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The Popular Magazine

PUBLISHED MAY. 7, 1915

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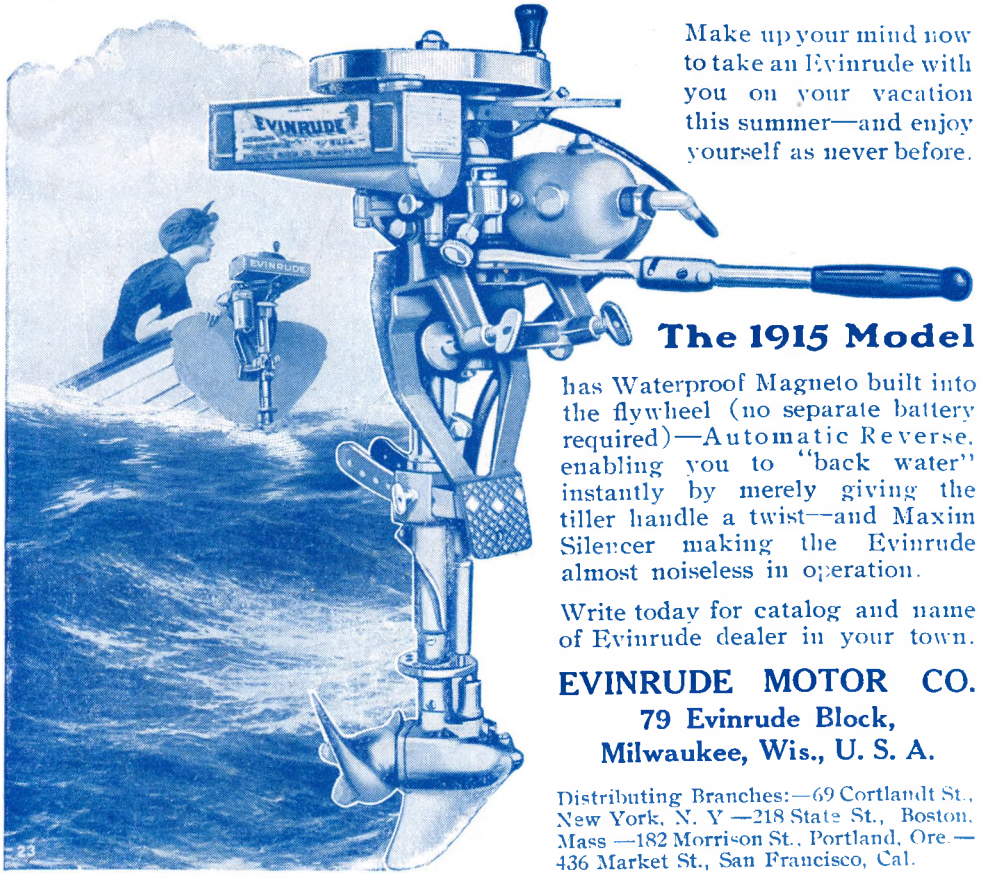

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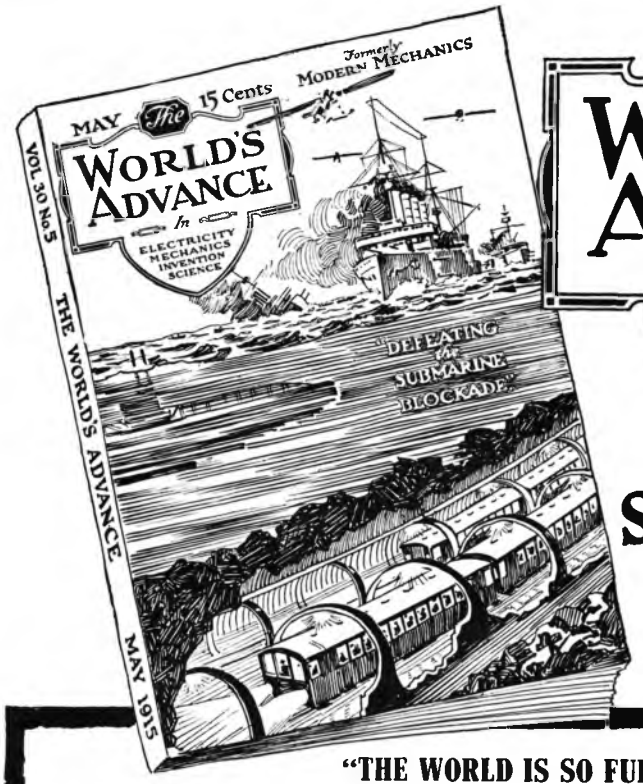

