gone for a ride but would shortly return.

"We waited.

"Ten minutes grew to twenty, to thirty. Unable longer to stay idly in the house I hastened down the long driveway and stood at the gate. It was still—still as it can only be on a crisp, frosty night. I could have heard her horse's hoofs ringing on the frozen road a half mile away, had there been a horse to hear. I ran back to the house, my thoughts filled with a hundred accidents that might have befallen her, determined to get a horse and ride to meet her—or to find her if, as I feared, she were lying hurt somewhere by the roadside.

"I rushed into the wide hall. From the second floor I heard her father give a great cry. I sprang up the stairs.

"'The ignorant, low-bred clown!' He was standing outside Anne's door and fairly screamed the words.

"I ran to him but he brushed me aside.

"'That this should come to me!' He waved a bit of paper above his head. 'He, the son, the grandson of a murderer!' I took the paper from him." Mr. Claiborne raised his hand to his forehead and turned so that his face was in shadow. "The words written on the paper were but few. Nevertheless they were the end of all things to me. Anne had written:

"Forgive me. I have gone away with Jim Shaw. We shall be married to-night on the mountain."

Fanny, who had been listening motionless and in silence, repeated the name, Shaw.

"Yes, Jim Shaw was the giant's name. The Shaws are a family—more properly a clan—who live on House Mountain and their record is one of violence. The first Shaw fled to that mountain before a sheriff's posse. They are all big men and, strangely, not normally unkind nor cruel. But all have been cursed with a temper which, when aroused, ceases to be temper and becomes madness. Jim Shaw's father and his grandfather had both killed a human being and those who knew had seen signs of the family curse in Jim when on the football field.

"Two years went by and we heard little or no news of Anne. Then some mountain folk, coming to town, said that she had borne a son. Her father did not relent. He declared he never wished to see either his daughter nor his grandson.

"A third year had passed when one day a mountaineer rode into town, his horse as wet as if he had swum him through the river.

"The curse had fallen!

"There had been a fight. Corn whisky of course had played its part. Jim had attacked a man. Anne had tried to save him from himself, but the Shaw madness was upon him." Mr. Claiborne spoke so low that Fanny leaned far toward him to catch his words. "Jim had turned on her and blindly plunged his knife into her breast."

The old man rose and with his back to Fanny found matches and lighted the candles. When he turned again to her his face was calm.

"The doctor and I, though we rode furiously and had fresh horses awaiting us at the foot of the mountain, reached her too late. Jim had fled—and Anne was gone."

Mr. Claiborne ceased speaking; his hands, now unclasped, hung idle before him, his white head was bent low.

Fanny rose. "There ain't nothing I know to say, Mr. Claiborne, except—except that I know why you have been so good as to tell me."

"And selfish, dear child. I could not bear that Anne's son——" He caught and held her outstretched hand in both his own. "There is so much of Anne in his eyes, in the good breadth of his face, that I feel he isn't a Shaw. And now that you know, you can guard him from the curse. Does he—does he drink?"

"Oh, no! Tex says he's on the water wagon for life."

"Ah! that is well. And my dear, he is considerate—the first instinct of a gentleman. He has been walking back and forth outside for the last ten minutes. Consideration—a good sign—a good sign."

"You called him a gentleman," Fanny said wistfully. "Of course I know we ain't real class. He said you was different. But I never knew——"

"You are two young and, I can see, happy people," Mr. Claiborne bowed over the hand he still held. "And I shall remember all my life this half hour spent with you."

Later that evening, when the small shuttle train again rattled over the trestle on its way to meet the Florida express, Texas turned to Fanny.

"By the way, I lose a fur coat, don't I honey? Nobody let out so much as a peep about the Shaw murder."

"Yes, Tex, I win, but I'll pay," Fanny said in her pleasantly final way. "It was worth a box of Havanas any time to feel for half an hour like your—your father made me feel—that I really and truly was Lady Frances Something-or-Other."

Meet this couple again in "Fanny Burke and the Statesman," in the next issue.

SAFETY FIRST IN THE AIR

SAFETY in the air has become an important matter with the increase of commercial flying in the United States. A report prepared for the department of commerce by the Manufacturers' Aircraft Association states that last year there were 1,200 aircraft engaged in commercial aviation and that these planes during the first six months of the year flew a total of three and a quarter million miles with forty serious accidents from which resulted the deaths of fourteen persons and the injury of fifty-two others. The report lists six requisites for safe flying, as follows:

1. A machine sound aërodynamically and structurally.
2. An engine of sufficient power.
3. A competent, conservative pilot and navigator.
4. Air ports and emergency landing fields sufficiently close together to insure gliding to safety.
5. Nation-wide weather forecasts specialized and adapted to the needs of flyers.
6. National air-route charts.

Each of the forty accidents was caused by a deficiency in one of these needs. Seventeen of them were charged to faults of pilots, and the association recommends that the government examine and license civilian pilots. Two of the accidents were caused by lack of weather reports, stunt flying caused eight, lack of proper inspection caused eleven, and two were the result of carelessness on the flying field. Recommendations of the association call for the creation of more air ports—there now are only 271 land and water air terminals in the United States and its possessions—the limiting of "stunting" to certain areas by the government, and strictly enforced Federal rules for the policing of landing fields.

The Spark in the Tinder

By Holman Day

Author of "The Psychomancers," "On the Long Leash," Etc.

WHAT HAPPENED IN PREVIOUS CHAPTERS.

A man lay dead in the Brassua wilderness. There were two bullet wounds in his head and a rifle on the ground at his side. Was it murder, or had he been killed by a chance shot from the rifle of "Skiddy" Trask? John Lang, Skiddy's hunting companion, a successful lawyer, thought the latter possible and decided not to report finding the body. Not far away they found a woodsman, Onésime Ouellette, pinned by a felled tree. When released his rifle was missing and he told a wild tale of seeing a beautiful woman in the timberland—but wasn't sure that she wasn't a vision born of delirium. He took the hunters to his cabin and when next morning Lang gave him his card and offered legal help should the other ever need it, his gratitude was boundless. Before they started for the city Skiddy broached the matter that had caused him to accompany Lang—he and Reba Donworth wanted the lawyer to release the girl from her engagement to marry Lang, so that she could marry Skiddy. Secure in his self-esteem and knowing Skiddy to be a ne'er-do-well owned body and soul by his uncle, old Serenus Skidmore Trask, owner of the Brassua region, Lang refused scornfully. When he met Reba in the city she confessed that she loved Skiddy, but Lang had no idea of giving her up. That evening at the Talisman Club the two men had angry words. Lang was called to the Trask mansion and learned that rough old Serenus Trask had married a beautiful girl of unknown antecedents. Trask made a new will providing for his wife and instructed Lang to use a legal "twist bit" to force Skiddy to marry Maravista Blake, heiress of the Tulandic timberlands. At an interview next day Skiddy, disregarding consequences, refused, and reproached the lawyer bitterly for helping the old man to ruin his chance for happiness. Later Lang was surprised to learn that Skiddy had accepted a thousand dollars from his uncle to visit Maravista, but instead Skiddy went North, became involved in an unsuccessful bootlegging operation, learned that his uncle had been married by Elder Ashael, called by the woodsmen a "Charmer Man," and bought information that would enable him to blackmail Anita, his uncle's wife, by using the name of Mack Templeton, a dishonest prohibition agent who had disappeared from his usual haunts. To escape arrest he had to work in a lumber camp, and after a period of harsh treatment returned to the city half crazed, encountered Lang at the Talisman Club, told him that instead of killing him he would leave him to a worse punishment, and threatened to commit suicide. Later that evening he went to the Trask mansion and saw Anita privately. The other guests, among whom were Lang, were startled by a shot, and Lang and Trask found Skiddy lying dead. A revolver dangled from Anita's fingers. She said that he had shot himself, but was arrested and Lang agreed to defend her. Lang became interested in one of the witnesses in the case, the strange Elder Ashael. Meanwhile the dead man in the woods had been identified as Mack Templeton. Ouellette was arrested for the murder, taken to the city, and appealed to Lang to defend him, which the lawyer promised to do. After her acquittal Anita admitted to her husband that she had been married to Templeton. She claimed that he had been killed by a man who had followed Templeton and her when she went to interview him in the woods. Excitement caused Trask's death and soon Lang heard rumors that he was trying to marry Anita for her fortune. After a stormy meeting with some of his detractors he went into the Brassua woods to rest and get a grip on himself.

(A Six-Part Story—Part IV.)

CHAPTER XXV.

ON ANGEL KNOB.

FOR a time John Lang, tramping into the heart of the woods of the North, kept looking behind as the twisting path took him among the trees. It was like a man making sure that the doors which insured his privacy were closed as he passed through. He felt a comfort in beholding the trees sift together and barricade the aisles in the rear as he turned into new vistas.

He did not hurry. Time was for the city man. He had been a slave of the clock. He was dismissing the matters of the city for the peace of his soul. He had no particular destination except the hills—the rim of the hills.

He shared the swagon stew of the woodsfolk whom he happened upon. He lingered here and there, o' days, when he found new

friends who perceived in him only the usual voyager. He was sociable with them in reserved fashion. There were trappers, curing the winter's spoil and making it ready for the auction market. There were gum pickers and ship-knee hewers and there were scattered camps of pulpwood choppers. Also there were men who seemed to have nothing to do except to exist—men who looked askance at him as if they were wondering whether at last somebody had come to claim them in the name of the law.

He found lodgings for his nights with all sorts of men.

He did not know whether the woods he tramped through belonged to the Double T or not. He asked no questions. He did not care. He was keeping his worries about the affairs of the Trasks as much out of his mind as possible.

He did not know whether what had come upon his mind was peace or merely animal contentment in leaving to the day in hand the matters belonging to that day.

He marched on toward the looming hills.

He found a sick man sitting on a log, panting. The fellow said he was the lone fire warden in charge of the station on Borestone—he pointed to the craggy peak which overshadowed the glen in which they were. It was his duty to report the fires which he could locate from his aerie—a post which commanded thousands of acres.

A sudden tempest that was shot through with lightning shafts had swept across Borestone. His cabin had been set on fire by a crashing bolt and he was left stunned and scorched; his heliograph had been destroyed. He could not report his plight by a message to be relayed from station to station. Therefore he had come stumbling and sliding down, going for help as best he could.

"I've got to get to the Charmer Man's," he told Lang. "He can cure me!"

The name had no significance for the lawyer at first.

"He's Elder Ashael of Angel Knob. It's yonder. I have done my best but I can't get there without help."

An old man in a white frock that matched his hair and beard—a patriarch who was serenely indifferent to the stares of a courtroom crowd—the lawyer remembered old Ashael. And remembering he was reminded of his vague resolve to seek out that strange man of the woods when occasion offered an opportunity.

Lang put out his hands and helped the stricken warden to his feet and supported him as they walked along.

"I'm thanking God that you came to me," said the man, almost whimpering. "I've had an awful tug of it alone. But I knew I'd be all right if I could only get to the Charmer Man! Have you heard about him?"

"No!" Lang was hiding his identity; he trusted to his new beard and his rough garments to make him another personage than the one whom Ashael might remember as the counsel for the defense.

"Then you're sure a new one in these parts. He does good to all men, without money and without price. That's the wording of the writing on his door. There are a lot of folks who don't believe that faith and good works can heal the ills of the body," chattered the sick man. It was plain that he was repeating in his own style a phrase that had become familiar to him.

"I always read my Bible every day. There's a lot of time for reading and for thinking, too, up on the peak of old Borestone. I don't mean that Elder Ashael has got a monopoly on healing. Nobody has got a monopoly, mister. God didn't fix the thing that way when He planned. The blessing is open for all those who know how to go and get it.

"Once the elders of the church came and prayed beside the sick bed of my mother when the doctor had given her up—and she got well. The Bible tells all about how to do it with the help of the elders of the church. And there's another book that tells how. I'm going to buy it when I can get to where they sell 'em. You never know what's going to happen. There I was, sitting all calm, and the lightning hit me."

In spite of his garrulity the man was very weak. Lang halted, to get a firmer grip on the patient whom he was half carrying.

"How far is it to a regular doctor, my friend?"

"I don't know, and I don't care. If a regular doctor stood right there where that bush is I wouldn't let him lay a finger on me. Take me to old Ashael. That's the path."

The trees were very clearly blazed on that path which led off from the road the two men were following. Each blaze mark was a cross cut into the wood through the bark; the mark was painted white. "You can see 'em in the darkest night," said the warden.

"And day or night, it's all the same to Ashael where his welcome is concerned. 'Come to me by the way of the cross,' he says. That's what he calls it—'The Way of the Cross.' "

They struggled up the slope. On the poll of the hill there was a log camp that was surrounded by trim white birches. "There's fifty of 'em. He calls 'em his angel band. But he isn't a nut," stated the man earnestly.

Ashael came from his door as the two approached the camp. He hastened to help Lang with his burden, but after a few steps the warden pushed away their hands. "Let me try to walk alone! I feel better just because I have laid my eyes on you," he assured Ashael.

But his weakness overmastered his will. He staggered and the old man saved him from falling. "Brother, there are times when faith has the wings of an eagle, but there are other times when faith needs good crutches," he warned, and he turned on Lang a very sensible and understanding smile. He gave no indication that he remembered the lawyer. He listened to the recital of the tale of trouble.

"I thought that perhaps I could make myself well. So I stayed up there in a brush shelter," confessed the warden. "But I had to give in—and I have been thanking God that the woods are still wet and safe from fires, even though He couldn't see His way to curing me."

"We'll see what can be done, not presuming to ask God for anything except what He may grant in His own good time. Come in with me!"

Lang sat down on the porch of the camp to wait and rest himself. He pulled out his pipe but he put it back into his pocket before he lighted it. He heard the mumble of a voice within the camp as if an earnest prayer were being offered up and he had the queer feeling that burning tobacco might be profanation of some kind of a service that was going on.

After a time Ashael came out. "The poor fellow is asleep," he reported. "He needs it. His pain is not so bad, at any rate!"

"Then he isn't all well and kicking, eh?" The lawyer's cynicism was revealed in his tone. He looked away from Ashael when he expressed that bantering surprise. A few moments later Lang was conscious of astonishment that was not of the simulated sort. The Charmer Man had not replied. Lang turned his head and looked into the full blue eyes that were regarding him with an expression that was not exactly understandable; but there was undisguised humor in the eyes.

"I am only a counsel for the plaintiff, appearing before the court of the Most High God, my friend. In your practice you are accustomed to wait patiently for the action of the court, aren't you?"

"You know who I am, do you?"

"You are John Lang."

"You were in court for so short a time that——"

Ashael went on when the lawyer hesitated. "Perhaps we mutually interested each other, though the time was so short."

"I'll confess that I was greatly impressed by you, sir. I'll own up that this meeting, more or less by chance, is very pleasing. It was in my mind to hunt you up some day."

"For what reason?"

"I don't know. I will confess, as you realize must be the case, that my profession makes me curious in regard to men and their affairs," pursued the lawyer. "I'd like to know how it is you're here in these woods, a man of your apparent intelligence, doing what it is you're doing, according to reports."

"And you would also like to know, I presume, what my rightful name is, seeing that I know yours."

"I certainly would."

"Before you leave my camp, you're going to ask me, aren't you, to tell nobody that John Lang is in these parts?" pressed Ashael.

"Yes! I am not a fugitive, you understand!" The lawyer twisted his mouth into a smile which had no humor in it. "But, there are persons who want to hurt me; they'd like to locate me!"

"I understand. And I agree with you as to the good judgment a man may use in avoiding enemies. I'll keep *your* secret because I want to help you. And you'll keep *my* secret—because I'm not going to tell you anything about myself."

Ashael made his declaration mildly. But the calm finality in his tone made the rebuff of a sort that irritated his visitor. Lang pulled forth his pipe and lighted it and did not mind because the smoke, that he puffed out vigorously in drifting clouds, went trailing across the face of his host.

There was a long silence. A tufted cater-

pillar crawled along the floor of the porch. Lang scuffed a ruthless foot across the worm.

"You should have allowed it to go along till it had preached its little sermon, sir."

"What do you mean?" demanded the lawyer.

"It would have turned into a butterfly a bit later. In this life we have eyes which can see the winged creature of beauty rise from the worm; in the other life we have an enlightened vision which can see the soul separate from the corruption of the body. You are tempted, these days, to grind all things under your heel, aren't you?"

"Why do you think that of me?"

"You plainly showed your feelings when you angrily set foot upon that worm."

"Let it stand that way. You may be right!"

"And yet you helped that poor fellow to my door!"

"He helped me, too, by being my guide. I had a curiosity to see you again. We have all three split even." He rose. "I'm going along. Good-by!"

"A moment, please! Have you lost real and honest desire to help others in this world? Are you no longer 'Generous John?'"

"I never was. I'm not now. I have had authoritative statements on that point from those who claim to know me best. I wouldn't turn my hand over to help any man alive."

"The man in there, asleep, is on his way to be healed. But I am worried about you, sir."

"You needn't be. I'm feeling quite healthy."

"You are very ill, my brother."

"Do you propose to offer your services?"

"You are sick with a trouble that you yourself must heal. By putting aside your own will and giving honest help to humankind you could win back to health. Make real friends and help them unselfishly."

"I have no real friends," insisted Lang, stubborn in his revolt against all mankind. But he turned from the old man and showed acute and friendly appreciation of a thrush's lilting song.

"Ah, you confess that you are a brother of the birds, at least," declared Ashael. "You are in a sad state in respect to your brotherhood with man, however. You must begin at the foot of the ladder of love and work your way up. Why not be humble to that extent, friend, and be no more at the first than a brother of the birds? I can think of a way."

"I don't follow you!"

When Ashael talked further Lang was more perplexed; the topic seemed to have nothing to do with what the old man had been talking about a few moments before.

"If you know anything about the woods, sir, you understand that May is a dangerous season. The dried slash of the winter choppings is everywhere. The spring hurries as fast as she can to offset the carelessness of man. She places her fire breaks. She coaxes up the patches of the box-berry greens and puts leaves on the witch hobble and the moose wood. But the work takes time, the best she can do! Then a fool with a pipe or a camp fire lights the fuse of the bomb! Away the conflagration goes! And in your present mood in regard to men—and women too, maybe—I don't suppose you would care how many acres of the Widow Trask's lands are burned or how much the barons of the Great Northern lose in the way of pulp timber or whether the fat and homely heiress of Jonas Blake is obliged to buy a husband on the bargain counter because of her loss in standing timber?"

"No, I don't care," returned Lang sourly, but he was looking with new interest at Ashael.

"Perhaps not, for you'd know that the Widow Trask and the others would not lose all. But there are many—there are thousands who would lose everything—homes and their lives. No, no! Don't say again that you don't care. I'm not talking about human beings. I'm talking about the birds, your brothers."

He returned Lang's unfriendly stare with composure. "I'm talking of only humble friends but I am not jesting with you, sir. I have told you that you must start at the foot of the ladder of love in order to make yourself well again. I'm merely giving you a prescription—you must fill it and take it of your own volition. All these thousands of acres are left unguarded by a fire warden until that poor chap in there can go back to Borestone or can get word to another warden. If you should take his place on the mountain for a time, you could keep watch."

"You think, Elder Ashael, that it would be a mighty good thing for me to go up on that mountain and look out over the world and do some hard thinking in regard to myself. That's your idea, isn't it?"

"I compliment your astuteness, my friend!"

"The man told me that his house was burned."

"He spoke, however, of a brush shelter. You have boasted of your health of body. You'll feel the heartbeat of Mother World if you lie on the ground. You'll see farther into the heart of the heavens if you'll stay out from under a wooden roof for a time."

"He said that his heliograph had been destroyed."

"I have one here in my camp. I have used it to send messages of good cheer to the lonely chaps on the mountaintops. I will lend it to you."

"I'll say this," admitted Lang frankly. "You're a good operator—getting at me as you have done. Your name 'Charmer Man' fits you. I see what you hope is going to happen in my case. But I'm distinctly telling you that when I take this job I'm doing it only for the sake of the birds. Let that be understood between us."

"It was my own suggestion, friend. I'm not going back on it!"

Ashael went into his camp. When he came out bringing the heliograph he said, "The poor chap is awake. He tells me that he managed to save his supplies in the lean-to. They are cached near the brush shelter. Do you understand how to operate this instrument?"

"We learned all those things at Plattsburg," snapped Lang. He picked up his pack, adjusted it and started away, the instrument under his arm.

"That trail to the mountain is plain," called Ashael.

"Thank you."

"If you feel like giving me a morning hello when the sun is bright, or a sunset word or two to say that all is right up there, I'll be glad."

"I'll probably have nothing to say." Lang was feeling irritation that he did not understand very well. He was in the mood of one who had had something put over on him. The pretext of the service for the birds was a very thin veneer for Ashael's success in being engaged rather informally as a physician of the soul.

The lawyer desired to keep on clinging to his bitter grudge against all men. He took that grudge up the mountain with him. He told himself that he wanted to stay on the mountain for a time in order to avoid the whole pestiferous pack of humanity.

It was a tough climb, and it took up his full attention when he came to the ledgy cliffs. He came across several lethargic spotted adders sunning themselves on the ledges. He was glad to note all the difficulties and the deterrents of the ascent. They assured his privacy.

That night, from the peak of Borestone, he watched the sunset die and saw the flashing waters of the wind-swept lakes fade in the obscurity of the twilight. When the stars came out he slept peacefully on a bed of spruce boughs under the brushwood roof.

CHAPTER XXVI.

THOUGH THE KING WAS DEAD, THE QUEEN LIVED.

The headquarters camp of the Double T was on the Hagas waters, a lake whose inlets and outlets made it look like a great octopus sprawling in the forest. The camp was the center of a web of tote roads and streams.

There were numerous buildings—horse hovels, cook and bunk houses, wangan or store camps, shelters for machinery. On a hill that was crowned with towering spruces was a big, eight-sided house of logs, a sort of a fortress in the forest, the home and office camp from which Serenus Skidmore Trask had administered his affairs through all the years.