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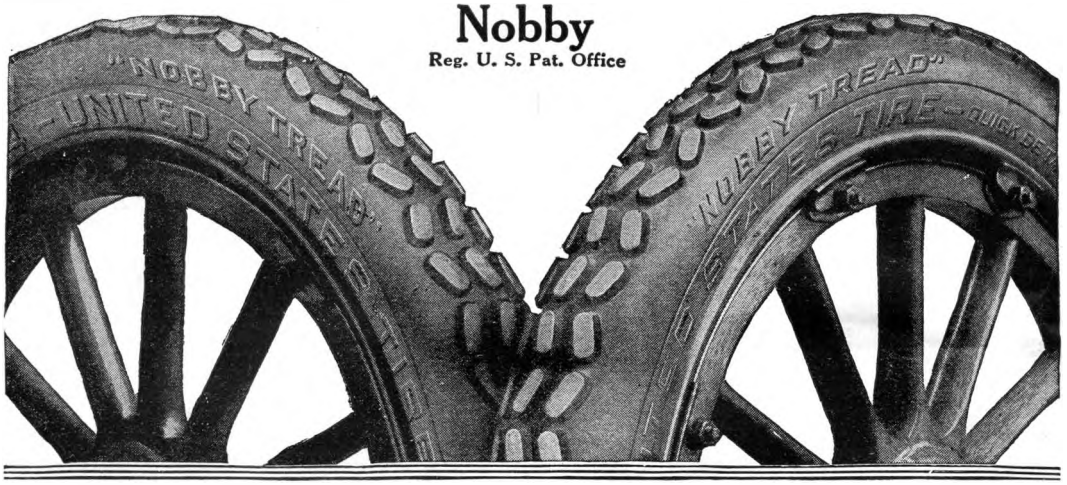

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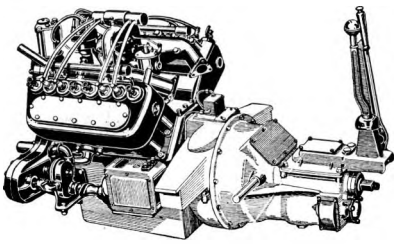

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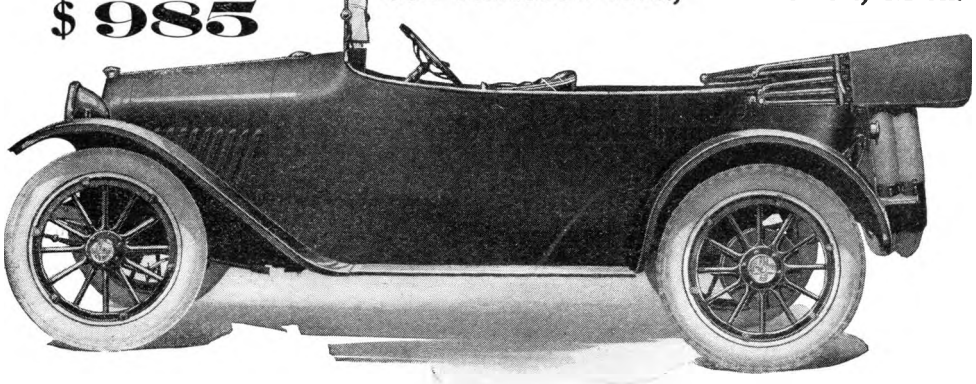

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VOLUME XXXVI NUMBER 4

TWICE-A-MONTH

The Popular Magazine

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MAY 7, 1915

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THE POPULAR MAGAZINE

VOL. XXXVI. MAY 7, 1915. No. 4.

Sunny Mateel

By Henry Herbert Knibbs

Author of "Overland Red," Etc.

Mr. Knibbs is the author of some forceful verse as well as some forceful Western stories. He has the artist's eye for beauty as well as the boy's love of adventure; and in this novel of the Northern wilderness he has given us wonderful glimpses of Nature in her ruggedest and loveliest aspects, and has peopled the rough places with a number of men and women whom to know is to love: Sunny Mateel herself, the girl of the wilderness; Ward Selden, the young civil engineer seeking the Goddess Opportunity beyond the limitations of convention, beyond the reaches of most men; Sunny's father, the fine old trapper; and the irresistible Uncle Clem.

(A Book-length Novel)

CHAPTER I.

IT was early morning when Ward Selden entered the chief engineer's quarters, and, much to the latter's amazement, tendered his resignation. The chief demurred. He liked Selden.

"See here, Ward," he said kindly, "I know this country is pretty wild and lonesome, but you might as well stay till we all go out. We're nearly through up here. It looks bad—for you to quit just now. *I* know you're not a quitter, but the head office doesn't."

"I've thought about all that," said Selden. "You've given me a clean report so far. You passed the work in the cut, and that was my last job."

Donald McLean, the heavy-shouldered, keen-eyed chief, glanced out of the cabin window. "Well," he said at length, "have it your way. I suppose you're going South?"

Selden shook his head. "I'm not going out," he replied.

The engineer shifted in his chair and gazed at the younger man. "Got the woods fever, Ward?"

Selden colored, but his eyes did not waver. "Something like that. I haven't a thing against the boys or the job or——"

"The boss," added McLean, laughing. And he leaned back in his chair. "I know that. That is what makes it difficult to talk you into staying. There's nothing definite to adjust. But we can use you, if you'll stay."

Selden, gazing at the other, again shook his head.

"Well, Ward, I'll O. K. anything you may have to turn in. You know how to get me in town, if you care to tackle another job with us."

Selden shook hands with McLean, and presently strode from the building into the sunlight of the pleasant June morning.

He squared his shoulders, breathed deeply, and struck out briskly for his own camp.

Overworked, overtired, he was for the moment incompetent to focus properly his own position in resigning from work that had paid him well and that had been well done. In reality, his condition was due to a natural revulsion of feeling toward the rigid mechanical excellence of engineering. He felt in some indefinite way that he was guilty of a kind of treason in deserting the all but completed work on the new railroad. He had rendered faithful service to the company. McLean, with Celtic shrewdness, weighed and understood his assistant's condition of mind. With liberal forethought, the older man refrained from urging the younger to stay, knowing that he would make good eventually, wherever placed.

"I feel now as though I had the whole North country to myself, for once," said Selden, as he arrived at his camp. "And just as soon as I put this branch of the Transcontinental behind me a hundred miles or so, I'm going to holler good and loud and long. Then I'll feel better."

A few hours later, with a sparsely equipped pack, he struck westward through the unspoiled forest. Far from the raw, red rails of the new road, he rested on a rise of ground, studying a map until the haze of twilight startled him to action.

With the last glow of sunset, he pitched his tent and prepared supper. After supper he smoked. There was nothing to ruffle the placid surface of his solitary content. As it grew darker his tiny fire's quick, cheerful blaze became as a companion, sympathetic with his optimism. He planned great things, gazing across the dwindling embers of his neglected fire. Near him the clustered columns of the spruce grew rigidly distinct as the summer moon drew slowly up the sky. From erstwhile unfathomable depths of nothingness, giant trees sprang into being with awesome swiftness. Indistinct masses of gray moss became instantly beautiful with a moonlit radiance, mysterious and unreal. Overhead, the bulked branches seemed to draw apart, the blackness round them melting to the dim edges of their clustered tops. A fanciful filigree of web and woof—the myriad twigs and needle-pointed leaves of pine and fir—spread in keen tracery against a silvery curtain edged with blue and pricked with stars.

The last embers of the fire melted to gray ash. A little wand of smoke drew up, thin and straight. Meeting a faint midnight breeze, it quivered, threading its wavering course through an angle of moonlight. Selden gazed at it, smiling in the sheer contentment of his isolation. Presently he rose and stretched sleepily. As he did so, a shape paced across an illumined opening and stood for a second with wide antlers thrown back and eyes glowing softly. An instant—a breath, and the shape was gone.