There was a new tyrant on the throne in the octagon house. Anita Trask sat in the big chair at the broad table and the various bosses of the Double T came to her and reported and received their orders and went away.

Some of them had swaggered a bit before they went in—had cocked their heads and had had something to say in asides about taking orders from a girl, even though she did own the Double T. They were prepared to be condescending out of their knowledge of the practical side of lumbering.

They came out from her presence, blinking with the uncertainty of those who were not just certain of themselves and were considerably humbled. They had come up against a mistress who fixed their attention firmly with her round, unwavering eyes and who let it be known that she was of the woods, the same as they were. She said that she did not understand the details of

the timber business and should not interfere with any man who was producing results.

She was just as frank in informing her subalterns that she should keep an eye on them by the employment of walking bosses who knew their business and who would report to her regularly. When one man ventured to remonstrate that he did not need any "spy" to keep him straight, she immediately told the man that he was through with the Double T. There was another boss in the office at the time and after the crestfallen objector had gone away she ordered that boss to pass the word that her agents were not to be called spies.

One of the men who visited her on business informed himself—though he was very careful about telling anybody else after learning how quick she was on the trigger in the matter of discharging men—that unless something very serious was the trouble with his eyesight he had seen that same girl across the border at Portage Lewrie, helping a chap with a black mustache to run a raffle game at a carnival.

John Lang, with more subtle analysis of her nature than the woodsmen could compass, had recognized in her the avatar of that compelling feminine quality which has raised Jane Shores and Du Barrys from the ditch to despotism all through the ages. But the story told often by the head cook of the Double T camps revealed even a stranger quality in her. The cook described the affair with considerable awe.

She had espied the cats that were clustered about the funnel of the cook house where it emerged through the roof; the cats were gathered there to warm themselves in the nip of the May evening. The cook warned her against being sociable with those cats. He explained that all domestic cats grow wild after they have been in the woods for a time. He said that they would come to no one of their own accord, and if a person tried to pick one up that person would be clawed into ribbons.

"But she looked up at them cats," said the cook, "and she twittered a funny call and after a few minutes down they came a-straggling; and they humped up their backs and leaned against her legs and purred and meowed all sociable and free. And she picked up the two toughest old toms and marched off to her camp with one under each arm. And any day you step into the office you'll see 'em setting on the table admiring her but ready at all times to gouge a whole clawful of meat out of any hand but hers if they can reach that hand."

The cook was telling the story again to a new man in camp. It was the rosy time o' day just before the twilight came.

"And to prove it, there she comes and there are the cats!"

Anita was walking down slowly from the octagon camp. In the crook of each arm she carried a cat. The animals were big and black and in their sooty faces their green eyes showed lustrously large. At the edge of the fringe of woods the stump of a great pine had been sawed level and fitted with a back and chair arms; Serenus Trask had used it for his outdoor throne when the weather invited. His widow took a seat there, holding the cats on her knees. They seemed to be expecting something in the way of diversion. Their tails were jerking and their whiskers twitched.

The cook swore under his breath. "It seems to be her notion of a good way to settle her dinner—but I'll be damned if I like it—seeing it every evening!"

A few rabbits, venturing in single file, came hopping from the undergrowth, emboldened by the twilight to seek the fresh herbage of the clearing.

Anita loosed the black cats. They leaped lithely and silently and each pounced on a fleeing rabbit. Setting strong jaws they broke the backs of their victims so that the rabbits were deprived of the only defense which those timid beasts possess—their sturdy hind legs. But the cats did not slay the rabbits at once. They cuffed the animals about the sward. A terror-stricken rabbit wails as piteously as an infant in pain. The awful cries continued after the cats had dragged the wounded animals under a camp's porch. Anita was laughing aloud.

At a little distance from her a man stopped, awaiting audience. He was one of the field agents.

"Why are you scowling like that?" she demanded sharply. "Don't you enjoy good sport?"

"Yes—oh, yes!" he said, obsequiously apologizing by tone and manner. "But I hate to hear 'em take on so bad!"

"In the woods you must go by the laws of the woods. The big trees crowd out the little ones, the big animals eat the lit-

tle ones. It's the same outside the woods among men and women, only they gloss over their doings. Why lie about it?" She caught herself up and apologized aloud to her sense of reserve, showing no regard for the man's feelings. "You mustn't think I'm getting confidential with an understrapper. I was only saying things to myself. What's the business?"

"We have located that Lawyer Lang according to your orders, madam."

She was jarred out of the pose of autocratic dignity she had assumed since she had come into the woods of the Double T. She leaped from her stump throne. "Where is he?"

"On the top of Borestone! A message was helioed from the station up there to the station on Spencer. Spencer phoned to Castonia settlement that it was a telegram to the city—a telegram to a Judge Cleaves to have him tell Onésime Ouellette—the Canuck they're holding for the Templeton murder—not to worry but to keep waiting all patient and he would get free."

He misinterpreted the expression that made even her handsome face ugly at that moment.

"The helio didn't say who was sending the message, I'll admit. But I've got good friends to give me tips as to messages in this section and I reckon you're paying me to use my brains and put two and two together. The papers all said that Lang had taken the Ouellette case to defend. Who else but Lang would be sending that word from Borestone?"

Anita was now in command of herself. "This Lawyer Lang would do better to send a message to me, explaining why he ran away and left my husband's legal affairs to take care of themselves."

"We all understand how you feel about him, after what you have told us, if you'll allow me to say as much, madam! He's only wasting his time on that Frenchman—and I don't care how good a lawyer Lang is!"

"I don't care to hear the case mentioned, sir. And the only interest I have in Lang is to find him and oblige him to attend to his duties. I must go to the top of Borestone, wherever it is."

"It's an awful climb, madam!"

"I'm not afraid of mountains or of men when the business of the Double T is to be attended to, sir. I will start at daybreak with you as a guide. Have the horses ready."

He flourished an obedient hand and bowed and walked away.

She called to the black cats and they came from under the porch, licking blood from their lips and followed her up the slope to the octagon camp. She hurried in and closed the door behind her and leaned against it, jealous of her privacy. She was trembling; her face was flushed; her red lips were apart.

"John! John!" she whispered over and over, caressing the name with soft fervor.

CHAPTER XXVII.

ON THE MATTER OF THIEVES.

The mistress of the barony of the Double T rode across her lands in the glory of the May sunshine. Her single squire, Dawson, whom she had appointed to be her guide followed at a respectful distance.

He had brought the horses to the octagon camp before sunrise but he was obliged to wait for a long time. He ventured to ask a woman, who appeared and set about her work of tidying the screened porch, if she would tell her mistress that he was waiting.

"She knows you're here. She has been getting ready for an hour! She's primping as if she had a fashion party on her mind."

The squire had plenty of opportunity to study the attire of the lady of the Double T as they rode along. She rode astride, to be sure, but she wore divided skirts of rich, green fabric, instead of her usual riding breeches. Her hat was green, of the same material as the habit and the hat had a broad brim; a drooping white plume hung as far as her shoulder. The feather was a bit archaic, according to modern fashions, but it was peculiarly effective in her case.

According to the man's humble opinion her rig was a most extraordinary one for mountain climbing—and he had warned her that the climb was a particularly tough one. She had probably given up that idea, he told himself.

She turned in her saddle to speak to him. He was a matter-of-fact individual, bronzed and bearded, and was not subject to especially vivid emotions. But the beauty of that glowing face under the green brim of the hat sent a thrill through him. It did not seem like anything real—a girl of that

sort—thus attired—in the woods—he told himself.

"Dawson, how far is it to Borestone?"

"A matter of ten woods miles, madam."

"And after we leave the horses it's not an easy climb, you say?"

"Only for squirrels, ma'am!"

She did not appear to be at all discomposed by the information.

When they came to any sort of an elevation that afforded a view of the stretch of forest she stopped and asked if what they beheld was her land. Every time when he assured her again that they could not as yet see beyond the boundaries of her territory she raised her chin proudly.

"And one can look for a long distance from the top of Borestone, I suppose?"

"For miles and miles, madam!"

"And much of what one can see from up there is still my land, eh?"

"Most of it."

When they were well along on their way they arrived at a main depot camp. She dismounted and inspected the stores in the various buildings. The keeper of the camp escorted her and explained. Many cats trailed him. He said that he treated them well because they kept the mice from the stores.

"And I wish I had cats big enough to keep away other kinds of critters than mice," he confided with surly emphasis. He was a man who had been affected by the isolation of his lonely job and had become misanthropic and inclined to make much of small matters. "Those critters I'm speaking of are what's knocking the profits off the Double T operations for you, ma'am."

She turned on him, her eyes blazing. "If anything is taking profits from the Double T, my man, I should have been told. I have my own reasons for wanting profits to be very large from now on."

On her ride through her possessions she had been meditating deeply. She had her own estimate of the nature of man—an estimate that had been pounded into hard conviction on the anvil of experience after having been put through the fires of her trials. There was a man on the top of Borestone—and he was only a man, she told herself, even though he had shown toward her a reserve such as no other man had ever displayed when she invited. He had resisted her. But would he resist the offering that she was going to lay at his feet? She was going up to that god on the mountain with a votive gift. Even John Lang had his price! She knew it—she was going with it in her hand.

But here was a lackey who was telling her that her possessions were in a way to be diminished.

"It's this way," he said when she angrily demanded facts. "We have a lot of small depots—scattered camps—where it ain't good sense to pay for special guards. And the squatters come and steal from those camps."

"Put on guards—with guns," she commanded.

"I beg your pardon, ma'am," ventured Dawson. "But Mr. Trask didn't think it was worth while. Paying men to guard small stocks would come to more than what the stealing amounts to—twice over. Jim, here, has grown to be sort of cracked on the subject."

"I'm for the interests of the Double T," insisted the keeper.

"I don't care if it's only pennyworths they're stealing," declared the mistress sharply. "I'll have it stopped. I must have all my money. Get guns. Shoot!"

"Kill 'em?" queried the keeper, squinting his eyes evilly and showing satisfaction.

"Yes!"

"You're the kind after my own heart, ma'am! You're a boss to be proud of. Will you back me up in all I do?"

"I will."

"I'd like to have you feel a little proud of *me*, humble though I am, ma'am. So I'm going to tell you that I have done something to one gang that is fixing 'em without spending money on guards and guns. I dosed a fifty-pound box of bulk cooking soda with arsenic and let 'em steal it."

"You devilish son of a bobcat! That's murder!" exploded the indignant Dawson.

"Did it kill them?" inquired Anita, unperturbed.

"I didn't go out to kill 'em! I'm a slicker operator than that! I made the dose middling light—enough to make 'em sick and keep 'em growing sicker—and they don't know yet what's the matter. It's the rat-poison idea—don't let 'em die in the house! They'll move away because they think the locality isn't healthy—or else they'll get so bad that the State pauper overseers will come and get 'em. Same thing—good riddance! I'll keep on and drive out all the

thieves that are taking away profits from the Double T."

"This is going to make a lot of trouble if it isn't stopped, Mrs. Trask," declared Dawson.

"For whom? For me? For the Double T? Dawson, the thief is the only guilty party. We are not responsible if he is hurt by what he steals. My man, you are not telling this to anybody else, are you?" she asked the keeper.

"Only to you, ma'am!"

"And to Dawson," she added crisply, and said with meaning: "Therefore, it's a matter that will not be talked about." She went out of the camp and mounted her horse. "What are we paying you?" she asked the depot guard who stood in the door, smirking at her.

"Thirty-five a month—and my keep, of course!"

"I'll tell the pay clerk to make it fifty from now on."

"Ma'am, I'll promise you results. If you're so minded, and want to see how a good plan is working, you might swing around by way of the Pugwash Road and that takes you through the settlement I'm speaking of. But I'm advising you against sampling any hot biscuits!"

"Dawson, show me how to go by way of the Pugwash Road," she commanded. As she started away, the keeper had another bit of information for her.

"Old Ashael of Angel Knob is trying his hand on 'em, so I hear, making regular trips. But I guess he's beginning to figure that the devil is beating him to it."

Her countenance did not reveal that any news about Elder Ashael interested her.

She had nothing more to say to Dawson as the two rode on. He had been keeping at a respectful distance behind her; now he was even more a laggard, as if he were avoiding anything like companionship.

The settlement to which they came was a straggling hamlet of shacks and small log huts. It was one of those squatter neighborhoods so familiar in the woods of the North, a community of consanguinity where inbreeding had had its results. It was a family, rather than a village. The keeper who had dosed the soda with arsenic understood well how the loot would be used as a common supply as long as it lasted.

Most of the men, women and children who were in sight were sitting stolidly in the sunlight as if they were hoping that the rays might give them back their health and strength. They were pathetic spectacles—so shrunken, wasted and cadaverous that they were fairly hideous. They looked at the radiant woman who rode past but there was no particular expression in their sunken eyes.

Slow poisoning by arsenic is attended by certain characteristic results. The flesh melts away. The muscles become atrophied. Here was a community of living skeletons.

The mistress of the Double T pulled her horse to a slow walk. She displayed a great deal of interest in what she saw, but very little concern. Dawson averted his gaze. He looked sick.

"Do I own this land?" Anita asked him.

"Yes, madam. These folks are only squatters."

She stopped her horse opposite one log house where several persons were collected just outside the door. "I own this land," she informed them. "This is not a good place for you to live. I ask you to move away."

They showed no sign that they were impressed and they made no reply.

"Wake up, you fellows!" she cried sharply. "Why doesn't one of you speak up and answer me?"

"I reckon they're too near dead to do much talking, madam," Dawson suggested, putting into his tone as much rebuke of the new punitive tactics as he dared. "They don't pay any attention to orders to move away. I've heard your husband tongue-lash 'em in good shape—and he sure could handle his tongue! But they wouldn't move, even for him."

She showed some incredulity when she received that information.

"That's right!" insisted Dawson. "There's some kind of a law about squatters. Driving 'em off is more expensive than letting 'em stay."

"But I—*I* propose to drive them off!" She raised her riding crop. "I own the Double T. I order you—all of you—to get off my lands. I don't propose to have my lands cluttered up with such buildings."

If he could have understood better Dawson would have known that Anita was bearing a gift to a man on a mountaintop and was passionately desirous of having that gift without blemish; it was going to the extreme of meticulous mania in a certain

matter but she was in the mood to go to extremes. She railed at them; her voice was shrill.

Elder Ashael came slowly from the door of the log house. He was very grave and he raised his hand in protest. "There's death within doors here, Widow Trask!"

The rebuke did not calm her; the emphasis he had put on the title which he applied to her roused her like a taunt, for just then she was exulting in her youth, her beauty and her power.

"Do you have any influence over these wretches who are trespassing on my lands?"

"I have been trying to influence them."

"Have you ever told them that it is wrong to steal my land?"

"I have told them that it is wrong to steal anything. I have tried to show them the way toward the truth and the right. I have told them that they would certainly be punished for doing wrong things."

Men, women and children rose and dragged themselves nearer the scene of the colloquy. They were not surveying Ashael with any sort of amity. It was plain that they had not relished his past arraignment of them for doing wrong. Some of the men were muttering in surly fashion. One raised his voice.

"One of you has always been saying that God ain't willing to let us do something for ourselves against them that has been trying to grind us down. And now here comes another one who says that the Double T won't even let us have a quill pig's chance in these woods. You don't herd quill pigs and drive 'em off, even if they do girdle the trees!"

This thinly veiled rebelliousness angered Anita still more.

"If you have any influence at all in this settlement, sir," she said to Ashael, "I'm going to ask you to use it and get these people away. If they will go quietly I will send horses to cart them and their belongings to some other locality, off my lands. If they don't agree to go that way I'll send men here with dynamite to blow these shacks up and make these persons shift for themselves. That's final!"

She whirled her horse with intent to go on, but Ashael put his hand on the reins. "You are young and impetuous, Widow Trask, and are new to your task and its responsibilities. Therefore, I will tell you something for your guidance."

"I don't care for your advice, sir!"

He preserved his mildness but he kept his hand on the reins. "It isn't merely advice. It's the law. One should be warned against breaking the law." He gave her keen and shrewd scrutiny. "If you were in closer touch with the attorney for the Trask estate at this time I would not be called on to give you the law. These persons in this settlement are, to a certain extent, State paupers. You have no right to use force and set them and their belongings down on the lands of somebody else. You'll be liable under the pauper laws.

"You haven't the right, even, without due process of law, to evict them from your lands. Your husband knew better. He did not care to go to the expense. That poor chap's reference to the porcupines is enlightening on that point—it costs money to exterminate wild animals. It is the State law that squatters who have been on lands long enough to make what is called 'improvements' cannot be thrown off unless those improvements are paid for by the actual owner of the land."

"Do you call all this an 'improvement?'" asked Anita scornfully, with a sweep of her crop to indicate the scene.

"In the eyes of the law, yes! Even the scratching of the soil around yonder stumps where they have put in their poor crops, that's a legal improvement of the land. You must respect the rights of these people, Widow Trask."

She looked as if she would like to lash him across his face because of his insistence on that title. "And that's the kind of influence you're using on these squatters is it—influencing them to oppose me?"

"I am determined to render unto Cæsar all things that are due to Cæsar. But I am just as determined to have these folks hold to the rights that the law gives them."

"Do you live on my lands?"

"I do."

"A squatter?"

"I am in exactly the same position as these settlers—and all the settlers in this region are suffering from the wicked injustice of things as they stand!" He showed a flash of righteous anger.

She welcomed that anger as if it gave her an opportunity to indulge in her own resentment.

"How do you dare to say that it is unjust for me to keep my own for myself?"

"I offered Serenus Trask money—I begged him over and over again to take money for the little acre on which I live. He would not sell to me. He would not sell land in these woods to anybody else. None of the timber barons will sell. They will not allow a squatter to buy his honest rights."

"And for a blamed good reason," volunteered Dawson. "Our crop is timber and we don't propose to have it in danger all the time from the fires of these devilish, lazy fools who'd rather clear a tract by burning the trees than by using enough elbow grease to chop 'em."

"And if you are encouraging that sort of business you are not a safe man to be allowed on my lands," declared Anita hotly. "You say that you are in the same class as these others and you seem to glory in it! I order you to leave—and if you'll lead away your friends, it will be better for the whole of you."

She struck her horse which leaped forward, crowding past Ashael.

When they were well on their way Dawson spoke. "If you'll allow me——" Then he hesitated.

"You talked good sense a little while ago. Go on! I hope you're going to talk more sense!"

"I'm not standing up for those squatters, madam! But I'm advising you to go slow and sure."

"I'm going to drive them off my lands."

"They're a dangerous bunch, right now. They have always been ugly. Now they're worse than ever on account of what's happening to make 'em sick. Your husband never took chances with them."

"Don't refer to my husband. He's dead. I am alive."

"Those people can be stirred up to make trouble for most anybody, without specially caring who the party is, madam!"

"That statement gives me an idea! I thank you, Dawson!"

"But the trouble they're always threatening to bring about is to start a fire in these woods that'll make hell seem like a refrigerator in comparison."

"I'll see to it that nothing of that kind is ever started against me, sir. I can handle rabble such as they are, if they're not led by a trouble maker. But when a man stands up in front of me, on my own lands, and defies me and encourages a lot of ignoramuses to stand out against my orders, I'll attend to his case—and I don't care how white his whiskers are," she declared roughly, with venom. "When I start to fight for my own, Dawson, and for what I claim is my own——" She paused and turned in her saddle and surveyed him, narrowing her eyes. "I just thanked you for an idea, Dawson! I'm thanking you again for some handy words! When I'm fighting for what I want I can make hell seem like a refrigerator!"

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE APPARITION ON BORESTONE.

When Anita and her squire arrived at a place on the Borestone trail where the upward tilt of the ledges was too steep for the horses, she dismounted.

Dawson had been wholly cowed by what he had discovered in her nature. He was chary about making more suggestions. But he did offer to climb the mountain alone and said that he was sure that he would be able to induce Lawyer Lang to come down. Anita made no reply but proceeded to arrange the skirts of her habit for the ascent of the precipice which confronted her, gathering them about her knees by means of tapes and clasps.

"And your rig isn't fit for such a climb, ma'am! I told you last evening——"

She turned on him, suspending her task with her skirts and surveying him with angry eyes from under the brim of her hat. "When you told me a moment ago, Dawson, that the trail is straight up and can't be missed, you told me all you can tell me. Now I'll tell *you* something! You stay here with the horses! Don't you leave here to come up on that mountain, no matter how long I am gone. Don't allow yourself to get into a state of mind because you think I may have fallen or am in trouble. You stay here! Do you understand?"

"Yes, madam!"

She turned away and began the ascent, leaning forward, pulling herself up by the bushes and saplings, moving swiftly and surely. A moment later he got one of the starts of his life! She picked up something from the sun-warmed face of the cliff, turned quickly and flung it down at him.

It was a big writhing snake which narrowly missed his head when he ducked; it was only a harmless serpent, he knew—a reptile with dirty brown spots and known

as a milk adder. But he turned up at the girl a face that had become suddenly pale under the tan.

"It's a playmate for you, Dawson, so that you won't be lonesome while I'm gone."

Up on the top of Borestone the volunteer fire warden was not as thoroughly attuned to his surroundings that day as usual; his tenure of office was in the way of being terminated. For many days he had been conscious of a growing content with things as they were. His conscience was less troublesome. The sense of the waiting duties did not weigh on him so heavily. The bonds which linked him to the world of men were less oppressive and he did not bother to wonder just what the nature of this new indifference was. His principal regret—the one which stayed awake—was that he would be deprived of this excuse of service for a stricken man; the feeling that he ought not to leave Borestone until the man was well again had been comforting him. There was a real duty on the mountaintop in those days of danger.

But the man was nearly well. That thought was bothering Lang that day while he sat on the gray moss and looked out over the mighty stretch of lakes and forest. It was a peculiarly delicious sort of day. May often borrows the framework of such a day from her sister June, just to try an experiment, and trims that framework to suit the whim of the earlier season.

And on account of the wondrous quality of that day Lang was sorry because the warden was coming to dispossess the substitute.

Lang had been a more or less regular visitor to the camp of Ashael. The trail had become familiar and was easy for him even when he had only the moon to light his way up the mountain. After his long, sunlit hours as a sentinel he welcomed the exertion which the trip to Ashael's house demanded. He and the old man talked together on the porch in the twilight. Ashael did not preach. But he had a subtle way of probing and after he had touched the spot that was sore he allowed Lang to go away and nurse the hurt with his own means of alleviation.

The lawyer, unable to rid himself of his habit of questioning a witness, made attempts to probe on his own account; it was no longer mere curiosity. Lang wanted to know the man better—to understand by what experience and on what foundation of faith he had been able to erect the structure of his implicit belief in God's healing bounty—a blessing for soul and for body if either were ailing.

Ashael could not be induced to give a name to that bounty. He declared that man had no right to bound by a designation a truth that was everlasting and illimitable. With just as much decision the old man forbore persistently from telling his own name to Lang. On one occasion he definitely locked the door of his anonymity. He proceeded to do it in this way: "Who was the judge who presided at the Trask trial?" he asked.

"Justice Deland."

"Is he a man of his word?"

"Scrupulously so."

"You are a shrewd man—a persistent man, my friend. You know that I was obliged to reveal to Judge Deland enough to prove that I had a right to perform a marriage. It is in your thoughts that you will ask him, some day, what he knows about my identity. Isn't that so?"

"Yes."

"He promised me that he would not tell any man what I told him. I am glad to hear you say that he is trustworthy. I would like now to have you assure me that you will never mention the matter to him—will not tempt a trustworthy man. This is not a whim. The matter concerns others who should not be troubled by the knowledge that I am alive."

"You have my word on the matter, sir."

It was on that particular occasion that Ashael loaned to Lang a book whose title was "Charity." It was not an especially profound treatise. Charity was not dissected but was presented in thoughts which the author had gleaned from others.

Lang slowly read the sentiments, one by one; while he pondered on them he looked abroad over the outspread panorama of the hills and the forest. He was seated on an eminence that was a great block of stone—for thus was Borestone, a massive obelisk rooted into the granite of earth's foundations. The words of one of the wisest of man's counselors seemed especially pointed by Lang's location of the moment:

> Though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing.

He laid the book, opened, face down on

the moss. He had heard the rattle of falling stones; some one was climbing up the path. He thought it must be the warden, coming to take back his job; the man had been getting restless, though Lang had urged him to stay with Ashael a while longer.

He beheld the face of Anita Trask. She stopped before she came into full view over the edge of the rim rock. She seemed puzzled and a bit frightened.

"I am looking for John Lang."

He rose. He was not sure that he was astonished at sight of her. The widow of Serenus Trask truly had a good business reason for seeking out the attorney for the estate.

"I'm afraid you're finding this beard a little—perplexing!" He stroked his hand over his face.

She came slowly and stood in front of him, appraising. "Why are you staying up on this mountain—looking like this?"

"I have taken a poor chap's place as fire warden till he gets well."

She was panting after her climb. Her cheeks were flushed. For a moment it was evident her fatigue had provoked resentment because she was forced to make all that effort to come to him.

"You left nobody to take *your* place—to attend to the affairs of the estate—to look after *my* interests."

"I am sorry. I have been very unprofessional. But after the trial I was completely unnerved by—well, I prefer not to speak of the reasons I had for going away for a few days."

"A few days!" There was more of mournful reproach than irritation in her tone then.

"When I went away I had no idea that I would be staying in the woods so long." He spoke coldly. There was no welcome in his manner. There was a long silence between them.

Tears welled up in her eyes. It was not her nature to hold back her emotions when they were deeply stirred. "You're not helping me! I thought you would be surprised. I thought you would cry out when you saw me—away up here! I came—came alone so that I could make you jump out of that shell of yours, John Lang!"

"It has been a hard climb for you. I ought to be ashamed of having been the cause of it. But as to jumping, I'm afraid I'm not so easily affected by surprises."

"What's the matter with you?" she demanded with a forceful directness that effected what her sudden appearance on the mountain failed to provoke; he was genuinely startled and much embarrassed for she came along and grabbed his arms and shook him.

The tears were gone from her eyes. She was exhibiting a breezy pertness—more of that naïveté which he had seen in her in the past.

"Where is your house, Mr. Hermit?"

He pointed to the brushwood shelter, pulling one of his arms free.

"That accounts for your terrible looks." She dabbed her hand across his cheek and stepped back away from him. "Unless you stop being foolish and fix yourself up and come back to town, I'll discharge you as my lawyer."

"I have decided to give up the position I held with Mr. Trask."

"You shall not do it."

"I have absolutely made up my mind on that point."

She stamped her foot. Then she whimpered like a child. "It is all in your hands. You're the only one who knows about the estate. It will be betraying me—handing me over to somebody who will rob me because I don't know about my own business. You shall not be so wicked, John."

While he was wondering what sort of consolation he ought to offer, she smiled at him—a smile that glimmered through tears like sunshine flashing through raindrops.

Her swift-shuttling moods were beginning to wreck his self-poise. He was realizing that this beautiful visitant's appearance on that mountaintop was a more surprising event than he had been willing to admit at first.

"Well, Mr. Host, if you don't ask me to sit down, I shall invite myself. I have a perfect right to sit down on my own mountain. You know I do own it, don't you?"

She seated herself on the moss and began to unfasten the tapes which bound her skirts to her knees.

"I haven't asked to find out who owns the lands, Mrs. Trask."

"I own them, as far as you can see. So, by being fire warden up here you have been working for me without knowing it. Queer, isn't it?"

She shook out the folds of her habit, settled herself into a comfortable posture and looked up at him archly from under the

brim of her hat. "Now what is it that you have been doing up here except think and think and think?"

"I have taken up most of my time by reading." He pointed to the book that was close beside her; she had taken the place from which he had risen to greet her. She craned her neck and looked at the book, not offering to disturb it.

" 'Charity!' Did somebody write a whole book about charity?"

"A great many persons helped to write that book—it is made up of folks' ideas of what charity is."

"Those who make books must know a great deal—must be very wise in regard to what they write about." She picked the volume up, handling it gingerly. "I have never read a whole book through," she confessed artlessly. "I never could seem to understand books. What were you reading just now—when I came up over the ledge?"

"I was merely reading in the book, here and there."

"But *what?*" she insisted with some petulance. "Just what thing did you read last?"

He stepped toward her and took the extended volume from her hand.

"I'm sort of superstitious about books," she explained. "Sometimes I open them, just hit or miss, and take the first words I see and make them a hint on how to act. I'll try it this time in another way. I'll take the last words you read. It will be funny!"

He lent himself to her whim and read slowly in the voice that had held his auditors spellbound in a courtroom.

"Though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing."

She pondered for some moments. She put her hands on the moss and pressed down as if to make sure of the vast bulk of stone on which she was elevated above the world. Her mood had changed again. She was very grave. Her lip trembled.

"John Lang, tell me! Did the man who wrote that know a great deal—did he mean just what he wrote?"

"He knew a great deal—and I'm sure he believed it."

"Give me the book, please."

He passed it to her. She immediately closed the book and clasped it in her hands. "Won't you sit down, John Lang? I want to say something to you."

He obeyed her request.

She looked at the cover of the book and murmured its title over and over.

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE GIFT.

Lang waited a long time, respecting the meditation of the girl. She was tracing slowly with a forefinger the lettering of the title on the cover of the book.

He was quite resolved to give over the legal affairs of the Trask estate to another lawyer. He wondered whether her persistent efforts, dating back to their first meeting, to knock out from under him the props of his poise, were subtle tactics or merely the outcropping of her erratic nature. He was quite sure that he would not allow her to startle him again.

He expected that he was to be called on to combat her pleading and protests in regard to his connection with the estate. Her first words were a query whether he did not think the view from the mountain was very lovely.

He agreed that it was.

"I suppose, looking out on it day after day, you have grown to like it so well that you hate to go away and leave it?"

"I am excusing in that way my neglect of my profession."

"You must be in love with this region, surely, to feel as you do. I don't believe you know why I have come all the way up here to this mountaintop."

"You have come to ask me some very proper questions about your business."

"No! You're guessing wrong. I'll be very calm in what I say because I know I have made you angry in the past by saying things you didn't expect me to say. If I'm calm I hope you won't think I'm trying to jump you." She stretched forth her arm and swung it in a slow arc. "I have come up here to offer to you all you see and all that is beyond the rim of the hills. I want you to take it for yours. I want you to take me, too! Because I love you."

He leaped up and strode to and fro. Of what sort was this woman who had declared only a moment before that she was finished with surprises?

"You are not like that foolish old man who said that he was afraid of me, are you, John Lang? I did not love him. There's

no need of talking about any such thing as that."

"I understood the situation very well, Mrs. Trask. It was perfectly plain to everybody."

"But please sit down. I can't talk to you when you are galloping about in front of me. I don't expect you to say, right off sudden, that you'll take what I'm offering. You're different from the other men I have met. They have all begged me to take them. I love you because you're strong and honest. I need you to take me and all my troubles on your shoulders. It will be only a light load for a man like you. Won't you sit down? After I have told you something you will not scowl at me, perhaps."

Suddenly she broke out of the placidity that was wistful. She doubled her fist and beat upon the cover of the book.

"Is that where charity is—is it only in a book? Is charity only something to read about? They call you 'Generous John!' But haven't you any charity in you? I tell you to sit down. Are you afraid to be tested as to your charity?"

That exhortation of his courage prevailed; he sat down.

"You're big and honest and you're not like the rest I saw outside in the world. But you're human. You have been curious about me. You want me to tell you just who I am. I don't know, myself. I only know that I was a little girl in the woods, as far back as I can remember. I lived in a log cabin with folks. But my father and mother weren't there. They were never there. When the woman was ugly because I wouldn't slave for her, she twitted me about my lady mother. And I have always had dreams and visions about my lady mother."

She paused and looked up into the sky, raptly.

Lang remembered what Serenus Trask had said about those visions, hushing his tones and entreating to be reassured as to her sanity.

"I did have a lady mother. I did not belong with that scum. But they would never tell me why I was there. They did not dare to abuse me. Somebody was watching over me. I'm sure that I did not dream all the dreams. I have seen my lady mother in the night. I know I was awake. She put her hands to my cheeks and kissed me." She studied his face for a time. "But you're a lawyer and you don't believe in a girl's dreams, or in what she only thinks she knows. So, I'll say no more about being a little girl in a log house in the woods.

"But in the woods I saw only one way to get the things one wants to have. It's the way of the woods! The weak must give up to the stronger. Even the trees fight with each other for dirt to cover their roots and for the sunlight to make them grow. The hunter shoots the innocent animals. The traps are set everywhere. When I was a very little girl I hated my fur coat and my cap because I had seen the poor minks waiting in the traps with broken paws—just waiting and suffering till the man of my house came and killed them with a club. But when I grew to be a bigger girl I stopped caring. I fell into the way of the woods!

"Then there came a young man who was handsome and I ran away with him and we were married.

"He believed in the way of the woods, too. And I helped him to set traps for other men, because he made me do it—and I didn't care. I might tell you how sometimes I used to think about my lady mother—and then I did care. I might tell you some of my thoughts and how I hated myself for a little while, and then perhaps you'd feel more kind toward me. Maybe you'd agree with what the book says." She patted the cover. "But there isn't time to tell you all those things—and I might seem like trying to take advantage of what I'm not really entitled to."

He followed her gaze toward the west when she paused in her recital. The sun was getting low. He felt like sparring for time.

"No, there is not time for much more talk just now, Mrs. Trask. It will not be safe for you to go down the mountain after dark. It's getting dim in the valley, even now."

She paid no attention to his suggestion. "So it came to the time when he set a trap for the old man of the Double T. Of course I had to help him with the trap. I had done so much in the past, when he commanded me, that he thought I wouldn't care what next I did. But I had clung to one thing, John Lang—my honesty as a wife, no matter what else I had done. I don't need to explain all to you, do I?"

"No!"

"When he tried to make me let go the one

thing I had clung to—when he wanted me to make a lie of a marriage with the old man so that the real husband would have his clutch on me always—— There's a name in the law for the crime, John Lang. I've forgotten!"

"Bigamy."

"Perhaps the crime of killing a man who tried to force a wife to do a thing like that would not be so terrible—judging from the way of the woods!" She was looking away from the lawyer into the red of the sunset.

"It would be murder."

"I did not kill him. I have told you. I was following him to the place where I was to give him the money. There was another man who was following. And there was a man who was chopping—and a tree fell. I was frightened. I did not know well what happened."

"I was in those woods that day, Mrs. Trask."

She threw the book from her, half rose and fell on her knees. Dreadful anxiety convulsed her face.

"Please don't let that fact alarm you. And I am not questioning your statement about another man. I'm going to tell you now what I'm going to tell to the world outside. It's for the sake of Onésime Ouellette. I have been a coward in the matter too long. I was hunting in the woods with young Trask. We were lost. We came on the body of Mack Templeton. We decided in a sneaking way to make no report. Later we found Ouellette pinned under a tree. He had been there a long time. He could not have killed the man whose body we found." He leaned forward and fired a quick question at her. "Did you take a rifle that you found standing beside a tree? It was Ouellette's."

"I did not take any rifle."

"If I could know how that poor fellow's rifle happened to be where the body was found I would be helped much in defending Ouellette."

"That other man—he probably took it. Must I be called into court as a witness?"

"It may be necessary to call you."

"I am away—I am free—you set me free. I was innocent. They let me go because you made them see the truth about me! I'll die if I have to go into court again." She crawled toward him on her knees.

"I am going to put away all my pride, Mrs. Trask, and tell the truth. It is only right for you to do the same!"

"You saved me, John Lang. I belong to you. I will do what you tell me to do. But why will you drag both of us into trouble? What is that ragged woodsman that he should make us stand up and shame ourselves? They will misunderstand—the folks outside. They like to believe bad things of other folks."

"We will consider what must be done when I am back in town and have looked into the State's evidence against the man. It's no time now for a discussion of the case. We must be starting down the mountain. Come! I will assist you."

"We have not settled the business that has brought me here," she said stubbornly.

"We cannot talk any more about it."

She stood up before him. She spread her arms to indicate the stretch of her possessions. In the last red glare of the sunset, against the lurid screen of the sky, she was the incarnation of the Spirit of Temptation.

"There it lies, John Lang. All the miles of it. I don't know what to do with it. All the time I'm fighting men who want to steal it from me. I'm giving it to you. All you need to do is to care for it—and take me with it. See how little I am, standing here in the middle of it! So small a thing as I am won't be any extra burden!"

"I cannot take any such gift! I can't even discuss such a matter sensibly!"

"Do I spoil it all because I want you to take me with it?"

He was not sure whether it was anger that pricked him then—it was some sort of sentiment of revolt. "I don't know what to say to you! You're putting me in a damnable position!"

'Well, suppose we wait till we're calmed down," she suggested meekly. "It's an important matter, and we must talk it over."

"At some other place—at some other time! We must get off this mountain before night settles."

"There's no place in the whole wide world where we can be as honest with each other as up here. I have been honest with you."

"I propose to be honest with you, also, Mrs. Trask. I must tell you——"

She hurried to him and placed her hand on his lips. "I took plenty of time to think it all over before I came to you. It isn't right and just for you to answer me back until you have taken plenty of time to

think." She stepped away from him. "I'll allow you to think. I'll not bother you. There's plenty of time. If you speak too quickly I shall be angry because you will be slighting my offer. I shall not believe you when you speak, unless you take a long time to think."

"There is no time to waste, I tell you! You know what that mountainside is!"

"It's terrible. It's too dark now to think of going down."

"I'll go for help—we'll make some sort of a litter——"

"No—no! I'll not risk my neck that way. And I'll not be left alone here. I'm going to sit down." She resumed her seat on the moss. "John Lang, what right have you to tell me that I can't sit down on my own mountain just as long as I want to sit here? If you're willing to say it's yours, I'll allow you to drive me off. But until you do say the word, this mountain is mine. Sit down and be good and do your thinking."

He went apart from her and sat on a bowlder and watched the colors fade in the west.

CHAPTER XXX.

TWO ALONE ON BORESTONE.

John Lang, sitting in the peace of that evening, was promptly aware that he was not harboring anger in spite of the girl's amazing procedure.

He gazed long in her direction. She did not speak to him.

Her humble patience, yonder in the shadows that were wrapping themselves around the summit of Borestone, made softening appeal to him. There was a piteous quality in what she had told him of her life. She had made her struggle against besetting conditions with her own poor weapons, even as he had done with his broader understanding of men and the ways of men. After all his ponderings in the loneliness of his existence on Borestone he was less inclined to sit in judgment. In his defense of her in court he had quite convinced himself of her innocence of the death of young Trask. Lang was inexorably impelled, in his newer mental enlightenment, to blame himself for that catastrophe; in fact his conscience was accusing him bitterly, even as poor Skiddy Trask had predicted.

As to what had really happened in the Brassua woods——

John Lang in those days was filled with sympathy for other sinners. He was ready to credit her vague statement that she did not know what had happened. At the worst, admitting that she was concerned in the taking off of Templeton, she had defended the one thing to which she clung—the honor of her womanhood.

He looked again in her direction. She had not moved. The light was dim but he could see that she had picked up the volume entitled "Charity" and was cuddling it at her breast.

He felt the swift grip of emotion's unseen fingers at his throat. He wanted to offer to her some sort of consolation. There was something childlike about her, after all—in her changing mood, her disregard of conventions, her grotesque forwardness.

But he could not console her as he would comfort a grieving child. He was afraid she would not understand the new mildness which he entertained in regard to her. With the more or less material, masculine impulse in the way of cheering children, he decided that he would give her something to eat. While he was starting his little fire with fagots in the stone oven built against the side of a ledge, she came close and watched him.

"I am used to cooking in the woods," she said. "I'm homesick when I see you puttering with the fire. Bring to me what you have to eat and let me make supper! Please do!"

He brought utensils and the food, opened the tins and gave her full charge. She was deft and nimble and she understood the woods art of making plain materials tasty with a new touch. She even prevailed on him to bring the sheet-iron oven and she fashioned biscuits that were small and puffy and nicely browned when they were done—each one hardly more than a delicious mouthful; they were a great improvement on the sprawly affairs he had been turning out.

All this work took time and it was late when they had sipped the last pannikin of tea. They turned their backs on the fire flare and looked up at the sparkle of stars in the heavens.

"I won't apologize for the brushwood shelter. You are used to the woods and will understand."

"I have slept many nights in the open without a shelter, John Lang. I did it because I liked to do it. But to-night I don't

intend to sleep. I'm going to sit here. I'll have a good time looking up at the stars. I'll not trouble you with my chatter. When you are ready to talk to me I'll listen."

Somewhere down the mountain a whip-poorwill flicked the air with its staccato notes. Away off on some placid water a loon wailed its oboe call in prolonged diminuendo.

"So many people never really know what the night is," she murmured. "The city folks don't know. Even if they were up here, as we are, they wouldn't understand. They'd be lonesome. I am not."

He did not speak, and there was a long silence.

"Do you know the names of the stars?" she queried after a time. "The big ones! I have often wondered but I have never had anybody to tell me. The folks I have been with in this life have never been willing to look up at the stars."

Glad because she was able to busy herself with something besides her thoughts, he pointed out the constellations and named the stars as far as his limited knowledge would permit.

He had been dreading that night; but somehow it did not seem long. He had feared more of those outbursts of hers—the embarrassment of those amazing demands—the statements that had put him at such a disadvantage that he had recourse to anger in default of any sane rejoinder.

There were times when they did not converse. He heard her crooning the word "charity," repeating it over and over as if she were invoking the spirit of the virtue.

Lang was not sure of his thoughts. He tried to follow some consecutive plan of reasoning this thing out, but every time he builded his little edifice of "the-right-thing-to-do," some mental devil frisked in and knocked the whole business down.

He had come to the point where he was admitting that his hard and fast resolution to quit her service was less stern; it was willing to reopen the case and listen to arguments. But he realized that his general bitterness against humanity had influenced him to make that allowance. He might be able to placate the scandal mongers, he reflected sourly, if he should go obediently along according to the plan which they had mapped out for him. He would not be astonishing a world which had already discounted the future in his affairs.

He told himself earnestly that his affection for Reba Donworth was unchanged in spite of her attitude toward him. He liked to feel that his was a nature of stability and purpose, not to be swerved from the straight ahead by obstacles that would check other men. He placed her estimation of him as a man above all other prizes which he sought in the way of worldly commendation just then. He was not in the mood to set much value on approbation by the general run of mankind. He had always told Reba that he got what he went after; he had been especially emphatic in his declaration that he would win her. He had the queer feeling that he did not want to have her think that he was a quitter.

This love thing seemed to be a jumbled-up business. He was not able to arrive at definite conclusions. He had the dim notion that he was pretty much wrong, anyway, in trying to make love-a matter of the head exclusively, instead of leaving it all to the heart. He was aware that even then he was analyzing sentiment, weighing it pro and con. He wondered if there could be a woman somewhere in the world who would ever make him realize with all the power of his being that he was in love—unquestioningly and devotedly in love!

He looked at the girl who sat near him in the shadows of the mountain's loneliness and he was conscious of a surge of pitying tenderness.

There came the usual wind before dawn, a slow, chilling draft across the mountaintop. He noted that she was huddled with arms linked around her knees.

"Are you cold?"

"Yes!"

"Won't you sit under the bough shelter?"

"No!"

A few minutes later he heard the soft clicking of her teeth as she shivered with indrawn sighs of discomfort. Lang brought a blanket from the shelter and knelt beside her and wrapped it around her shoulders. She helped him, drawing the folds close; she took off the broad hat and scaled it away; she asked him to pull the blanket high about her face. Then, before he had risen from beside her, she nestled close to him and laid her head against his shoulder. If he had removed himself she would have fallen on the moss.