From overhead came the soft lisp of birch leaves in the summer wind. Selden rolled in his blankets. A gust of warm air lifted the dead ashes of his fire, then fled while the great gray flakes settled here and there like indolent butterflies. The moon dipped slowly to the distant hills, rocked in a haze of blue, and vanished.

The Northland forest, brooding in somber, unslumbering majesty, seemed

to await with myriad restless murmurings the coming of the dawn.

CHAPTER II.

Methodically Selden packed his kit next morning, pausing once or twice to glance at the awakening sky. He noted with complacency the faint mist and heavy dew—harbingers of a hot day. His would be the shady trails of the forest—the untraveled wilderness—and not the blazing, rock-ballasted roadbed with its heat and toil.

Not altogether a theorist in woodcraft despite his somewhat romantic fondness for the wilderness, he planned his journey systematically, approximating each day's mileage and estimating each day's supplies. With pack of provisions, blankets, rifle, and ax, his outfit did not weigh over forty pounds. Naturally strong, he felt for the time being exceedingly fit, which was partially due to a wearing, nervous excitement of which he was unconscious.

Setting his course, he strode briskly through the forest, consulting his compass infrequently, as the going was particularly easy. The timbered plateau across which he journeyed would, he knew, drop off to ravines and hills after the first few days' travel. These ravines and hills would, in turn, become the deep valleys and mountains of the rugged North country with its big timber, its cold blue lakes, and heavy, rapid streams.

Morning after morning he awoke to prepare a hasty meal, cord up his pack, and trudge on with a speed and determination that astonished himself. "It's a big country!" he exclaimed frequently. "Big, and there's something big to be done up here."

Quite sanely he realized that there were just as big things to be done in his home town, for instance. He did not gloze his reasoning with excuses to himself. Frankly he admitted that he was soul-sick of systematic toil and that his goddess, Opportunity, lurked oftenest in the city streets, but he longed to find her beyond the limitations of convention, beyond the reaches of most men. Well enough he knew her, this goddess Opportunity, knew that eventually he would find her on the bright highways of the city, or in the quiet, sumptuous offices of wealth, or perchance amid the wrangling din of anvils and the rush of steam, but gypsy-like he longed to find her, fresh and fair and young, a dryad or a naiad of the great, evergreen solitudes.

His soul craved the romance that his technical training and its subsequent rigid application had denied him. He had served faithfully at a task he disliked. What could he not do should the task be to his liking?

Despite his physical activity and his engrossing reflections, the solitude was wearing him down. He caught himself talking aloud. He hurried. He hardly allowed himself the essential noon rest and food. He smoked and planned long into the night when he should have slept from dusk till dawn. Of a clean mind, and ordinarily fearless, yet it was the very essence of fear, the eternal questioning of silence that urged him on. He reasoned that his unrest was ambition, eagerness to explore the unknown where his goddess dwelt.

One morning he awoke to gaze into the valleys flanked by great hills heavily clad with the dusky green of distant fir and pine. The limpid mountain stream of yesterday, shallow, scarce covering the pebbles in its bed, became to-day's torrent in the valley. Fording it with pack and rifle held above his head, he was wet to the armpits.

Already he had been seven days on the way. From each rise of ground he had scanned the northern sky line for a hint of smoke or the gleam of raw planks that would mark the en-

virons of the new lumber town of Newhall, his tentative destination. Nothing but the endless sweep of gray, rocky crests and green mountainsides to the very haze of the horizon met his gaze. Many times he was about to fire at a deer, but he knew he could not use all of the meat, and his own supplies were sufficient.

"You must hurry! Hurry! Hurry!" an insistent voice reiterated.

"Why?" he would ask himself aloud.

"Hanged if I do!" he would exclaim, and deliberately slacken his pace, thus stubbornly controverting the voice of his own unrealized fear.

His eyes showed lack of sleep, and at times had a startled expression, and for no apparent reason. By this time he was traveling on sheer moral grit. His physical being stood the ordeal well enough, and he would have reached his destination without mishap had he not relaxed his usual vigilance on the eighth day.