"I am all right, now—I am all right!" she murmured. "Let me sleep a few minutes—I am so tired!"

He did not move.

"Yes, I'm so tired—thinking—thinking!" she went on. "I haven't any head for it. You know best, and you must think for both of us. I trust in you. I know it will be all right after you have thought. 'Twill be all right—all right——"

Her voice trailed drowsily into silence.

After a little while he set his arm gently about her shoulders; it was a move of protection rather than an embrace of love; she responded by relaxing her muscles, lying against him with the trustfulness of a child who was surrendering herself to the care of an approved guardian.

Slowly the dawn came and the wind died and the tints of pearl in the skies were supplanted by the hues of the rose. And with the dawn came Ashael, toiling up over the rim rock. He was alone.

Anita merely opened her eyes when the old man greeted Lang. She did not offer to move from her protector's arm nor did Lang take himself away from her. There was something akin to defiance in Lang's persisting in his embrace of the girl. It was as if his night ponderings had decided him to defy the world in general, beginning with the first one who laid eyes on his new association with Anita.

"I came up here because I was afraid something had happened," said the old man with a hint of apology.

"Nothing has happened," returned the lawyer, conscious within himself that a great deal had happened. "Mrs. Trask was very much exhausted by her climb yesterday and was afraid to go down the mountain after dark. It became night before we realized."

"Her man came to my camp last evening and reported. He did not dare to disobey his orders. He said you told him not to come on the mountain," he informed Anita.

"Yes, I told him to stay with the horses."

"That's why I came—and if everything is all right I'll go away again."

Lang released the girl and struggled up on his feet. He was numbed and his cramped muscles refused him service for some moments. He stood in his tracks, getting control of himself.

Anita arose. She went close to Lang and whispered. "*Is* everything all right?"

"I hope so," he faltered. His thoughts were not clear; the shadows of the night were still involved with his attempts to arrive at the proper solution of the problem.

"You have had a long time for thinking, John Lang."

"But the matter is tremendously important—for both of us."

She smiled up at him. "You say 'for both of us!' You have put me into your thoughts along with yourself! I thank you, John Lang. That's enough for now—it's enough for now! I know it will be all right!"

The smile faded on her face when she turned on Ashael.

Here was an interloper who had broken upon a tête-à-tête at a crucial moment. She believed that she had been near the realization of her hopes. Lang's manner of the morning signified much when she looked up into his face. But her experiences in life had taught her to be apprehensive when success was only half won. She had been obliged to play life as a game and knew that inconsiderable accidents sometimes had caused Fate to turn the wrong card.

However, in her new hopes, she felt a fresh confidence in herself. She swaggered when she strode in front of the old man. She peremptorily ordered him to go away.

"And you twitted me yesterday of not being in close touch with my attorney! You see that I am in close touch now and I don't need any more advice from you about law. I order you off my lands—you and all the scum you're encouraging to steal my property."

"It's the matter of the squatters, Lawyer Lang," explained Ashael quietly, noting the attorney's perplexity. "If you want me to explain to you——"

"I will explain," Anita broke in rudely. "I propose to take Mr. Lang this very day to look at one of the horrible places you're keeping up on my lands." She turned to Lang. "It's on the way to the home camp at Hagas. I ask you to go with me to Hagas. There's much business to look after and I need your help. You can send to the city for the papers of the estate. You must come with me." She was coaxing with all her power. "There's a horse for you at the foot of the mountain. Dawson can walk back."

"I have made a promise that I must respect. I told the warden that I would stay here on the mountain until he is able to climb up and take back his job." He smiled slightly. "I'll admit that it's rather a minor job, considering the work of my own that's

waiting for me. But I'm protecting your lands by staying here."

"I'll excuse you from this work, John Lang. No matter if the fire does come and rage. There's a bigger thing to look after. You know! I need you."

"The warden is coming back to Borestone to-day," stated Ashael. "Dawson told him that the Widow Trask had come to hunt up her lawyer."

Lang in a sudden spirit of resentment was tempted to pick up the heliograph and fling it over the cliff; that news would go winking from station to station, to be translated into gossip that would reach town all too soon.

"So there's no excuse for you to stay," affirmed Anita. Entreating, she patted Lang's arm. His eyes left hers and he looked over her head in an earnest stare and she turned to follow the direction of his gaze. Ashael folded his arms and returned Lang's stare.

She was between the two. She was conscious that there was some element beyond comprehension in that man-to-man conference with the eyes. But she believed that she did know something about what Ashael was conveying by his expression. His somberness seemed like a rebuke. She was convinced that the recluse was unfriendly to her. Yet she could hardly believe that a mere old man of the woods could have influence over John Lang.

However, Lang proceeded to address the hermit and in a manner which deepened the mystery for Anita; it seemed as if there were some kind of an understanding between the men. "Do I get you right, Ashael? I sort of pledged myself to you when I came up here. Haven't I stayed out from under a roof long enough? Do you think I need to look farther into the heart of the heavens?"

"I do."

After a few moments of thought Lang took Anita's hand and led her across the small plateau away from the old man. The morning sun shone full in their faces; there were no more night shadows on Borestone; the candor of daylight brought counsel.

"When you talked to me last night about yourself you gave me a chance to understand you better than I ever hoped to do. You were honest with me. I want to be honest with you."

She felt acutely the reserve in his tone.

"But you loved me in the night—when you put your arm around me," she said. "You did love me."

He looked steadily off into the hale radiance of the morning. "You had a right to tell me what you did—about your feeling toward me. Every woman who cares for a man tells him so—though not always with words. But words are honest, and better, when one is sure! I'm grateful to you for your frankness. I will come to you a little later. I'll come like a man."

"Come with me now."

"I must stay up here for a time—a few days—for my own sake."

"Then you will never come," she wailed.

"I promise that I will. But this is not a matter to be settled upon suddenly. I'm respecting your right to be made happy after all your troubles of the past. When I come to you I shall know! We must build upon that sort of a foundation."

"I'm afraid to leave you with that man—that old man who looks at you the way he does. He will lie about me. He doesn't like me. He will turn you from me."

"I will not allow him to say anything against you."

"But he will say something—something—I don't know what he will say—but it will be something that will take you from me," she quavered. Her understanding was dim but her instinct was keenly bright. She had seen that queer look pass between men before and it had worked against women who were weak. Something that was called honor—she had heard it challenged and had witnessed the response. She sensed some of the qualities that were in John Lang—and she was afraid!

"Tell him to go away," she commanded in a tense whisper. "I don't want you to talk with him. If you will tell him to go away I'll not be foolish and urge you to come along with me now—not till you know—and can tell me! If you'll order him to go, I'll feel sure of you—that you'll think only of yourself and myself—it's between us two that the matter lies, John."

He called to Ashael. "I'll stay up here a while longer, even if the warden does come back. Mrs. Trask and I are grateful for your thoughtfulness. We won't detain you any longer."

"Very well!" said Ashael, and he went down over the rim rock.

As soon as the old man was out of sight

Anita flung her arms around Lang's neck and kissed him. "Yes, stay here!" she urged. "A few days will you stay? Yes! It's best. You'll be lonely here. I'll be glad of that. You will look down on where we sat together all the night—and you'll sit there after I'm gone and you'll wish I were back here. I know you'll wish that. Then you'll come. Come to Hagas. I'll be waiting. And then it will be all right!"

She hurried away from him.

He was a bit surprised by her hasty departure. It was rather tantalizing, but it was adroitly feminine in its effect on him. He knew that he was sorry to have her go. He followed after her and offered to help her down the mountain.

"But I don't want you to go," she insisted. "I want you to stay up here and think about me after I'm gone." She flung a kiss to him from her finger tips and disappeared among the lower ledges.

When she saw Ashael on a ladder far below she stopped and picked up a big rock. She did it quickly, as if by impulse. But she slowly laid the rock down as if second thought had rebuked instinct and had suggested a better way.

CHAPTER XXXI.

THE SPARK IN THE TINDER.

On her way back to Hagas water from the foot of Borestone Anita rode alone. She knew the way home, she told Dawson, and did not need his services. Her manner toward him plainly showed that she did not relish his companionship. When they were a few rods along on the road she turned suddenly on him and detected his expression before he had time to mask it.

"Where is the location of that trouble which has been reported between the Double T and the Tulandic?" she demanded curtly.

"On the Whirlingstone, ma'am. It's the old row that has broken out again because that Blake heiress has gone away to Europe and left her bosses to do as they want to. Just now they're blowing out splash dams to steal our waters for their drives."

"Which way is Whirlingstone?"

He pointed toward the north; they were headed south.

"Have we plenty of dynamite, Dawson?"

"Lots of it, ma'am."

"You don't feel as gentle, do you, toward the bosses of the Tulandic as you do toward the squatters who are stealing from me?"

"The bosses are able to stand up and make it a fair, square man fight," he said, setting his jaws.

"All right! You go up there! Take charge. Go now!" She flourished her crop in gesture of dismissal. "When they blow one of our dams, go ahead and blow two of theirs—then buy more dynamite."

She did not proceed on her way until he was out of sight. Then she struck her horse and hurried on.

Once more the mistress of the Double T rode into the squalid settlement of Pugwash, walking her horse slowly and studying the melancholy faces that were upturned to watch her progress. Near one cabin a cow, whose ribs showed like slats under canvas, was cropping herbage among stumps of trees. In the patch of shade that was cast by the shack a dispirited woman was feebly working the stick of a dash churn up and down. Several pairs of rusty shears were stuck into the ground around the churn; the woman called querulously and a neighbor came and brought more shears and stuck them down.

"Ride! Ride, all so proud and gay and look down on them poor folks!" squalled the woman of the churn, resting her dasher. "We're not afraid of you! We're down to where nothing you can do to us can hurt us more'n what has been done."

"I'm sorry for what I said yesterday," returned Anita very humbly. "I spoke without realizing what dreadful trouble you are in. Dawson and my other agents lied about you. What is the matter here? I want to help you all."

The woman was softened immediately; this bit of sympathy from one of the lordly oppressors tripped her emotions and she began to cry in sniffling fashion.

In the still air Anita's voice had carried far and the attention of the community was attracted. Men and women and children, they rose and staggered toward the cabin where Anita had paused. Incidents of interest were all too few in that neighborhood and their curiosity was stirred. But the promise of help was so novel that hope was also stirred—and hope had long been moribund in that place. Each had personal appeal to offer. However, in their lethargy they allowed the woman of the churn to do the talking for all.

"The butter won't even come!" she wailed.

"Everything has been bad but now it has come to this. The butter won't whey! The 'chanter don't mind the shears! The devil and his witches come right past the shears!"

"I don't understand," protested Anita, wrinkling her forehead.

"Don't you know what everybody knows —that when you stick shears round the churn they keep the 'chantment away?"

The bystanders indorsed that accepted truth, mumbling their affirmation.

"But this 'chantment is so wicked that even the shears can't keep away the devil and his witches! Look at us! We're all 'chanted with the hellish tick-de-loorum that has been put on us. Sumac tea even ain't good any more. All the time we're growing worse."

"The 'chanter has goofered us," boomed a shrunken old man in sepulchral tones.

"Who is this—whatever you call him?" Anita inquired, showing profound interest.

"We want to know—that's what we want to know!"

Another man spoke, his tones sharp with the rage of suffering helplessness that had passed the stage of endurance. "But we're going to find out and we'll know what to do to him."

"It ain't a him—it's a her—it's a witch," declared another in the group of superstitious misery.

Then there was a chorus of clamorous argument—shrill cries of insistent women and hollow barking of dissenting men. It was plain that the topic was one that had engrossed the settlement for a long time.

Anita studied them while they raved at each other. The pack had no leader she perceived. Lacking a leader they merely snapped and snarled in aimless fashion. She knew the natures of such mongrel communities in the North woods. She had seen those natures employed as tools by those who had the wit to guide them.

When she had looked down on Ashael's head, on the Borestone trail and had laid aside the rock which she had impulsively picked up she knew where more efficient weapons awaited her use. The desperate and mysterious illness that afflicted them, their fears, their despair, their rankling sense of injury made them tinder for a kindling suggestion.

She raised her hand and stilled the pack.

"If there is an enchanter at work here it must be somebody who keeps in close touch with you."

They agreed with her; they said that matters were continually growing worse—there had not been any spells of respite.

"He must be somebody who is not like anybody else in these parts," she said. "Who is there about here that's strange—and different?"

They did not reply; they looked up at her as if they were willing to trust to her knowledge and guidance.

"Who is that peculiar old man—the one who was here yesterday, and who talked to me?"

A fellow on the outskirts of the crowd, a man low-browed and heavy-jowled with a withered neck that sagged in folds, squinted at her. "I've said all along that it's him—I've said it over and over!"

"I won't let it be said it's him," a woman screamed. "No, I won't. He healed my father years ago. He stopped my brother's blood when the ax gashed him."

"Yes—years ago!" snarled the low-browed man. "Fooling folks along—it's the way the devil always takes!"

"He preaches God and goodness to us," said another woman. "It would be better for some of you men if you'd listen to him. God punishes wickedness."

"God ain't doing this to us, and the critter lies who says so!"

Again Anita secured silence. "I have talked with wise folks about witchcraft—about bad men who put spells on poor folks. There are tests that can be made to prove whether a man is a sorcerer or a wizard. There are names the wise folks have for men who are in league with the devil."

"You're right! Put 'em in the fire! That's the test!" declared the low-browed man.

"No, no!" she expostulated. "You must not use fire. That's very dangerous." She looked around apprehensively at the stretch of the Double T forest.

"They hold 'em under water and count the bubbles," averred a man in the throng. "If there are thirteen bubbles, he's a witch."

"Listen to me," said Anita with decision. "Men who go about on my lands, stirring up folks like you to do this or that against me, are bad men. They get you into trouble. You men can manage your own business without advice. I can see that you are all right, if others will leave you alone."

They brightened under that praise. They surveyed her with increasing favor.

"The bad men should be forced to go away from these parts. I think the wise folks told me something about the test by water. I don't remember exactly. But you seem to understand about witchcraft." She pointed to the shears that were stuck around the churn. "I'll leave it to you to know what to do. It's a matter to be attended to right away. If a wizard finds out by his spells that punishment is being planned he may do something much worse than what he has done if you give him a few hours' start of you."

So far as their benumbed intellects were concerned she had in those words indicated the culprit and had set the time for action. Their expressions told her that she had prevailed with them.

"Remember that I'm your friend," she urged. "When the bad man has been made to go away you and I will get along very well."

She beckoned to the low-browed man and he came through the crowd to the side of her horse. She had found more venomous resolution in him than in the others. All of the men and women edged closer when she produced her purse and gave money to the man whom she had chosen for her leader. "This is to be spent for the good of all of you," she warned. "For food and medicine. I shall keep watch. I shall come here again very soon. If the bad man has then gone away and you are getting better, I shall do something else to help you."

"His case will be attended to to-night," promised the leader, clutching the money.

"I hope it will be to-night so that he can't harm you any more. Make him go away. But take warning! My name is not to be used. It's wholly your affair and I'm simply your friend. If I hear that anybody has named me in the case I'll do no more to help you."

They gazed at the money in the man's hand and assured her in an eager chorus that they would try their best to please her in all things.

Then the mistress of the Double T rode on toward Hagas waters, feeling that the old man of Angel Knob would not be able to put into words of dissuasion the sentiments which he had expressed by his rebuking gaze on the top of Borestone. There was nobody else in all the North country—on her barony—who would dare to influence John Lang against her. And John Lang had promised to come to her.

CHAPTER XXXII.

THE LAW.

At twilight John Lang came down off Borestone, his few belongings in his pack. The warden had come back to take the job.

When the sun went down toward the west that day—in the afternoon that followed the morning of Anita's departure over the rim rock—Lang was lonely. The spirit of wanderlust urged him. He fell to wondering what abnormal impulse had kept him so long a recluse, stupidly cogitating day after day on that mountaintop, neglecting his affairs, shrinking from the world, fearing to go out among men.

He felt a new uplift of boldness—and there was considerable anger in the feeling. There was fight in him! In order to have plenty of occasion and excuse for fighting he decided that he would allow the world to believe that he was going to marry the widow of Serenus Trask, if the world insisted on taking that attitude. He refused to admit, right then, that he did intend to marry her or that his new stand was paving the way to the marriage after the usual decorous interval had elapsed. He had simply resolved, so he told himself, not to be backed down in any proposition that might come up in his affairs. He knew Anita Trask better—he would not allow anybody to slander her. He had championed her in court—he would go on and champion her in any other place where she might be assailed or threatened. He pitied her. There was only one manly thing for him to do—stay by her till those affairs were straightened out.

He felt less lonely the moment he was on the forest level, off the ledges of the mountain that had elevated him above the world. He belonged in the world. His interests were in the affairs of men. But he was in no hurry to go to town. He had mapped his first plans of action; he would have Anita send a messenger to the city for the papers of the estate in order that they might go over them carefully in the quietness of the home camp on Hagas waters; there were so many matters awaiting his attention in the city that he would be distracted from the application which the Trask affairs required.

He had decided to lodge with Ashael that night. He had a book to return and he wanted to say his farewell.

He was not owning up to another consideration—that is to say, not with frankness. But he knew that he was going forth to give battle. And he was in a hurry to begin. It was in his thoughts that Ashael might have something to say to him about that scene on the top of Borestone in the dawn. Lang was in the mood to have a trial clash of weapons with anybody, even with a placid old hermit.

It was dim in the woods where the trail to Angel Knob snaked along; but "The Way of the Cross" was well blazed.

There were mists in the low places—the veils of spring's night gear. Lang was not superstitious, nor was he easily alarmed. But when he was crossing a clearing he saw what he could not readily explain to himself. He beheld gaunt figures retreating into the depths of the vapor. He was almost positive that he perceived faces; they were countenances that were hollowed into the similitude of skulls. It was as if he looked on walking skeletons. He hailed but he was not answered. The forms fled and became mere shadows and were hidden by the mists.

When he arrived at the camp on Angel Knob he did not mention to Ashael what he had seen or thought he saw. He was quite sure that he had been deceived; the mists even made the white birches seem like stalking ghosts.

Lang and Ashael sat on the porch for a time. Then a night wind, a bleak blast for that time of year, whipped away the mists and lashed the treetops back and forth across the stars. The men went indoors and Ashael kindled a fire on the hearth, kneeling and fanning it with the wing of a hawk.

Their talk on the porch had been mere random chat about the season and the woods. Ashael, busy with the fire, asked, "Now that you are going home to the city, do you feel that you're taking back what you came up here to find?"

It was an opportunity to make a first test of that new blade of his championship, and Lang drew promptly.

"I'm not going to hurry back to the city. To-morrow I'm going to the Hagas home camp of the Double T to assist Mrs. Trask in the affairs of her estate. I've been neglecting my duty to her."

Ashael offered no comment. His fire was blazing brightly and he seated himself on a high stool and looked down at the flames. Lang endured the silence as long as he could.

"I suppose you have something to say about that decision and about what you saw on Borestone this morning!"

"No, I have nothing to say."

"You spoke about my taking back something—coming up here to find something. What do you mean?" Lang demanded, making a pretense of obtuseness.

"We'd better let the matter rest. You answered me to my satisfaction."

"I didn't answer your question, sir. I merely made a statement about my plans."

"Your statement was sufficient for my understanding. You are not taking the thing back with you and you don't feel that you're taking it back."

"Taking *what?* I don't like riddles."

"Your peace of mind."

"I'm not to blame because I haven't found anything of the sort in these woods. It isn't here!"

"I found it for myself. It was here when I came seeking for it."

"Oh, I know what you mean. I've been studying you and your system. It's to do all for the other fellow—trying to suit the other fellow's notions of what it's right for you to do, instead of pleasing yourself," said Lang irritably.

"When one thinks merely of pleasing himself he is quite likely to be out of tune with a certain great harmony that was pitched to the keynote of Truth when the spheres began to revolve. There is no way in being out of tune."

"You've got to live the life of this world according to the human code, or you'll get nowhere."

"This life is given us so that we may put ourselves in tune with the infinite and the eternal. The great harmony drowns out all the discords. But each human discord is a punishment unto himself."

"Oh, I know your philosophy all right enough!" The irony in Lang's tone indicated how much he disparaged that philosophy.

"But it's not mine," Ashael remonstrated. "Any more than the universe is mine!"

He got off the stool and pulled down a volume from the mantel. Kneeling close to the firelight he read aloud:

"Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbor and hate thine enemy.

But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you: that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust. For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? Do not even the publicans the same?"

The recluse closed the volume and looked up at Lang. "I don't need to tell you who voiced that philosophy."

"No."

"The trouble with men is this: they take that and the rest of the universal philosophy that was voiced by the Great Wayshower as merely pleasant prattle from the parson's lips of a Sunday morning. But it is just as much a practical, working, fundamental law, John Lang, as the deepest legal truth on which your common-law statutes are founded. And you don't use human law merely to make pretty sounds with. You use that law as a working tool. I'm only a poor old moss-grown stick up in these woods. I might call myself a sort of gutter leading from an everlasting spring in the hills to a trough beside the dusty way along which men pass. Nothing much, of myself! But just as long as I serve for a channel —conducting down only a trickle of God's goodness according to my limited capacity —I am right! I serve! And I know I am right!"

"And how about the infernal ingratitude of men who get something for nothing?"

"John Lang, their ingratitude harms only them—not me. I am right, obeying the great law. It's a pretty trite statement—that virtue is its own reward! But God Almighty knows how true it is—and He sent a messenger to the world to put it into words —and because it is in mere words of human invention—the words I have read to you—most men let the parson babble to make a pretty sound and don't delve for the truth that's in them."

Lang did not reply. The hermit remained on his knees, mending the fire.

The lawyer was meditating on that declaration of Ashael's in regard to the law, his interest piqued from a professional standpoint. He was still willfully resisting the suggestion that infraction of the Divine law was certain to bring punishment. The Bible said so, to be sure, but the Bible was the parson's code. It was what the judge on the bench said, executing man-made statutes, that did the business for lawbreakers!

He did not dwell on the matter with anything like exhaustive analysis. He was not in a mental state where he cared to employ thought too laboriously. The fire leaping up the stones was a comforting sight and influenced him to relax mind and body. He looked into the flames and became drowsy; the vigil of the night before was having its effect. The remembrance of that vigil reminded him sharply of Anita; he decided that he would start for Hagas waters in the first light of the dawn. He looked ahead to the morning with zest.

The wind outside lulled him; it swept through the trees and whined in the cracks of the window sashes.

A shout, raucously loud, startled him. A man was demanding with oaths that somebody come out!

When Ashael went forth Lang followed. It was not black darkness outdoors; the stars were bright in the sky from which the wind had swept the clouds. The two men on the porch could see many persons among the white birches.

"What is wanted of me?" asked Ashael.

"You go away from this place. Light your lantern and start now. Never come back. Will you go?"

"I will not go. I know you, Ase Tuttle. Have you lost your mind?"

"I know you, too, you damnation old witch! That's the name for you. We all know you now for what you really are. You go away and you won't get hurt."

"What does this mean, you people?"

"It means that we have found out how you have 'chanted us. We're all dying! You have done it!"

"And even the butter won't whey on account of your bewitching the churn," declared a woman shrilly.

"Once again I ask you—will you go away?" bawled the man.

"No!"

"Then you're going to get what's coming to you!"

"You'll have to stand 'em off with a gun," warned Lang. "There's no mob so senseless and dangerous as a pack of superstitious half-wits."

"I have no gun. You must not use yours, my friend."

The crowd was advancing. The men howled threats, working up their courage

of mania, and the women shrieked, hysterically urging their males to catch the wizard and tear him to bits.

"God o' mercy, man! You're not going to stand here and let those lunatics have their way with you, are you?"

"They are not to blame. Somebody has lied and has set them against me."

Lang leaped off the porch and walked toward the crowd. Over his shoulder he informed Ashael, "This 'turn the cheek' business may be all right according to your code, but it doesn't fit mine."

A man was running, leading the pack. He swung a club at Lang but the lawyer snatched it away, set his hands against the man's breast and pushed him back. The others stopped. This stalwart stranger had complicated matters for them.

"You ain't in this. We don't want you. It's him we're after," yelled the leader.

"I don't think you would know just what to do with me if you did get me," stated Lang dryly. His calm fearlessness daunted them more effectually than bluster would have done; they understood bluster. "What's the matter with you?"

"He has witched us."

"You're all kinds of a liar, man. There's no such thing as witchcraft."

"We're here to get him and you can't bluff us back with your talk."

"In about one minute I'll stop using talk and lay into your gang with a club in each hand. Get away from here!"

They did not retreat, nor did they advance; they were huddling closer together, getting up courage by contact.

"Who has put you up to this by lies?" Lang demanded with his courtroom manner of bullying a witness.

"It wasn't any lie. She knows! The queen lady of the Double T knows!"

Anita had trusted too much to those shallow minds from which information could be easily spilled. The interference by this bold man who threatened their plan had stampeded their wits and put their timid prudence to flight. Lang was assured by a chorus of voices that they had good advice on how to deal with the wizard of Angel Knob; they wanted to make Lang understand that a more important personage than he—whoever he might be—had told them what to do to save themselves from evil.

The lawyer did not answer them. Rancorous choler was in him. Just why he was so furiously angry he did not exactly understand. Somehow the wretches were defiling something which had value in his eyes; it was something that was very new—something that was in his heart a few moments before when he looked into the dancing flames in Ashael's cabin.

He threw away his club and struck Tuttle between the eyes and dropped the man who had been railing with profane obscenity. Lang picked the limp form up and flung Tuttle against a group of other men and they ran away. After a few moments Tuttle staggered to his feet and followed his pack.

Lang went back to Ashael.

"Excuse me for desecrating Angel Knob and going against your New Testament ideas! But I reckoned a little of the Old Testament stuff was needed," stated the victor. "I don't remember the texts or the ancient parties who were concerned, but I remember something about using the jawbone of an ass; I used the whole animal." He walked into the camp and Ashael followed. "I'll turn in pretty soon, I reckon," said Lang. "I want to make an early start for——"

He turned away from Ashael and did not name his destination. He sat down in front of the fire and resumed his study of the flames.

A little distance away, just about this time, in a hollow off the trail of "The Way of the Cross" the pack gathered around Tuttle.

"That ain't a man, though he talked like one," he stated with decision, excusing his discomfiture. "He was 'chanted up by that old hellion and was sicked onto me. He was a demon. I smelled brimstone. There ain't nothing left for us but the fire test!"

"She said not to," protested a man.

"If she was here she'd change her mind. She wasn't cal'lating on a demon being 'chanted up to stop us. She don't want to be euchred. She ordered something done. By the blue blazes, it's going to be done, too!"

"She's entitled to her money's worth," agreed another.

"I have come prepared—that's the kind of a man I am to depend on," said Tuttle. He dredged his pockets and produced handfuls of matches. "They're from her depot camp," he chuckled. "I reckon if she knowed

how they're going to be used she wouldn't be mad because we stole 'em."

"Ain't a fire resky, with that wind?"

"It's going to be a different kind of a fire. I've got my plans. It's a witch-test fire. Come along!"

When they had arrived silently back among the white birches he set all the men at work with their knives, stripping the bark, the outer, crisp white integument of Ashael's "angels." Into the ends of split sticks they set great wads of the bark. And when the word was given they all lighted the improvised torches. Men and women, they began to run in a circle around and around the camp, the fires streaming over their heads.

It was a senseless performance, a juvenile prank by witless grown-ups with a crack-brained leader who entertained some fantastic notion about the efficacy of a ring of fire in the case of a witch.

But the torches, rudely contrived, hastily put together, dropped petals of flame as the excited carriers went leaping about the building. Other petals went scaling off on the wings of the wind. Some of them alighted in clumps of resinous undergrowth and torched the tinder into a sudden flame. Some bits of the blazing bark, swirling upward on the gusts of the gale, lodged in the larger trees—the spruces and the hemlocks.

After a few minutes there was a sound all about in the lurid woods like the rush of falling waters; the sound was the roar of fires streaming up through the needles and the tassels and the cones of the black growth.

The flames leaped from tree to tree. The crested tops seemed to explode instead of burn. Such is the dreaded "crown fire" of the North country when the flames mount the galloping winds.

They who had done the mischief ran into the woods; they knew fires and the ways of fires; they had had practice in the squatter art of burning tracts to form blueberry barrens. They dropped their torches and the flames set back fires which raced to join the first ranks of the growing conflagration. The fugitives of Pugwash were going into the eye of the wind and were safe.

The two men of the camp had become fugitives, too. But they were forced to flee ahead of the fires—they could not pierce the wall of red ruin which lay to the southward.

The camp was burning before they left it; they had used a little time to gather some of their possessions.

"Borestone!" gasped Lang. "We'll go up there!"

But the draft of wind in the valley between them and the mountain was like that in a chimney flue; the flames were roaring and rolling there.

"I have always depended on 'The Way of the Cross,'" vouchsafed Ashael. "But we must take another trail."

He set away and Lang hurried at his heels.

TO BE CONTINUED.

A BIG COLLECTION

AFTER Mr. Hughes submitted his ship-scrapping proposal to the Arms Conference he became the idol of the Washington populace. Everywhere he went he was applauded. It became an event for him to leave a building or enter an automobile. His time in the streets was spent in doffing his "silk topper." Even his sayings and witty cracks were passed around as the funniest things ever gotten off.

The best one of these he whispered in an elevator of the state department one morning. Being in a hurry he and the man with him had entered the first public lift they came to. The car was crowded with senators and representatives who were on their way to Mr. Hughes' office with half a dozen men whom the secretary recognized as applicants for consulships.

"This," whispered Hughes to his friend, so low that the enunciation of the words hardly moved his whiskers, "is the largest collection for foreign missions that I've seen taken up for a long time."

The Coming of the Campbells

By John D. Swain

Author of "Just So Many—and No More," and other stories

In his connection with this ring fight that was indeed a fight Jamie was clearly guilty of all charges against him—excepting that of playing a musical instrument!

THE light-heavy title passed to Angus Campbell when such great sports writers as "Pop" Hardy, Ben Hur, and "Confucius" O'Brien were in their prime. Their stories of the battle are ring classics; nothing in American fistiana has been better done. Hundreds of thousands have seen the fight pictures, despite interstate laws. All the officials and trainers as well as the principals themselves were interviewed. The importance of the match, the record crowd, the size of the purse and the dramatic finish united to make it the big feature of its day.

It would seem that no detail, however trivial, could have been overlooked; and it would amaze "Honest John" White—were he living—and all of the experts who sat three deep about the ringside that murky July night, to know that the inside story, the real secret of the crowning of a new fistic champion has never been told nor even suspected. Yet this is literally true.

The story begins some thirty years before the fight, when an old wife in the Scotch Highlands read the fortunes of Jamie and Angus Campbell as she stirred a cup of tea with a pewter spoon. They were lads of eight and nine, barefooted, freckled, with shocks of straw-colored hair falling over gray-blue eyes.

The old wife mumbled as she scanned the tea leaves, and looked up to peer at Angus, the elder.

"*Muckle siller will come to ye frae Jamie,*" she averred; by which she meant much money.

Other things she told the lads, but they recalled naught but the money that was to come. It became a jest of their boyhood. When they were a few years older Jamie used it often to borrow a trifle from the more thrifty Angus.

"'Tis a bit on account," he would say with a grin. "To be set against the siller that will be coming to ye from me!"

In early manhood the old wife's words were no longer repeated. But Jamie's borrowings increased. It became a habit for the elder brother to help him out of all manner of scrapes that his wildness and improvidence led him into. Jamie Campbell was the keener. He was a good scholar, a fluent talker, well liked by all. His father sent him to Edinburgh to study law. Within the year he had tired of that and was all for the army. Horse racing pleased him better than all. For a time he edited a sporting column. At twenty-five he was a ne'er-do-well, optimistic, finding it easy to secure congenial employment, but easier yet to lose it. His demands upon steady, hard-headed, industrious brother Angus increased faster than Angus' wages did.

They were devoted to one another, each in his way; Jamie laughing at the other's little economies, his slow-moving mind and bovine patience; Angus shaking his head over his brother's overfondness for the taverns, his thriftlessness, the waste of a naturally quick and creative mind.

When old Campbell died, leaving the lads, as the saying goes, little more than a blessing and a bannock, they decided to try their fortune in America. Angus was a stone mason, a lean, powerful fellow, skilled at his trade and noted for his prowess at wrestling, boxing or hare and hounds. He could lay stone walls all week and then run fifteen miles over hill and dale of a Saturday afternoon for a bit of ribbon and a line in the "Glasgie papers." He was abstemious, loyal, taciturn.

Once, playing golf with Jamie, the latter announced at the seventeenth hole: "That'll make me dormie!"

Angus raised his eyes in patient reproach.

"Jamie, lad, ye know weel I canna play gowf wi' a chatterbox!"

'Twas Angus paid their passage to Halifax and later on to New York. His hopes that, once free from his cronies, Jamie might settle down came to naught. The years crept on. Angus fell into the hands of a clever promoter, ceased to build cellars and began the long, toilsome climb up the pugilistic ladder. Jamie ceased even the pretense of seeking work and became the champion two-handed drinker of Scotch whisky. He hung about his brother's training camps and was always present when he fought. If sober he sometimes carried a pail or waved a towel; if not, he simply bawled encouragement. Drunk or sober he never forgot to ask for a share of the purses Angus won with his sledge-hammer fists.

Angus' progress was slow and disheartening. It was a dilemma to his manager whether to train him down to the middleweight class at the risk of sapping his vitality, or to fatten him up for a light-heavy. He never entered a ring weighing an ounce over one hundred and seventy. His great asset was his tough fiber, his ability to absorb punishment, coupled with a whale of a wallop packed in either mitt. He was neither fast nor clever, was always ready to take a punch to land one, never broke a training rule or caused his backers the least anxiety. But he was unable to get a chance at the title.

The truth is that he was very much respected as a man so nearly impervious to the best they had that he was better known as "the Granite Man" than by his own name. He really belonged to the régime of bare-knuckle London-prize-ring days. It was rarely that he could get matched for more than eight or ten-round goes; and there were plenty of second-raters who could make him look foolish over the short route. True, they could not even jar him or snap back his head on his thick column of a neck; but they could cut him up and make him miss and exploit their superior footwork. He could have smashed any of them as he would a cockroach—and in a finish fight he would have. But he lost so many newspaper decisions that the topnotchers had a specious excuse for avoiding a match.

His gameness gained him a place in the fight fans' hearts, however, and he managed to lay aside a little each year, and to support himself and brother Jamie with whom he lived on terms of a warm though undemonstrative affection.

It was when Battling Logan, the champion heavy of Australia, upon his first trip to the States incautiously offered to meet Campbell in a twenty-round battle that the tide began to turn. Logan took such a terrible beating before finally passing out in the fifteenth that the American—as he had long been by adoption—forced the big fellows to consider his claims.

Logan had knocked out the British favorite in the second round of an exhibition match, and had held the American champion even in a ten-round mill at Sydney when the latter was touring the world two years before. Ben Hur, in the *Sporting Era*, began to hint that the Granite Man had been side-stepped because he was too hard a nut to crack. Minor sports writers took up the hue and cry and the public, always eager to see a champion dethroned, made itself heard.

It was a proof of his manager's ability that he was able to postpone a meeting for two years longer, before the fatal barometer of the gate receipts warned him that his man must attempt that which no one had yet come anywhere near accomplishing—the hanging of a K. O. on Angus Campbell.

Meanwhile, the years had thinned the thatch on the Granite Man's hard head. He was a little slower than formerly and knew it. His wind was unimpaired, his muscles possessed the old drive and those tremendous legs which had been such an asset could still bear him up under the most terrific assaults without revealing that faint quivering of the thighs which to the trained eye is the first symptom of exhausted nature.

He was close on to forty now; eight years older than the title holder. It was manifest that his best days were behind him—that it was now or never if he were to round out his long, hard struggle by winning the title. With that in his possession he could reap a small fortune within the next twelve months before he was obliged to meet a new challenger. A defeat would place him definitely in the discard. There is all the difference in the world between a man who has never been knocked out and is a challenger in his class and one who having been given his chance is put finally to sleep. He might about as well never wake up, if like Angus Campbell, his thirty-ninth year finds him with only a paltry three or four

thousand to show for his tin ear and broken nose. Especially if he has a brother Jamie clinging to him like a pet leech!

Tony Rintell secured the match for a Western city which was looking for a big drawing card to dedicate a new arena then nearing completion. The contracts were signed in April, leaving three months for conditioning and for the publicity campaign.

The champion regained most of his lost prestige directly he accepted Campbell's challenge. The latter always had been popular because he liked to swap punches. The big journals carried signed stories by their experts from the training camps. The motion-picture news services showed the men engaged in their routine work. Certain of the clergy denounced the contest from their pulpits. It was no fault of the promoter that all of them did not do so.

The champion submitted the syndicated story of his life—as written by his attorney. Angus Campbell sold some eloquent stories of his early struggles—composed by the versatile Jamie. The bookmakers figured out the odds and a Wall Street broker and a Broadway star made the first big wager, five thousand dollars to three thousand dollars that Campbell would not last fifteen of the twenty scheduled rounds. Applications for blocks of choice seats began to come in to Tony Rintell's Eastern office.

The champion established his training quarters close to Atlantic City, charging admission to his daily work-outs with half a dozen human punching bags. Campbell did not attempt anything like secret training but located in such an inaccessible hamlet in the Adirondacks that the rabble did not bother him. As always, he devoted much time to cross-country running; he could not afford a big stable of sparring partners. Old Dan Mahoney who had handled him for years was in full charge and knew Angus like a book. It was certain that he would be in the pink when the bell rang.

Jamie seemed to realize the gravity of the occasion and behaved beautifully. He often soothed Angus with his skill on the bagpipes, an instrument manifestly unsuited to urban life. He stampeded a few cows, set flocks of crows to cawing and raised thoughts of murder in the camp; but Angus seemed to enjoy it and there were no neighbors to complain, so Dan Mahoney sternly repressed his own anguish and let the atrocity continue.

By June, the books showed Tony Rintell a clear profit of a hundred thousand dollars. All the twenty-five-dollar seats were taken, and more than half of the rest. Five-dollar chairs were selling at a premium. Ringside space was estimated by the inch, like frontage on Fifth Avenue. Injunctions sought by all sorts of societies and individual guardians of morality had been refused. It was certain that unless an earthquake destroyed the arena or death took a principal the fight would take place.

The champion was training faithfully, even though he did make a show place of his big camp. His manager knew all about Angus Campbell and several of his stable had felt the crushing impact of his blows. They were agreed that he was "one tough bird" who would not weaken under a few knockdowns, wherever they landed. He had no nerves. And all men—champions or false alarms—looked alike to him when he got their range. He wanted to win the worst way and knew he was all through if he didn't. So the champion left nothing undone to get himself just right for the big night.

It came at last, with special trains speeding east, north and west and with even conservative papers carrying front-page stories of the experts' last words as to the chances of the title changing hands. Without exception they picked the champion to win, barring a fluke. Betting odds had held pretty steadily at five to three. Campbell was too old; he had fought too many times against heavier men; the champ was too shifty for him and could hit fully as hard. On the dope there was nothing to it!

I have said that no fight was ever better covered. Were this a mere story of the battle by rounds I could do no more than garble a few of the great epics inspired by it—such as the immortal story written just after the fight by Confucius O'Brien, a fighting Celt whose lines sing as sonorously as the "Lays of Ancient Rome," and not forgetting many notable accounts penned by minor writers whose reputation may be said to date from this night. The two great press services covered it splendidly; not the fight alone but the crowd as well and the picturesque and notable characters crowded about the ring and all the other numberless details incidental to the flocking together of twenty thousand fans to witness one of the great dramas of the squared circle.

If I deal at all with the technical progress of the battle, it is merely to stimulate the reader's memory of some of these big stories; for impossible as it may seem, not one of the array of trained observers got the real, vital story which I am about to reveal, nor was it in the slightest degree their fault. There is no conceivable means whereby they could have guessed it. It was a secret of destiny, not even realized at the time by those who unwittingly fulfilled its irrefragable decree.

I turn to the crystal-clear analysis of Ben Hur written round by round as the fight progressed by an observer who knew the game from every angle; and I find that it was precisely five minutes past nine when Angus Campbell entered the ring and that he was generously received. Four minutes later the champion clambered in and the vast room exploded into sound. He was the favorite largely because nearly every man present had wagered something on him.

The weights as announced were: a hundred and eighty and a hundred and sixty-seven. Both men appeared to be in perfect condition. Campbell's biceps were rather small, his wrists and forearms thick and knotted. The great muscles coiled in his back showed where his driving power came from. His legs were like young oaks.

The champion revealed the deceptively smooth surface with no spectacular over-development which marks the athlete brought cunningly along to the point of perfection for the very hour of combat.

As if realizing that twenty rounds were none too many for the tough job he had in hand the champion waded in at once, trying for a knock-out. Campbell met him toe to toe, that being exactly the style of battle he liked best. The mob, perceiving that the ultimate ideal of the fight fan had been reached—where two big, game men elect to make it a hammer-and-tongs affair rather than a display of clever footwork and feinting—became delirious for one or two brief seconds and then crouched down in an intense concentration that the trump of Judgment Day would not seemingly have broken.

The champion was lightning fast and scored early and often; but no living man could mix it with Campbell and come off unmarked. Toward the end of the round both eased up a little because it was not humanly possible to keep up the pace.

The next few rounds differed in no essential from the initial frame. Ben Hur comments more than once on the clean character of the milling. Not once did either man attempt to take an unfair advantage. There were no foul taunts whispered in the clinches. Never did the referee have to utter a warning. They were two powerful, courageous men bent on winning by sheer strength and science. Stranger yet—and a record, in its way—not once did the referee have to order them to break. Nor did the crowd jeer on the rare occasions when as by mutual consent they clinched for a few seconds after a furious exchange. Every man there knew that he was seeing the fight of the age and that both were spending their magnificent vitality to its last drop!

A number of the reporters in commenting on the incessant slugging hazarded the opinion that the end must come in another round or so and named their choice; but it is not until the fourteenth that Ben Hur is able to give the edge to either. Referring again to his story I note that he acutely remarks that it is now evident that "Campbell is not only bearing the handicap of thirteen pounds of brawn but also of eight years of life." He remarks on the deepening lines running from nose to mouth of the older and lighter man, the growing slowness with which he moved about. But he was wading in as indomitably as ever, as willing to swap punches. Each man carried a knock-out in either hand and the champion was scoring oftener: but no such glutton for punishment walked the earth as Angus Campbell. It began to simmer down to the ancient truism. Youth was being served.

In the fifteenth and sixteenth rounds the fighting rose to such superhuman heights that the mighty arena became a bedlam compared to which an asylum for the criminal insane is a cloister of serene philosophizing. In these two frames Campbell was knocked down nine times. Not once was he roughed or tripped; clean punches lifted him fairly off his feet. The champion appeared to realize that it was now or never if he was to lay the specter that threatened to snatch his crown. But as often as he laid it the bloody specter rose again to confront him. The older man was by now a very horrible sight. His face had been battered out of all recognition and very nearly out of any human semblance. His right eye was entirely closed, his left swelled badly. His nose was broken and his mouth cut so that it seemed to wear a bloody and derisive grin. He

went down, rose; went down again. The bell announced the end of the sixteenth.

Both were very weak as they slowly rose from their chairs at the beginning of the seventeenth. It seemed certain that one more good punch would win for either. It was the champion who connected. Both swung their rights; but the defender was inside. It was perfectly timed and landed clean on the button of the jaw. Angus fell like a tree and did not move. Honest John White began to count him out.