Crossing a trapper's line, he hesitated, consulted his compass, and finally swung from his set course, following the trail and looking for the blaze that he knew must be spotted somewhere on the trees ahead. He felt himself growing sleepy. Presently he stumbled, caught himself, and the jar sent a tingling from head to heels. "Part of me is asleep," he soliloquized. "Wonder who traps up here? I'd like to talk to some one, if only in sign language. Hello! There's an old bear trap, or coop for the bait, at least."

He stepped to one side to examine the little log hut in which the bait is usually secured.

"Can't be any trap around here. No one traps bear in June."

Finding the beaten trail had relaxed the unnatural tension of his nerves, and with it his customary vigilance. Otherwise he would have noticed that the short log over which he had stumbled in the dead leaves was the drag, round one end of which was a chain, in turn linked to a rusted, unsprung, and moss-concealed bear trap.

He stepped backward to look for the trap before venturing down the trail. The leaves and moss at his feet suddenly became animate, puffing up in a rustling cloud and falling away. The quick crunch of the huge steel jaws was almost soundless as they gripped his leg above the ankle. The "offset" teeth of the trap bit deep into the tough leather of his high service boots. He dropped to his knees, groaning. In the first rush of fear he cried out for help. Then he worked round, and painfully slipped out of his pack straps. His rifle lay close to him. He lifted it and fired three times rapidly. Then he lay back against his pack, white and sweating. Below the grip of the trap, his leg was becoming numb and swollen. He bit his lips, and drawing himself up tried to pry the jaws of the trap apart with his rifle. Then he remembered that he carried a small file in his kit. He found it, and began filing on the neck of one of the springs. "It's tempered steel!" he kept repeating to himself. "It'll take hours to file through that—and then there's the other side."

Nevertheless he gritted his teeth and went at it, unheeding the twilight that brought with it the quick chill of the Northern night.

"If I only had water—I'm burning up!"

He shivered, and was about to begin filing again when a something, bulking darker than the dusk of the trail ahead caught his eye. He dropped the file and raised his rifle. But he lowered it quickly as a voice, unmistakably girlish and musical, said slowly: "You could see to shoot me better if you was standin' up. I heard you shoot a while back—so I come over—wonderin'——"

"Perhaps I could," replied Selden, and his voice sounded far away to him-

self. "But I'm caught—in—a bear trap. Better—help me——"

He was conscious of a startled cry and then quick hands that lowered his head against the pack. The pain ceased and he felt himself drifting down—down into a velvet blackness that lay across his face and smothered him.

CHAPTER III.

Selden's eyes opened. Directly above him were the stars, doubly intensified by the utter darkness that curtained all save the narrow pathway of sky toward which he gazed. Slowly his awakening senses distinguished a dim figure that sat at his feet; a figure that swayed rhythmically. He felt a tiny spatter of water on his face. He put out his hand, and felt the broad ribs of a canoe. He knew he was going downstream as the canoe met no resistance, was free from thrust motion. For a long time a kind of comfortable indifference bound him to silence. Then he endeavored to raise himself. The effort awoke the numbed nerves of his injured leg, and he dropped back.

"Where are you taking me? Who are you? I can't see three feet ahead of me."

"I can't neither," replied a voice melodious with an undercurrent of laughter.

"You're a girl!" he exclaimed.

This time his answer was a wordless melody, low and unmistakably feminine. Selden frowned. He could not appreciate the necessity for laughing just then, or being laughed at. The girl, interpreting his silence, added hastily:

"'Course I'm a girl. Been one ever since I could recollect. I'm Sunny Mateel. I lugged you down to the canoe. I dropped you, too—but you didn't know that." She sighed. "You'll be weighin' close to a hundred and eighty pounds, I reckon. I'm feelin' sorry that you got ketched in our bear trap."

"You seem to be," replied Selden. Then, a bit ashamed of his speech, he added: "Pretty good guess at my weight."

"I've lugged enough deer to know," said the girl, swinging steadily to the paddle.

Selden shifted his position. He bit his lips that she might not hear him groan. "Where does this adventure end?" he asked presently. "How badly am I hurt?"