It was not conceivable to Jamie Campbell that anything short of death could keep him from the fight. He had stuck close to his brother during the entire training season and had even been of some slight assistance. He rode with him in his private car, went to their suite in the hotel and stuck around until Angus went to sleep, it being his custom to have a few hours' nap just before a ring contest. Then Jamie fared forth to look over the town.

In that godless era it was one of the many boasts of this Western city that it maintained one saloon for every hundred and fifty inhabitants, counting women and children. It would be an exaggeration to say that Jamie Campbell visited each one during the following six hours; but those he overlooked were obscure places and off the beaten paths.

He had a hard head and had been abstemious for three months. He confined himself to Scotch whisky of which he could drink a great deal at any time. Nevertheless, about the time the first preliminary pair was being introduced at the arena, Jamie began buying drinks for strangers; a sure sign that he was not quite himself.

In each place he introduced himself; and as the brother of a celebrity, who might spill some inside dope, he had many drinks bought for him. Also the house set them up in generous fashion. Even so, the goodly roll Jamie carried dwindled away and was finally spent. Then he cheerfully contributed a few pibrochs on the bagpipes he bore under an arm. Whereupon suffering bystanders bought him more whisky to save their tortured ears.

Jamie carried in a vest pocket a precious ringside ticket. It was not until he had consumed more Scotch than most men can hold of water that his canny brain conceived the brilliant notion of auctioning off his seat to the highest bidder. He had some fuddled idea that as the challenger's brother he would be admitted free anyhow and escorted to the ringside, probably with a brass band! So in "Three Star" Hennessey's place he parted with his voucher for a handsome bonus. When that was at length expended he walked straight enough, gloriously but stolidly drunk, out onto the city streets.

He had no notion of the hour nor of the location of the arena. Asking his way a score or so of times he came by and by to where a dense throng waited outside the doors, unable to get in, like the overflow of a political rally. It is doubtful if he could have got himself admitted even had he kept his ticket.

As fate had it, he arrived at the precise instant when the referee leaned over Angus Campbell's body, swung his arms and chanted: *"One!"*

Destiny, moving in its implacable and irrevocable manner, had at length and in its own good time completed the pattern begun thirty years before in the tea leaves of an old wife of the Scottish highlands. It now made ready to show up the silly and futile plans of mere man and reveal itself by capping the improbable with the impossible!

Honest John White was this kind of a referee. Had that last blow of the champion's knocked Angus' head clean off his shoulders and into the press box he would none the less have continued his monotonous count over the decapitated torso. That was what he was hired to do.

Nevertheless he knew perfectly well that Angus was knocked cold. Both instinct and years of experience told him it was so. No physician knows more surely when the last sigh bears the soul from the dying than did John White know when a man was put down for the long count. So that when at the tally of *three* a shudder passed through the sodden mass over which he bent he was so astonished that for a brief instant he faltered in the count. Then he went stolidly on.

There was in Angus Campbell's body no more of life than can be expressed by a sort of sluggish metabolism and those involuntary functions which cease only after death itself. Feathers might have been burned under his nose, pins thrust beneath his finger nails, thumbs pressed into his eye sockets, all of the ancient, loathsome methods of bygone

days employed, and not an eyelash would have stirred. A cannon fired beside his ear would not have awakened him. And yet he did awaken.

Outside, untroubled by the hundreds who blocked the arena gate, unconcerned because he had no ticket, Jamie filled the bag of his pipes with a mighty lungful of air bearing a high alcoholic content and began to play. And the tune he chose—or that destiny chose—was *"The Campbells are Coming!"*

The bagpipes produce what may be called the X ray of music. Their peculiar and unforgetable timbre carries easily, through wood or brick, through the highest notes of a violin or the harshest rattle of drums. They are not to be drowned out by din of battle, the cheering of twenty thousand fans at a championship football game nor by any other noise created by God or man.

The sound of Jamie's pipes entered the arena and was audible above the pandemonium that reigned therein. But since every man's mind was already full of the valiant and bloody business being enacted no one paid the slightest attention to the thin squall which rode easily upon the crest of tumult. No one, that is, but——

The old song came to where that which had been Angus Campbell lay, being counted out. It entered his dull ears and found the sentinels of sound asleep. It passed by the brain, a senseless pudding. It groped farther, questing for the real Angus Campbell. In its search it dug down to a time far older than Angus and older than the tune itself. It grubbed in the roots of history before Roman keels grated on the sands of Dover—delved down to an age when Pict and Scot bludgeoned one another with crude weapons of wood and bone for the possession of a few miles of gorse and heather. It came to that which it sought crouching primevally in the ruins of Angus' body, and it touched whom it had found and said: *"Rise up, Angus Campbell!"*

And Angus rose as one from the dead.

At the count of six his one slit of an eye opened and Honest John White caught a gleam of frosty blue like the light reflected from a highland lake in wintertime. At seven he reached out and grasped one of the ring posts and began to drag himself up. As White's arms swung up to begin the fatal tenth count Angus stood swaying before him.

Technically he had won; for the champion's handlers, who knew a knock-out when they saw it, had already climbed into the ring to congratulate their man. But White's back had been turned as he was tolling off the count, and they slipped back under the ropes with bulging eyes and heartfelt curses.

To say that the champion was frightened when he beheld the resurrection of his opponent would do cruel injustice to a gallant fighter. But he was profoundly shocked and disheartened. He had wagered heavily on himself to knock Campbell out; he knew that if he had failed he could offer nothing better than he had been handing out for sixteen rounds.

White stepped back and Angus lurched blindly toward his foe. He didn't know where he was, or just who; but he knew that he was a Campbell and that the war cry of his clan was calling him!

Jerkily, like a somnambulist, he advanced; and uncertainly, despondently, the champion raised his arms and gathered himself together. Lashing out with a power that came to him from the deep reservoirs that lay below the utmost physical resources Angus smote his man under the left ear and the champion crumpled up and through the ropes, to fall into the arms of his seconds. Only the ropes held Angus erect long enough for Honest John White to raise his heavy arm in token of victory.

So was fulfilled the old wife's prophecy spoken thirty years before to a pair of freckled lads. "Muckle siller" came to Angus—through Jamie! Not to speak of the title and the picture rights, the vaudeville tours and all the by-products of a championship, there was fifty thousand in currency waiting for him in the promoter's safe.

A small part of it went the following morn to pay Jamie's fines. He stood charged with drunkenness, disturbing the peace, resisting an officer and for playing, unlicensed and in public, upon a *musical instrument*.

On all counts save the last he was clearly guilty as charged!

Thunderbolts

By Ellis Parker Butler

Author of "Tears and Temperament," "Up Liberty Hill," Etc.

Consult your lawyer on this story

WE had been talking of the law and the jury system and Drane, the young lawyer, had been defending both.

"You must admit, however, Drane," I said, "that the whole system—however excellent it may be—is still imperfect. Wrong does triumph in our courts now and then."

"Triumph?" said Drane, lingering on the word. "Triumph? No, I would not say that. The wrong side wins now and then—I admit that—but I'll not say that wrong ever 'triumphs' in our courts or elsewhere. Wrong may win something and appear to triumph at the moment but to my mind there is a vast difference between the triumph of justice—which is what you mean—and a temporary miscarriage of justice. Right does triumph; wrong never does more than have the upper hand for a short—or shorter—time."

I admitted that this was not what had been my belief. I saw what Drane meant, I thought, but I had never made the distinction he made. I had believed that sometimes right triumphed grandly but that sometimes wrong triumphed quite as grandly and fully as permanently.

"No," Drane said. "I think you had better get that out of your head. I doubt if any lawyer ever feels that wrong has triumphed, even when the right loses a case. Suppose I accept the case of a client whose success would be what you call a triumph of wrong. Suppose I win the case—keep the man out of jail or secure for him a sum of money, unjustly, in dispute. I have brought before the jury certain witnesses and I have made a superb plea. I win my case.

"The right is defeated; no doubt of that. But only temporarily. Wrong has not triumphed. Wrong, so to speak, has built a mud dam across the river of right, turning it aside for the moment; but I know it is a mere flimsy, stop-gap arrangement and not nal dictum that right must triumph eventually will correct all that sooner or later. No, old man; wrong never triumphs; triumph is the immutable prerogative of right, and of right only. And wrong knows it."

No doubt Drane was right. He might have instanced a dozen or a hundred cases to prove his point, which was, in effect, that the favorable verdict given to the wrong was like a bone thrown to a hungry dog, while a verdict for the right was a glow of pure light in the world. No doubt he could have instanced abundant examples in which the seeming triumph of wrong turned to bitter ashes.

"And it is a remarkable thing," Drane said, "that every new invention and discovery of man since the world began has tended to make the triumph of right more sure. Wrong uses these, of course. Wrong is often first at the bat with them; but the more science discovers the more difficult is the job of the lawyer who has to defend the wrong side of a case. Did I ever tell you about that Henson will case?"

"I have no memory of it," I said.

"More or less interesting," Drane said. "I don't know that it fits in with what we have been talking about, but it may, in a way. It was a case I knew I could not win. I went into court knowing it was lost and I won it."

Sam Henson, it seemed, was a big, burly brute of a man, rough and cruel to man and beast. He went West when he was twenty-three and found a nice girl and married her. Emmy was her name. But she gave him no children and as he piled up his fortune he treated her worse than the dirt under his feet. For months at a time he kept away from his home, getting into trouble with other women and raising Hades in his own way. When he returned he made life miserable for his wife.

There were about thirty years of this. Drane said he understood that Mrs. Hen-

fell into a "suffer in silence" state and this maddened Henson more than ever. All those years he had jeered at her, daring her to get a divorce. That was what he wanted.

He came home one night and he was rather thoroughly intoxicated. He raised the usual row and worked himself into a brutal state and actually threw his wife out of the house. He rushed her to the front door and threw her from the porch. She fell but did not suffer much physical damage. She picked herself up and went across the street and asked a spinster who lived there to take her in for the night.

All this was nothing but the usual drunken husband and irritating wife family row sort of business magnified in importance by the fact that Henson was a man of considerable wealth. One result was that Emmy Henson did not return to her husband's house; but from all any one ever learned he did not know this. He went away the next morning and did not return. His interests were in standing timber and in all parts of the West and, like a sailor, he probably had a "wife" in every port.

The one unpleasant feature of the affair for Mrs. Henson was that after leaving her for this last time Sam sent her no more money. He ignored her existence completely. For a while she did not mind this. She had a few dollars on hand and the small house from which she had been thrown was in her name. She sold that. She settled down in the home of the spinster.

Then a year or so later she began to have nerve trouble. It began with twitchings and increased to something like St. Vitus' dance—the result, possibly, of some injury she had suffered when she was thrown out of the house. That point is not important. What is more important is that the spinster—this Miss Sue Wanner—took care of her as if she had been a child. For six years she devoted herself to Emmy Henson day and night, waiting on her hand and foot, and all for love and without the slightest expectation of reward.

The two women lived as if they were sisters and in spirit they were. Sue Wanner, gaunt and thin and sharp of speech, took in such sewing as she could do and they managed to get along somehow.

Now and then Sam Henson sent a messenger to Emmy asking if she would consent to sue for divorce, but she would have nothing to do with him or his messengers one way or another. It was learned later that Henson had taken up with a woman and wanted to marry her but he gave Emmy no hint of that.

Things continued in this way until one winter. In January of that year Sue Wanner, the spinster, was laid flat on her back with paralysis. The doctor said she would never have the use of her lower limbs again but might live for many years. It was characteristic of this Sue Wanner that when she heard this verdict she mourned only on account of Mrs. Henson. She appeared to be, from every account, a good soul—salt of the earth.

This was the situation when Sam Henson sent his next messenger. This time Mrs. Henson listened. She was in dire straits for money and she could not let Sue Wanner be hauled off to the county poor farm infirmary after all Sue had done for her. She told Sam's messenger she was willing to dicker and when the messenger had departed she went to see Drane.

She was in a pitiful condition with her nervous shaking and her tears, Drane said.

Drane told her, immediately upon hearing her story, that she need not suffer for money. Whether she wished a separation and divorce or merely wished Sam Henson to support her she had the law all on her side; he could be made to pay her a reasonable sum at stated periods. He could afford it and the law could undoubtedly get at him. Mrs. Henson said that now that she had brought herself to deal with him in any way she preferred to have a divorce and have a sum settled on her and get it over with once and for all.

Drane told her that could be done and spoke of the sum she ought to demand. She was entirely reasonable about it. There was but one thing she seemed to desire—she wanted to make a will so that if she died the money she got from Sam would go to Sue Wanner. Drane said he would draw up a will and he did. In the will Mrs. Henson left all she possessed or might possess to Susan Wanner, her faithful friend and companion, and so on, and Drane took it to the house and had Mrs. Henson sign it before proper witnesses. He took it back to the office with him and locked it in his iron safe.

Word came from Sam Henson before long. He said he was glad Emmy had come to her senses at last and that he would talk the

matter over with her "as soon as he had time, because it was not very—important."

"I'm going to be down around that way in May," he said in his letter. "I'll let you hear from me before then, most likely."

In May Emmy Henson had another letter from Sam.

"I don't want to have any lawyer mixed up in this," he wrote. "I guess you and I can talk this over alone. If you don't like that, you can let it slide. I'm going to be fishing down the Birch Run with a couple of men on May 7th and if you want to meet me at the trolley shanty at the Green Hill Road about three o'clock in the afternoon I guess I can manage to be there."

Drane read this letter and advised Mrs. Henson to do nothing of the kind. He drafted a letter and showed it to her and in the letter he made her say that if Sam wanted to discuss the matter he could do so at Drane's office with her attorney present. But Mrs. Henson refused to let Drane send the letter. She said Sam was peculiar and she evidently thought Drane's letter was "just lawyer business." She said she would meet Sam. The most Drane was able to do was to persuade her to let him drive her to the trolley shack—it was a station—in his flivver. To this she agreed provided he would go right away in his car.

That seventh of May turned out to be an unusually hot day. The air was stiflingly heavy all morning and by noon big "ice-cream" clouds were piling up around the horizon, more like July than May. A May thunderstorm, an unusual event in that country, threatened.

At three o'clock Drane, with Mrs. Henson in his car, arrived at the Green Hill Road trolley station. He let her out there and as he glanced down the track of the trolley he saw a man—it was Sam Henson—climbing out of Birch Run where the trolley crosses it on a small bridge. Henson had a fishing rod in his hand and a creel slung over his shoulder. Drane saw this much and saw Mrs. Henson standing on the trolley track looking toward Sam Henson and then he sent his car forward.

He lost sight of the two instantly. The sky was covered by dark, slate-colored clouds. The next instant Drane heard a terrific crash of thunder, was dazed for an instant by a blinding flash of light and his car stopped. Its ignition system had been put out of business by the electric discharge.

Drane jumped out of his car and, looking back toward the trolley shack, saw Mrs. Henson prone on the tracks. He left his car and ran back. She had been struck by lightning and evidently killed instantly. The bolt had torn her clothing asunder and had burned a track down her left side. Her left shoe had been torn from her foot and the nails of her shoe heels melted into shapeless wires.

The lightning was still crashing deafeningly on all sides. Drane picked up the lifeless woman and looked up and down the road and up and down the trolley to see if any automobile or a trolley car was coming. Far down the track he saw another huddled form, close to where he had seen Sam Henson climbing out of the brook. From up on a bare hillside he saw a man come running, waving his hand and shouting. This was Jed Rogers, a beekeeper, who had a small shack near the top of the hill.

The rain began then, a tremendous downpour, and Drane carried the body of Mrs. Henson into the trolley shack. When he went outside he saw two more men climbing out of the brook. They reached the dead Sam Henson before Jed Rogers reached him, but Jed soon joined them. Drane went to see what he could do with the ignition system of his car.

Drane's town was the county seat and it transpired that Sam Henson had always held his "residence" there and his lawyer came down from somewhere to attend to the formalities connected with probating Sam's will. With him came his assistant, a bright young fellow named Hastings. Two of our local men were named as executors of Sam's will and in the will he left everything to one Aurelia Carstairs. This was the woman with whom he had been living and whom he had wanted to marry.

The whole affair, Drane said, seemed hardly worth giving two thoughts, as far as the money left by Henson was concerned. Jed Rogers, the bee man, let every one know just what he had seen and there was no reason for believing that he had not seen exactly what he told. He had been up on his hill, near the top of it—directly up from the bridge across the brook—when the two thunderbolts fell. He saw them both and both at the same instant.

"Like that!" he explained, snapping the fingers of his right hand and his left hand simultaneously.

Of course the affair made much newspaper copy—the husband and wife, so long estranged, going to meet one another and killed at the same moment. But as a legal proposition it was simple. No matter how sorry Drane felt for Sue Wanner, flat on her back and doomed to remain so, there was not a chance in the world that she could ever get a cent of the dollars Mrs. Henson had hoped she might have. This lady of elsewhere, Aurelia Carstairs, would get all of Sam Henson's money.

The law has decided, you understand, that when a man and a woman meet death simultaneously the woman is the first to die. She is legally the weaker and by legal logic dies first. By this logic Mrs. Henson had died before Sam and her dower rights—the money he could not will away from her if she was alive—lapsed back to Sam and, under his will, would go to Aurelia Carstairs. And there was Jed Rogers to swear that the two bolts fell at the same moment. And no one would doubt Jed; a more honest man did not live. Honesty and successful beekeeping seem to go hand in hand.

It seemed to Drane hardly worth while offering Mrs. Henson's will for probate, her possessions were so miserably trifling. Still it was his duty and he had no reason to neglect a duty.

He found young Hastings a bright, friendly young fellow and a good talker. Drane met him at the hotel by chance and Hastings introduced Drane to Mattoff, the elder lawyer. Mattoff was a stout man with a full face and big forehead. He wore spectacles that hooked behind his ears. He was all lawyer. He put aside Drane's suggestion that Aurelia Carstairs might do something for Sue Wanner as none of his business. He did not think she would, considering the way in which Mrs. Henson had been a dog in the manger. She was not the sort to give away anything, once she had her hands on it, Mattoff said.

They were sitting in the lobby of the hotel and Mattoff had a newspaper on his knee.

"I don't know," he said. "Some day I suppose things will be arranged so that everybody gets a square deal. I don't see how we can expect that now. We're all poor mortals and I don't see how we can expect the Aurelias to steer straight when even these big scientist fellows don't agree on what straight is."

"How so?" Drane asked.

"Well, I've just been reading this Einstein man's theory here—this relativity business. Upsets all the theories of all the scientists and astronomers and mathematicians—throws old Ike Newton out of court with his gravitation and all that. And clever stuff, too," said Mattoff. "I believe him."

"It is all Greek to me," Drane admitted.

"Greek to most folks," said Mattoff. "But here's an article that makes it clear enough. Take it along. Read it."

Mattoff got out of his chair, yawned and walked to the cigar counter.

"He's strong for Einstein," Hastings told Drane. "You should have heard him pounding Einstein and relativity into old Judge Grace this afternoon. Mattoff can convince a brass dog when he tries."

Drane glanced at the paper in his hand and tore out the page containing the Einstein article. He slipped the article in his coat pocket and threw the rest of the paper aside. For an hour or so he chatted with Hastings and then left him.

The formalities connected with probating a will are not serious in the courts of the Western State in which Emmy Henson and her husband maintained legal residence, and Judge Grace's court was notably lacking in stiffness. He was a kindly old gentleman and, within the law, desired to have as little formality as possible. There was no dispute regarding the Sam Henson will. No one protested that there was a later will or that this will was not properly signed or attested.

Drane, waiting his turn with Mrs. Henson's will, sat with one arm thrown over the back of a chair, watching Mattoff and rather admiring him. Mattoff was handsome and he was self-possessed. He was at home in the court as Drane had never yet been able to feel at home there. Even with no more important business ahead than presenting Mrs. Henson's almost valueless will Drane was nervous. His hand strayed to his pocket and encountered the bit of newspaper Mattoff had advised him to read. He took it from his pocket, wondering what it was and how it had come there. His eyes, undirected by conscious thought, fell on the words of the article on Einstein's theory, midway of the half column. He read:

Suppose a railway line is struck at the same instant by two flashes of lightning at two different points. How can we verify that they are simultaneous? By seeing them. But it takes

light a certain time to come to our eye from its place of origin. If we are nearer one flash than the other we will not see them at the same instant——

"Drane," Drane heard Judge Grace say, "you represent the deceased wife of this Samuel Henson, don't you? You represent her heir? You don't protest this will?"

Drane was on his feet instantly.

"That will? No. No—not if the dower rights of the widow are protected, your honor."

"Widow? Dower rights?" said Mattoff, turning to Drane. "My dear young man, there was no widow; there are no dower rights. Under the law——"

Drane was trembling. He was not sure he had anything but he more than half believed he had.

"My claim," he said, "is that I can prove by a reliable witness that Mrs. Henson outlived her husband an appreciable—a provable—period of time, your honor."

Mattoff put down the papers he had been holding.

"Your honor," he said to Judge Grace, "this is a new aspect. This, I assure your honor, is something of which I have known nothing. Will your honor allow me a few minutes in which to confer with Mr. Drane?"

"Certainly! Certainly!" said the judge, and Mattoff did confer with Drane. He walked to where Drane was standing.

"This is all new to me, I assure you," he said frankly. "My information led me to believe that this bee man—this Jed Rogers—was the only witness of the deaths, Mr. Drane."

"He was, as far as I know," Drane admitted.

"Well, then, what are you talking about?" Mattoff demanded. "I've talked to Rogers; I've seen his testimony before the coroner. He says, beyond all question, that he saw the two flashes at the same instant."

"Yes," said Drane. "Yes, he said that. I don't dispute that. But, here! Read this! Read this, if you will!"

Mattoff read the part of the Einstein article that Drane had so recently read for the first time.

"Well?" he asked.

"That's all," said Drane. "That is what I have. Jed Rogers saw both flashes simultaneously—he swore to that. But does not this count for something—Jed Rogers was on the hill, distant the shortest side of a triangle from Mrs. Henson. On the trolley track—the same straight track—her husband stood. Jed Rogers saw the two lightning flashes at the same instant—they reached his eye at the same instant. But, listen to this, Mattoff! He had to run down the long side of the hill to reach Sam Henson's body. He was two hundred feet farther from Sam Henson than from Emmy Henson when he 'saw' those two lightning flashes. The lightning stroke that killed Sam Henson had killed him and its light was on its way to Jed Rogers' eyes before the other stroke had left the clouds. Sam Henson was dead while Emmy Henson was still alive!"

Mattoff grinned.

"A fraction of a second?" he asked.

"Long enough to inherit her dower rights," said Drane.

Mattoff's eyes twinkled as he looked at Drane.

"You are a clever young man," he said with a chuckle. "You know this Rogers fellow will never change his statement and you know you can bring a hundred scientists to prove that light needs time to travel through the air and that it takes longer to travel the longer distance. You could make an interesting fight, Drane; most interesting! I'd like to fight this out in court with you, but I'm not going to. I can't spare the time. Or course, if Aurelia Carstairs thinks it is worth a fight, we'll fight. I don't!"

"What?" Drane exclaimed. "You are going to admit our dower rights?"

"Young man," said Mattoff, "I sat up with Judge Grace half last night convincing him that Einstein knows what he is talking about, and I convinced him!"

I asked Drane what followed.

"Oh, nothing!" Drane told me. "Sue Wanner got all she was entitled to under Emmy Henson's will—the full dower rights. The Aurelia woman got enough, I imagine, to satisfy her. Sue Wanner was able to endow a hospital with what she received and still have enough to live as well as a woman paralyzed from the waist down may."

"But how does that prove your point?" I asked. "How does that prove that wrong never triumphs and that right does?"

"It don't," Drane laughed. "It proves an entirely different thing. It proves what I have always claimed—that a lawyer is a

better builder of fiction than any author. You believed every word I told you and you were planning to use it, were you not?"

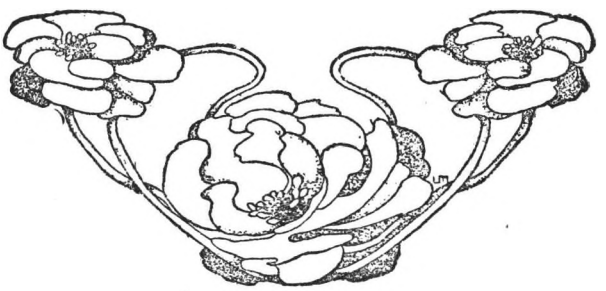
"I was."

"Well," said Drane, "it never happened. There was no Emmy Henson and there was no Sam Henson, no Sue Wanner, no Hastings, no Mattoff, no Jed Rogers. And no Judge Grace. There is no Birch Run out my way and no Green Hill Road. No such thing could happen. Ask any lawyer."

That was all Drane would say and he laughed when I accused him of begging the question. Later I told Drane's bit of fiction to another lawyer and he, too, laughed.

"He made his point," he said. "I think I see what he meant. He told you wrong could never triumph, didn't he? And wrong is a lie. The wrong is always a lie. Your friend Drane was showing you that while you might take a lie to be truth—this story of his—some one would see through it. Any lawyer would. And that is what he meant by saying wrong never triumphs. It's true, what he said, every word of it. Truth triumphs but error only hangs on by its toenails a while and then turns green and drops dead."

Which is all well enough, of course, but I do wish Sue Wanner had got that money!



GETTING UP STEAM

I WANT to amount to something!" is the cheapest talk turned out by the human tongue. Everybody indulges in it. Everybody, from the green girl dreaming of fame on the stage to the lazy youth wondering when father will send him out in search of a job, tells you the same old story. But not everybody means it. A man never means it until he adds: "I want to do something big, and this is it."

The one way to amount to something is to keep on doing things until the sum total of achievement is a mountain of result high enough to lift you above the common run. You will keep on doing things when you get up steam. The human being's steam is purpose. Get up steam! Have a purpose! Keep that purpose hot; keep it warm enough to pull you onward. No locomotive with cold boilers ever yet pulled a train. No lukewarm man ever yet had to his credit one respectable accomplishment. Unless you fix upon something big, something which keeps your ardor flaming, you will end in littleness.

If the thing you are doing now leaves you cold, drop it! Trying to be enthusiastic about a job to which you know you are unsuited is industrial suicide. Why waste, in bucking that stone wall, energy that would be fired into ten times its strength if put to congenial labor? Edison as a telegrapher was a joke. As soon as he felt the desire to work wonders with electricity he was a world beater. Purpose carried him from insignificance to a long life of dazzling splendor.

The man who lounges about, saying he wants to "amount to something" is so vague because he knows he is doing nothing that will take him to a definite object. He says "something" because he does not know what. When you say: "I want to do a big thing in trade—or medicine—or politics," you are on your way. The steam of purpose is beginning to draw you forward. Get a purpose. Get a purpose that thrills and enthralls you. That done, the rest is easy.

The Vanished Star

By Charles Somerville

Author of "The Mystery of the Gray Hat," "A Gentleman's Agreement," Etc.

At seven-thirty of a February evening the famous actress, Grace Robins, disappeared within the brief distance between door and curb. Where?

HAD it been a star of lesser magnitude who strangely and mysteriously disappeared in the full swing of New York's theatrical season, police and newspapers might have approached the affair with skepticism, scrutinizing flintily for a press agent's "stunt" behind it. The vanishing of an ordinarily prominent young woman of the stage only to reappear after a period of public sensation with an ingenious tale of explanation could be counted on to increase attendance at a theater. Thus a failure might possibly be lifted to success.

But in the startling case of Grace Robins such consideration did not—could not—exist. In eight seasons Miss Robins had become uniquely preëminent in her profession. Indeed she was generally acclaimed the new Maude Adams. Other managers admitted among themselves that "Delano's Robins" had the largest strictly personal following of any player in America.

She was beautiful, her voice wondrously melodious, her grace was exquisite and her art fine. And greater even than these compelling gifts for popularity was a personality that seemed to emanate goodness, sweetness, tenderness and gentle humor. Invariably she evoked a response of personal affection in the hearts of her audience. In her appearances the play was by far the secondary thing. The public crowded to see and hear Grace Robins. Besides, Delano, her discoverer, teacher and master of the art and craft of the theater, was not to be suspected of fathering a fake publicity exploit. The more so because her disappearance could affect him solely in one way—could only cause financial loss. "Great Fortunes" was a comedy especially written to fit Miss Robins' personality. With an understudy in the rôle its success at the National was foredoomed to collapse.

Not only had the celebrated, beloved actress vanished but with her Jennie Crozier, her maid. They had left Miss Robins' apartment in the Hotel Stenton in Fifth Avenue at half past seven o'clock of a February night. Unquestionably Miss Robins had left the hotel with the purpose of entering her motor car to be taken to the theater only ten blocks away, there to prepare for the one hundred and tenth performance of the run of "Great Fortunes." In evidence that she expected nothing unusual to occur and had meant to return immediately after the performance was the order she left for supper to be served in her rooms at half past eleven o'clock with covers for three—Delano, herself and Eugene Haynes, the playwright, who at that time was to have read his new comedy to manager and star.

John Bender, the soldierly, grizzled door attendant at the Stenton, positively recalled the departure of Miss Robins and her maid. He had remarked to Miss Robins on the "nastiness" of the weather. She had acknowledged the comment with a smile and had paused while Crozier adjusted her furs high up on her neck. Bender had continued to observe them as they stepped outside. There was a high, icy wind shrilling through Fifth Avenue driving with it plumes of fine snow that powdered the walk and pedestrians and the roofs and noses of the motor cars.

Bender then saw a tall man in visored cap and goggles and a huge bearskin coat—presumably Miss Robins' chauffeur—step forward, touch the actress' arm and guide her toward the curb. Blanketing snow blasts had cut off Bender's further view.

This had been absolutely the last seen of the actress and her maid.

Knowledge of a sinister event having befallen them began when Edward Tompkins, her chauffeur, called on the telephone from the Stenton lobby to the star's apartment to ask if the clocks and watches up there had gone wrong and did Miss Robins know it was nearly quarter to eight? Astonished to

hear she had left her rooms at half past seven Tompkins went straight to Bender, the doorman, only to receive positive information that Miss Robins and Crozier had left the hotel at their usual time. Tompkins then blamed himself for not having alighted from his car and gone to the Stenton door to escort Miss Robins for he reasoned that because of the blinding snowstorm she had been unable to distinguish her own automobile and had accepted the aid a zealous taxi driver had offered.

The National Theater was only ten blocks away but traffic conditions, congested as they always were, would, with the additional impediment of the weather, make travel very slow. Therefore he waited another five minutes before telephoning the theater to ask if she had arrived. The answer was returned that she had not. Tompkins agitatedly explained to the house manager his reason for calling and when at eight o'clock Miss Robins had not reported at the National, Delano was informed. Over the telephone the impresario questioned the servants in the Robins apartment only to find them as surprised and uneasy as himself at the news. Their replies convinced him the actress had foreseen no delay when she departed. He had Tompkins put on the wire and instructed him to make energetic inquiry outside the Stenton, especially at the cab stand, for news of Miss Robins.

When later, Tompkins, a clear-eyed, intelligent young fellow with three years' trustworthy service with Miss Robins behind him, went to the National to report to Delano he, Tompkins, was wholly in a quandary. He had questioned every person with duties outside the Stenton and in the lobby but none, save Bender, the doorman, had been able to tell him anything. He had found none who saw Miss Robins and her maid entering any vehicle at the curb.

Tompkins, however, had one statement to make of significance.

"I drew up at the hotel about a minute ahead of time," said Tompkins, "and just about then a young fellow came up to me as I sat at the wheel and asked me to look at a card he held out. I took it and stooped to look at it under the clock light while he said: 'Buddy, I'm way out of luck. I got here three weeks ago expecting to go to work but haven't been able to land a thing.' The card he showed was made out in the name of Harry Morris—a membership card in the Chicago chauffeurs' union. Then he said: 'Say, here's the ticket on my overcoat. I had to put it up—for six bucks. It's worth seventy. Be a good sport and buy the ticket, will you? I need the money for eats and a place to sleep.'

"I'd noticed he was wearing only a sweater and no overcoat and that was pretty tough on such a night. So, though I wouldn't take the ticket, I gave him two dollars and the address of a boarding house where they'd grubstake him till he landed a job. He thanked me and went away and then I looked at my clock and saw it was twenty-five minutes to eight and wondered what was delaying Miss Robins."

"Can you give a good description of this young fellow?" asked the manager eagerly.

"I'm afraid I can't. He kept me pretty busy looking at the union card and pawn ticket. Besides he had his sweater collar pulled up over his chin and his hat pulled way down on his eyes. But he was tall and slim and talked like a young fellow."

At quarter to nine o'clock Delano with his shock of iron-gray hair and cameo-cut features went before the curtain at the National, his great perturbation concealed as well as possible, and announced that a sudden indisposition would prevent Miss Robins' appearance and an understudy would take her rôle. He withdrew into the wings with a sharp murmur of disappointment in his ears.

Delano decided a full alarm must be spread, the aid of the police and newspapers solicited and private investigators of the highest skill money could engage employed in a hunt for the strangely missing star. To these, however, when they assembled in the huge room outside his offices in the National he made emphatic statement as to his conviction regarding Miss Robins' sudden and complete disappearance.

"You can dismiss any idea that she has gone away willfully and voluntarily," said Delano. "That could only happen I am sure in the case of her suffering mental aberration. In that event her maid, Jennie Crozier, a perfectly reliable young woman, would have got in touch with me somehow before this. Somebody has suggested a love affair, a sudden, impulsive, secret elopement. Impossible. Miss Robins held no secrets from me—she had no love affair. Besides, I have always found her most keenly appreciative of the opportunity I gave her,

of the efforts I have made to develop her art. She would never have taken herself off without warning, knowing that it would be utterly to my confusion and financial loss.

"This goes also to dismiss any theory of a disagreement or quarrel between us causing Miss Robins to disappear to satisfy a pique. Miss Robins is, I am grateful to say, a star who doesn't have piques and there has never been the slightest trouble between us. In short, gentlemen, Miss Robins undoubtedly has been kidnaped and is being held for ransom.

"Come to think of it, it is amazing that such a thing has not happened before—the kidnaping of a highly popular star in the middle of a successful run. The criminals have rightly judged that every day of Miss Robins' absence must cost me hundreds—thousands of dollars. You may recall that there have been newspaper articles recently which in all probability suggested the kidnaping plot. These were to the effect that last year Miss Robins had played to box-office receipts of more than one million dollars. That was quite true."

"I suppose inquiry has been made, Mr. Delano," questioned one of the reporters, "as to the man with the chauffeur's union card—whether he has turned up at the boarding house Tompkins sent him to?"

"He hasn't arrived there. Nor will he, in my opinion. It was plainly a ruse to hold Tompkins' attention while Tompkins was impersonated easily enough in the storm conditions by the man with the goggles, visored cap and bearskin coat that the doorman saw approach Miss Robins, touch her on the arm and lead her toward the curb and, unquestionably, to the kidnaper's car."

"If that's right those fellows took a big chance," commented one of the detectives, "snatching up a well-known woman like that right in front of her hotel. I'll say it was a mighty bold trick."

"Bold but not difficult," Delano replied. "You have only to picture the two women unsuspectingly entering the closed car. Miss Robins would enter first, the maid following. As the maid seated herself opposite her mistress a man behind would be in perfect position to lean inside the car, grasp Crozier around the neck and clap a stifling hand upon her mouth. In the very same time an accomplice on the other side of the car would have opened the door and either throttled Miss Robins to silence or frightened her into it at the point of a pistol. It is all done inside the car, you see, the car shrouded in dazzling drifts of snow, people passing with faces bundled and eyes half shut against the night's storm."

Nearly forty-eight hours had passed, barren of the turning up of a single clew to carry the searchers beyond the Stenton in their efforts to trace the subsequent movements of Miss Robins on Wednesday night —that of her disappearance—when Merritt, Delano's secretary, laid a letter on his chief's hand-carved, ebony desk.

"Just came upon it, sir, among thousands that have come to-day. Mostly from amateur sleuths, of course, or cranks with wild notions. Some just plain liars. But this may be genuine—reads right."

The letter was addressed to Delano on an envelope of excellent quality. The address was typewritten and also the contents. It was dated the same day as that of its receipt and it read:

DEAR MR. DELANO: We have waited a full twenty-four hours after obtaining possession of the person of Miss Grace Robins before communicating with you in order that you might have ample opportunity to realize that the job has been very thoroughly done and not a clew left behind, and that it is useless for you to look for any real aid in the matter from the police, reporters, or private sleuths you have employed.

Under favor of the weather our plan worked like a charm.

This letter should indicate convincingly that you are not dealing with ordinary reckless, stupid, clumsy, illiterate crooks.

We have carefully calculated the money loss you will sustain by our retention of the person of Miss Robins, which we are fully prepared, if necessary, to continue for an indefinite period. That, of course, depends on you. We figure her absence will entail a loss on you of fully two thousand dollars a day. At the same time we wish to be neither unreasonable or exorbitant.

Miss Robins will be returned immediately on payment by you of twenty-five thousand dollars if you negotiate with us in good faith at once. But for every week thereafter you may delay in doing business in the vain hope of our detection and capture the ransom fee will increase ten thousand dollars. Prompt response to our demands will, you see, be greatly to your advantage. Let it be understood at the outset and once and for all that we will deal only with you directly and personally. No dickerings with private sleuths or lawyers.

It is expected that this letter will get to you to-day—Friday. And if it does, perhaps it would be advisable to allow more time to pass so that you may be thoroughly convinced that all the aid you have called into action is help-

less to aid you. Let us suggest that if by Sunday you are willing to do business you have only to put twenty-five thousand dollars in your pocket and get into the roadster you so frequently drive alone in and drive out to the Boston Post Road. Figure to hit the Boston Post Road at three in the afternoon. After passing Eastchester keep a sharp eye out on the right for a large oak tree on whose trunk will be seen an irregular bare patch as if a horse had chewed the bark. To further identify this tree look up and you will see a faded polka-dot necktie bound around one of the smaller branches. Beyond this tree—about fifty feet—is a lane. Turn into it, park your car there and wait. We figure you will arrive there at a quarter to four o'clock.

If within half an hour we have not established communication with you it will mean that circumstances in our opinion have made the meeting unsafe for the time being. Therefore, do not wait longer. You see we are being as considerate of your valuable time as possible. In case of failure to connect with you then, await further communication by letter. It will be promptly forthcoming.

If you deal squarely with us and do not attempt to connive with the police or others to lay traps for us and are willing promptly to pay the moderate ransom demanded, there is no reason why Miss Robins, your great and valuable star, may not be restored to you within three hours after our meeting.

Do not attempt to pass marked money on us because an expert microscopic examination will be made of every note before acceptance. Such an attempt would only cause you delay and an increase of the ransom fee.

Miss Robins is being well cared for, but is naturally in a highly nervous condition. Hesitation on your part may bring about a dangerous collapse in her case. For her sake as well as your own, let's get down to business.

There was no signature.

To have observed the soft smile and studious eyes of Delano as he read and reread the letter could not possibly have been to detect the white-hot fury burning within him. The money loss he faced was not its chief cause. Delano was thoroughly the artist. The accumulation of wealth had been only a pleasant incidental to his great career. But the lovely personality of Miss Robins had long since attracted from him the keen affection of a father with its strong element of protectiveness. That she was being subjected and had been subjected to outrage, detention, an agony of anxiety and possible brutality was infuriating to the man. And the artist felt fierce indignation because anybody had dared to lay profane hands on the rare, exquisite actress of his creation—felt as a great sculptor might feel whose masterpiece had been stolen and had fallen into the hands of vandals. His lips grew white as he considered that the shock of the experience might do permanent injury to her highly attuned nervous system and thus to her art.

"Do you think the letter is the real thing, Mr. Delano?" asked Merritt finally.

"Yes."

"Shall I notify Inspector Crane?"

"No," replied Delano sharply. "By no means." He rumpled his shock of iron-gray hair with his slender, white-fingered hand. "I think I'll attend to this strictly myself."

"But, Mr. Delano," his secretary protested, "do you mean that? Finally? Do you realize the danger? Surely you don't mean to surrender yourself with twenty-five thousand dollars on your person into the custody of a gang of crooks! What's to prevent them simply robbing you and demanding further ransom? Or what certainty is there that it isn't just a plan for robbery—what evidence is there that they are the men who have kidnaped Miss Robins? They offer no proof—no written word from her as evidence that she is really their prisoner."

"That is a point well taken," conceded Delano. "But if the letter is genuine and I call in the aid of the police and we fail to trap these criminals don't you see the reprisal of torture they could visit on Miss Robins? I can't take a chance of that. Yet, by Heavens, I don't mean to let them triumph either!" There was only this momentary explosion of emotional expression. Delano immediately resumed his soft smile. "You see, Merritt," he went on, "this mind of mine has been accredited with great ingenuity in handling situations of the drama. I'm wondering if it will serve me in a real life thriller. At any rate I've until Sunday to think it over. Meanwhile, if you please, no word to anybody regarding this letter."

II.

It may easily be imagined how galling and humiliating it was to Delano to find himself under the whip hand of a coterie of criminals, the bitterness not lessened by the evidence that they were crooks of unusual daring and executive skill. In the period between the receipt of the letter and the following Sunday afternoon he gave the best efforts of his keen intellect to evoking a strategy out of which would come the rescue of Miss Robins and confusion and punishment upon the perpetrators of the outrage

against her. The police chase had fallen, stumbled and remained at a hopeless standstill from the very first. But Delano had the letter and in it saw his opportunity for a battle of wits with the outlaws.

It came Sunday afternoon. According to the specifications of the letter the time had arrived for action if he was to meet the kidnapers. There was a flicker of Delano's characteristic soft smile when at two o'clock he ordered his roadster brought to his home in Riverside Drive. The day was clear and sunny but very cold. He was bundled in fur coat, fur cap and a huge sable rug as he settled down to the wheel on his journey of adventure. He rode alone as the letter demanded, and otherwise faithfully fulfilled all the instructions of the kidnapers.

He had ridden along the broad, historic highway of the Boston Post Road for a full forty minutes before he came upon the big oak tree with the scarred bark corroboratively identified by a faded, polka-dot scarf tied in one of the small upper branches. As indicated, fifty feet beyond, was a lane. He drove his car into it and waited. It was hidden by big trees on both sides which offered also considerable protection from the raw wind. A foot warmer besides the sable rug, fur coat and cap kept Delano in bodily comfort but impatience rose to irritation and then to exasperation as the time dragged along, minute after minute, a quarter of an hour, twenty, twenty-five minutes and then the full half hour, the time allotted, with no appearance of the kidnapers.

However, the letter had stipulated the possibility of a nonappearance, definitely instructing him under such circumstance not to wait longer than the half hour. But he had blanketed his engine against the cold, so he decided to remain another ten minutes. Then he put his car in motion, backed out of the lane and started on the return trip of his fruitless journey.

He wondered what could have alarmed the criminals, for he was convinced that the letter was genuine. He had consulted neither the police nor his private investigators. It was not his purpose to cause the kidnapers the slightest suspicion of espionage. He had been keyed for the encounter and was out of all patience to have the day come to naught, an impatience embittered by the thought of Grace Robins still a prisoner and suffering, as she must be, agonies of apprehension.

He touched up the speed of his car and had gone some five miles on the journey home when a sharp, clear voice suddenly penetrated the fur cap over his ears.

"Mr. Delano," came the crisp call, "take the first road to the right ahead—go up about half a mile and we'll follow."

He looked swiftly around to his right at the six-cylindered limousine moving with speed nicely attuned to that of his own car. Two men were seated in front. Like himself they were fur bewrapped and goggled, their faces entirely concealed. Delano flashed a glance into the body of the limousine. A similarly accoutered man rode in the sheltered tonneau.

The impresario promptly nodded acquiescence, made the turn into the rustic road at which he soon arrived, sent his car along for what he judged to be the distance named and came to a halt. A minute later the other car drew up behind him.

"Clever!" Delano grudgingly admitted to himself. "Clever to have worked it this way!"

Evidently they had watched him all the time he waited at the appointed rendezvous, watched him as he turned back in chagrin, watched him as he traveled homeward. Had he been in connivance with police agents or other detectives it would have been natural they would have rejoined him by this time or that there would have been the passing of some nature of signals between them.

The door of the limousine opened and the man inside called:

"Mr. Delano, have the goodness to step in here and talk things over."

Delano saw that one of the other men had taken up a position to hide the license number on the rear of his car, the other similarly placed to conceal the number of the limousine. Unhesitatingly he made his way into the limousine and the door of it snapped closed behind him.

The face of the man inside was as completely concealed by fur collar, cap and goggle as his own. Moreover, with a handkerchief in his gloved hand he kept his mouth and nose from sight.

"This looks," the man remarked from behind the handkerchief, "as though you had decided to take the affair philosophically."

"The consideration first in my mind is to bring relief and rescue to Miss Robins," an-

swered Delano. "If it has got to cost me twenty-five thousand dollars to do it—well, you've managed this trick in a manner that seems to leave me helpless—that compels me to consider your demands. Still, my promptness in responding should weigh with you," he added good-humoredly. "I think at least it should take off about five thousand from the ransom."

"Not a cent less than twenty-five thousand," said the other emphatically. "Now then—have you brought that much money with you?"

"I haven't brought any money with me—yet," said Delano gently.

The other man straightened and his voice became brusque.

"What was the use of your coming at all in that case?"

"Easy, softly," tempered the manager. "Asking Miss Robins' pardon for using such a figure of speech in connection with her, but aren't you—well, aren't you asking me to buy a pig in a poke? How do I know that you can make good? How do I know that you really have Miss Robins in your possession? How do I know that this isn't merely a scheme to get me in this car with twenty-five thousand dollars on my person and at your mercy so that you can take me to some lonely spot, batter my head in, rob me and toss me out somewhere where my body will remain hidden for months? Have you any written word, for instance, from Miss Robins herself?"

"I have something," returned the man at his side, "that should be just as convincing."

In the sunlight cutting through the car window he displayed a ring with a cluster of blazing diamonds. Delano instantly recognized it as a Christmas gift of his own to Grace Robins.

"It is unquestionably Miss Robins' ring," he admitted. "Yet what does that prove? Nothing, I fear. How can I tell but that you have murdered and robbed her even as you might be planning to murder and rob me of the big sum of ransom money if I had it on my person? In all other respects I have implicitly met the conditions of your letter. I am willing to pay the money if I must. But you surely cannot deny that the position I take is a reasonable one."

The man, evidently the master of the trio, was silent for several seconds.

"What proof do you demand," he said finally, "before you will come across with the twenty-five thousand?"

"Simply the evidence that you are genuinely in the possession of the person of Miss Robins. Suppose you take me to her—let me see her. I don't ask permission to talk to her. And I will submit to any conditions of the journey you care to impose to protect yourselves from detection."

"And after that?"

"I will draw the money from the bank the first thing to-morrow morning, this being Sunday, and the exchange of the ransom for Miss Robins can be effected in any manner you may dictate."

"All this is mighty inconvenient, Mr. Delano. But I'll concede you have reason back of the stand you take. Just a minute while I talk this over with the others."

He got out of the car and after a consultation with the other two—all three tall, powerfully shouldered men—he returned to the manager's side.

"All right," he said. "They are willing. It goes. You will be allowed to see Miss Robins—talk to her for that matter. She couldn't tell you any more than what according to the statements from you I've seen in the newspapers you have already guessed—that under the covering afforded by the snowstorm and wind Miss Robins and her maid were decoyed into our car, overpowered when inside and carried away. There was very little rough treatment as perhaps you would like to know. Naturally you must expect to be kept in ignorance of the route of this trip we are going to take. You will have to submit to a blindfold."

"That's not unexpected," assented Delano good-naturedly.

"All right. Take off those goggles and put these on."

The impresario promptly made the change. He found that the lenses in the leather hoods of the goggles furnished were of ground glass and absolutely opaque.

"If you don't mind," said his custodian, and patted over Delano's person to find if he was armed. "Not," added the man laughing, "that it would do you the least good if you were."

"Had no such thing in mind, I assure you," said Delano. , "Is it to be a long ride?"

"What?"

"Oh, I'm not trying to pump you. But if there's much of a journey ahead I'd like

to compose myself for comfort—perhaps a little nap. For I haven't had more than fifty winks since Miss Robins' disappearance and I'm fagged out."

"Let me compliment you on the sensible way you are accepting the situation."

"Irritation and excitement wouldn't do any good, would it?"

"No," said his companion. "Go ahead; take your little nap if you can. I give you my word you'll see Miss Robins alive and well at the end of the trip."

"Thank you. But what's to become of my own car?"

"One of us will take care of it and be on hand to meet you on the return trip."

"Good," said Delano. He took hold of the padded-leather hand strap beside the window, inclined his head against his arm and stretched his legs in an attitude of complete relaxation. He felt the smooth start of the high-powered car as a turn was effected and he judged that the car shortly thereafter swung north in the wide Boston Post Road. His pose was wholly that of a man drowsily at his ease. But as a matter of fact his brown eyes behind the opaque ground glasses were wide open and brightly alert. He could, of course, see nothing. But he was listening—listening purposefully with all the concentration of which he was capable.

At midnight Sunday the newspapers were getting the information that Grace Robins, the famous actress, was back in her apartment with her maid, Jennie Crozier, as well —both safe and sound—and that not a cent of the twenty-five thousand dollars' ransom fee had been paid for the rescue.

Instead, in Inspector Crane's office in police headquarters sat three sullen, manacled men while their finger prints were being checked up and their criminal careers noted from the backs of their rogues' gallery photographs. And in a chair beside the inspector's desk sat Delano. His elbow was on the arm of it, his chin resting in his hand the while he studied the three prisoners, upon his face the habitual, soft smile of amused thoughtfulness.

It held a maddening fascination for James Holder, alias "Big Ned" Green, notorious forger, counterfeiter and bank burglar. He couldn't help swiveling his eyes toward the face of Delano every little while though each time he reluctantly did he glared wildly at the famous theatrical manager, making no effort to hide his bitter chagrin. Blaney Porter and "Kid" Newman, mere highwaymen, not of Green's grade, but his underlings and aids in the kidnaping conspiracy, were on the other hand glowering at their leader. The heads of both were bandaged, covering wounds of battle received when an hour and a half before a squad of police had smashed their way with axes into the back and front of an old-fashioned frame house in a thinly settled section of the Bronx near the Westchester County line.

It was to this house that Delano had been taken and permitted a five-minute interview with Miss Robins and Crozier. He had been allowed to remove the blind goggles the while, but darkness had fallen before they arrived at the place of his star's concealment and the windows of the room where she received him were scrupulously curtained against his having the slightest view of the environment of the house. Their talk had been limited to a mere greeting and his inquiry as to her state of body and mind. This had been reassuring. Again the leather motor glasses with the blind lenses had been adjusted and he was led out of the house.

Delano had surrendered himself with complete docility in every movement. He had in leaving the house with the chief conspirator's hand on his arm stumbled down several steps to the gravel pathway, an act of clumsiness excusable because of his blindfolded condition. He complained that it had caused one of his shoe laces to snap and asked his captor's permission to stoop and adjust it. The delay was of less than a minute. Then they resumed their place in the car.

Delano sighed openly with satisfaction.

"It was a wonderful relief to find her in health and good spirits," said he.

"And there'll be no further delay about paying the ransom money?"

"Why should there be—now?"

"That's the right way to look at it. Tomorrow then—the same time and place?"

"That suits me," said Delano and sank back again at ease in the well-padded seat.

At about the same point in the Boston Post Road where the kidnapers' car had first come up to him Delano's shoulder was shaken and Green called banteringly:

"Here you are, guvnor; all off for Kankakee!"

His own car was restored to him and the

kidnapers' automobile turned swiftly north and disappeared in that direction. But if later it turned to follow the impresario's roadster that car would have been observed to travel as directly as it might be guided to Delano's home in Riverside Drive. The evidence from his manner, his docility under leadership and his direct seeking of his home after the meeting with his imprisoned star was all to the effect that he was fully resigned to keeping the compact strictly.

The smashing police invasion of the remote house in the Bronx had fallen as a sickening surprise on a trio prematurely celebrating their success with liquor and viands, laughter and song.

Now, as he sat handcuffed before Inspector Crane, Green did his best to temper the expression of bitter rage in his eyes as he turned to Delano and said:

"You drew the brass ring all right. You put it over on us good and plenty. At my age, with what the big boy in the black gown will hand me, if I ever come out of Sing Sing it will be to go to an old folks' home. Seeing what you are going to cost me you can hardly blame me for being curious. How'd you do it?"

The famous dramatic director placed in the criminal's hand a small, square sheet of paper which he tore from a block pad. Big Ned Green stared blankly at the following cryptic notations:

N. 5.22—W. 15.36—N. 18.47—W. 19.28—N. (x) 12.23—E. 17.12—N. 7.15—E. 18.11—S. 34.19—E.

"What the devil does this mean?"

"Why, that's a time and compass chart of our trip out to the house where you held Miss Robins prisoner."

"Time and compass chart?"

"Yes. By minutes and seconds from the time you started out with me in your car. Indicates how long you took on each stretch of road and the direction you next turned into—as you can see for yourself. We started north and traveled five minutes and twenty-two seconds, then turned west for fifteen minutes and thirty-six seconds, then north again and so on. Obviously from the chart you carried me in a circle and then some distance farther east with a short turn south. Having the time between turns accurately fixed there only remained as guesswork at what speed you drove the car.

"I have ridden so much in motor cars that I was certain that though blindfolded I could sense the pace at which the car was driven unless you elected to hit up a very high speed, which was unlikely seeing that we drove most of the time in daylight and it was to be expected you would travel at a normal speed in order that no especial attention be attracted to the car. In fact you maintained an even speed of about fifteen miles an hour, save on the long run south where I noted with an 'x' that the pace had gone up to about twenty.

"Now it should be plain to you how later with watch and chart in hand I was able to direct a police chauffeur driving at the same speed accurately along the route you had taken to the journey's end."

"But how did you manage to make the damn thing—with me right aside you?"

"And me sleeping?" laughed Delano. "Remember I held the arm strap at the window with my head leaning against my —well, as a matter of fact my ear was leaning against my wrist watch and I might have snored to you but to myself I was diligently tolling off the seconds—keeping tabs on the turn. My other hand was in the roomy pocket of my fur ulster and in that was this pad and this stub of a pencil and it only took the slightest movement of my fingers in the deep pocket to set down the letters and figures of my chart."

"Neat," admitted the deflated kidnaper. "But just the same this could only bring you close to where you knew the house to be. How could you be certain that you had the right house? Seems to me the bulls took a mighty big chance smashing into the place with axes. You'd have been in a mighty big hole of it happened to the wrong house."

"No chance," replied Delano.

"Why?"

"That time I stumbled off the steps and had to tie my shoe—remember?"

"Yes."

"There was nothing the matter with the shoe. But when I'd brought the police up and, by the chart, we had every reason to believe we had found the house, I had Inspector Crane send an expert gumshoe artist creeping up the lawn and beside the gravel path he found this stub of a pencil where I'd stuck it in the turf when I pretended to tie my shoe. Then they got out their axes."

"Say, Ned," snarled Kid Newman, feeling of the bandage on his battered brow, "whoever told you you had anything in your head but fat?"

A Chat With You

ON January seventh we spoke of the trouble we had in selecting proper titles for stories and offered a year's subscription to the reader who sent us in the best selection of titles for that number.

Out of all the letters received the one from John Preston True seemed the best. He gets the subscription. He left many of the titles unchanged, but the changes he made were all good and he gave good reasons. "Summerhold" by Thomas McMorrow should have been "Back Home," according to Mr. True and we think he was right. "Summerhold" doesn't mean anything. Why did we put it there? Because the author put it there. Blame it on McMorrow.

WHEN we made the offer of the year's subscription we had a thrifty idea that we could get some good out of it. We would get some new ideas. We would see how good titles were chosen and we would learn to do it ourselves. It did not work. Mr. True and several others proved that they had imagination and wit enough to select good titles—but watching them do it did not help us at all. We are as badly off as before. We have seen Jack Dempsey fight, we have heard Caruso sing, we have seen Mr. True give good titles to stories—but we can't do any of these things any better than we could before. It's a gift. Almost everything is. This magazine is—at the price.

FOR instance we have a novel with which the next number of the magazine will open. The author calls it "Morgan le Fay." That is a pretty title, a romantic title, a mystic title, but does it mean anything? It brings us back to the days of King Arthur's court. There is the atmosphere of glamour about it. We liked it and we were going to let it stand when the thought came to us that it did not tell anything about the story. A good title ought to give some indication of what was to follow. This did not, because the story is not a tale of the legendary days of King Arthur but a story of to-day. We tried to make up another title which would sound just as well and tell something more about the story.

IN the story there is an American cowboy who joins the French Foreign Legion and fights his way up till he has the rank of a general. By this time every one thinks he is a Frenchman, but when he gets back to the cow country he surprises them. We thought of calling the story something like "A Cowboy Legionary," but that is a fool sort of sounding thing anyway. "Under Two Flags" might have been good but Ouida snapped that up long ago; and anyway, this is a story of the West. There is a lost mine in the story and there is an awfully attractive girl who is called Morgan le Fay. It ought to be easy to get a title for a story like this, but

we don't find it so. Here is a peach of a story. We ought to be able to pick out a title with a swing to it that would hit the story off at the same time. We can't do it. We are calling it "The Lost Mine of Morgan le Fay." A rather lame sort of title but a wonderful story. One of the best.

SEVERAL readers told us in their letters that it didn't matter what we called the stories as long as we gave them good ones. That is cheering. We can get the good stories. The authors attend to that. As for the titles, we will try to do better.

A LITTLE while ago we published a letter from a man who urged us to keep girls and women out of the stories in THE POPULAR. Whether he had lately been disappointed in love or was just a plain misogynist, he didn't want any girls mixed up with his fiction. As a matter of fact our trouble has been not to keep the girls out of our stories but to get them in. If we could find a really good love story we would publish it with enthusiasm.

WHEN we say a good love story we don't mean anything mawkish or sentimental. Still less do we mean what the motion-picture director calls "sex stuff." We don't care for psycho-analysis either. Really good love stories are written once in a generation. Very few people can write well about women. Since Shakespeare died there have been only one or two.

GOOD titles are a very good thing," writes Mrs. Ruth Nelson, "but I happen to know several regular readers of THE POPULAR and without exception they all grab the magazine at the first opportunity and read it through without stopping. Attention, interest, and desire seem to be completely blended in such a way as to keep them spellbound. In fact, I know several wives who seem actually jealous of the attention your magazine receives from their men-folks. So, cheer up, Mr. Editor!"

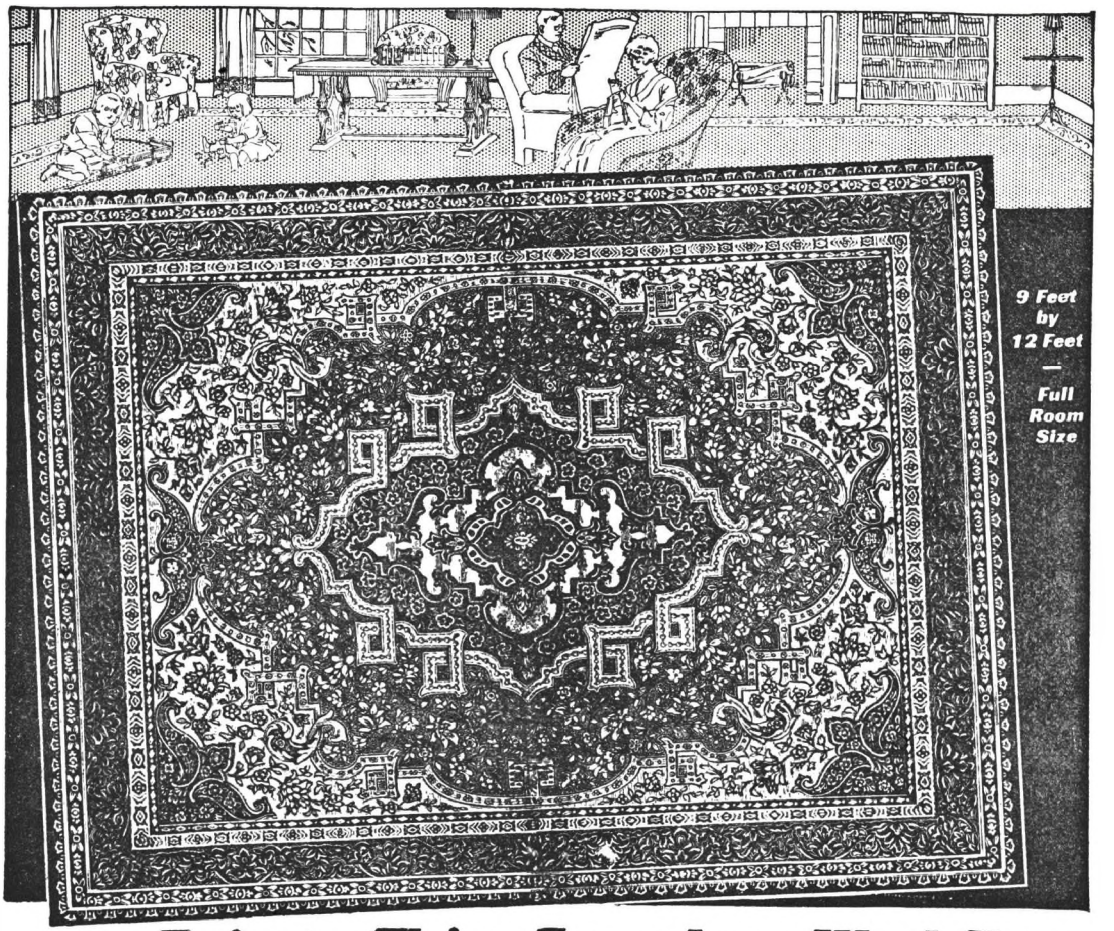
Thanks! We *are* cheering up as fast as we know how.

A MAN wants stories without a girl," writes Ruth Singer. "How silly! We are here, a part of the scheme of life and I believe we are as important as the aforesaid gentleman. You don't give us namby-pamby love stories. I don't like that kind, either. But wherever men and women meet, love is apt to creep in. Why keep it out of the stories? I wonder what is the matter with the gentleman who resents the appearance of a girl in the stories. He isn't normal. That's that!"

WE add to the list of charter members the name of Seldon M. George, of Wollaston, Massachusetts.

"I remember the first number," he writes, "and have not missed one since. On my shelves are many books, among them 'The Taming of Red Butte Western,' 'Chip of the Flying U.,' and other old POPULAR friends, but my present frame of mind leads me to say that 'Breed of the Wolf,' barring the title, is the best you have ever printed."

"Barring the title!" We always get hit on our weak spot. Such is life.



Brings This Seamless, Wool Face

$1 BRUSSELS RUG

The House of Hartman gives you the opportunity of a lifetime to get this magnificent, seamless, wool face, tapestry Brussels rug on the easiest terms and at a smashed price. Only $1 to send now and we ship the rug. Use it 30 days on Free Trial, then if not satisfied, return it and we refund the $1 and pay transportation charges both ways. If you keep it, take nearly a year to pay.

Bargain Price and Nearly a Year to Pay

Woven from Fine Wool Yarns

SUPERB COLORING

One of the most artistic designs ever offered in a seamless, wool face Brussels Rug. Closely woven from finest wool yarns to give plenty of service. Note also the handsome appearance of this rug. You will be delighted with the colors—tan, brown, green, red and blue, blending charmingly into soft, rich shades.

Elegant Oriental Medallion Pattern

The pattern is of a rich, oriental effect with a medallion center and a pleasing border to match. Only by seeing this rug on the floor of your own home can you appreciate how elegant and durable it is and how it alone will beautify an entire room. Try it—at our risk. Send the coupon and $1 today.

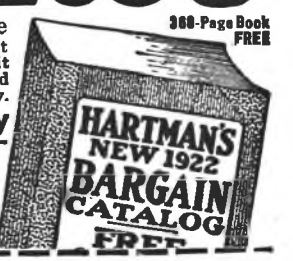
Order by No. 34DMA27. Price $26.75. Send $1 now. Balance $2.50 monthly.

FREE Bargain Catalog

368 pages—filled with stunning bargains in furniture, rugs, linoleum, stoves, ranges, silverware, watches, dishes, washing machines, sewing machines, aluminum ware, phonographs, gas engines, cream separators, etc. 30 days' free trial and small monthly payments on everything. *Postal card or letter brings it free.*

"Let Hartman Feather YOUR Nest"

368-Page Book FREE



HARTMAN FURNITURE & CARPET CO.
Dept. 4319 Chicago, Illinois

Enclosed find $1. Send the Rug No. 34DMA27. I am to have 30 days' free trial. If not satisfied, will ship it back and you will refund my $1 and pay transportation charges both ways. If I keep it, I will pay $2.50 each month until full price, $26.75, is paid. Title remains with you until final payment is made.

Name.....

Street Address.....

R. F. D..... Box No.....

Town..... State.....

State Your Occupation..... Color.....

HARTMAN Furniture & Carpet Co.
Dept. 4319 Chicago, Illinois

Chesterfield

CIGARETTES

Of Finest Turkish and Domestic Tobaccos – Blended

They Satisfy

Taste is a matter of tobacco quality

We state it as our honest belief that the tobaccos used in Chesterfield are of finer quality (and hence of better taste) than in any other cigarette at the price.

Liggett & Myers Tobacco Co.