"Oh, you ain't hurt turrible bad. Dad'll fix you up. He's first rate at doctorin' cuts and sech." The girl paused, holding the paddle clear of the water for a moment. "This ain't no adventure—if you're meanin' like storybooks. I'm jest a takin' you to our camp to get fixed up, same as I would any livin' thing that was hurt—and warn't good to eat."

Despite his pain Selden laughed outright. "You're somewhat of a humorist. Now anything that *was* good to eat?"

"If it was hurt bad—why, I'd jest snick it with my knife and stop its sufferin', and then take what was fit to eat home. We do need fresh meat. Dad ain't got a deer for quite a spell."

"How far are we from Newhall?" asked Selden.

"'Bout two days. But I can't talk to you no more. Round this next bend is the Ox Bow Rips, and I never run 'em at night before—so I got to watch out."

Selden could hear the faint murmur of disturbed waters; a murmur that grew to a reverberating "boom" as they swept round the sharp bend. He felt a slight twitch, and recognized the tug of a speeding current. Then the low booming grew still louder.

"Don't risk it on my account," he called.

"You scared?" the girl asked quickly.

"Scared? No!" he shouted. "Go as far as you like."

Suddenly, but with that soft, mysterious glow, that suggestion of having been ever present but invisible, the full moon burned clear and white on the black water. It spread in a wide silver path that softly illumined the tossing tide below and etherealized the graceful figure now standing in the stern of the canoe.

With the first thrust of her paddle as the little boat entered the rapids, Selden knew the girl had complete mastery of the craft. Despite the dip and lift of the boat and the quick, staggering shock of dropping sideways—to straighten again instantly downstream, and above all the rush and rumble of the "rips," Selden had no fear, but gazed intently at the girl's face. Pale she seemed in the moonlight, pale perhaps in contrast to the night black of her hair. He wondered at the lithe swiftness with which her arms flashed from side to side. He could feel the quick jump of the canoe as she threw her weight into a stroke to stem a cross current or meet a lifting wave.

"Perhaps she's the real naiad—or a dryad loosed from her tree. But this moonlight would make any girl enchanting. The good old sunlight is the real test. But what's the difference? We do like 'em pretty, though!" he exclaimed as if smitten with a very original thought. And he realized that they were in still water and that he had spoken aloud.

"Like what's pretty?" queried the girl.

"Oh, girls," blurted Selden defiantly. "I didn't mean to speak."

"Girls?" she queried slowly.

"Yep." And Selden grinned in the dark.

"Well, I'm not going to laugh. You thought I would. But I got you on my hands—with that leg—and it *is* chawed up pretty bad. Then dad's over to Newhall and won't be home till tomorrow. And besides," and the girl hesitated, "you ain't told me your name or what you be. I said I was Sunny Mateel——"

"I beg your pardon. I forgot that part of it. My name is Selden—Ward Selden, civil engineer. Just left the new Transcontinental—Northern branch. I'm sorry to have got mixed up in your bear trap. Sorry I've made you all this trouble——"

"Trouble!" exclaimed the girl, laughing. "This here's fun!"

"Oh—is it?" queried Selden ironically.

The girl became suddenly grave. "Now I'm beggin' *your* pardon," she said slowly. "I meant that findin' you there—that—oh, just to have somethin' new and different happen—somethin' to do, makes me happy like. I think I like takin' care of folks that's hurt or sick. We ain't never sick, though."

"That's good," said Selden, smiling.

"Dad says I'm happy all the time. He called me Sunny first. But he don't allus know. Thinks when I'm singin' or whistlin' I'm happy. He says my chirrupin' makes him feel good. But it's awful lonesome sometimes."

"Just to hear you laugh would cheer up any one. You've really done a whole lot for me already."

Sunny Mateel laughed softly, quite unconscious that she was laughing. "Reckon I have done a lot for you. Ketched you in a bear trap first time you come a callin'. Then dropped you luggin' you down to the canoe. Then resked drowndin' you in the Ox Bow. And now I'm wonderin'," and she ceased speaking as she ran the canoe ashore, "jest wonderin' if you ain't pretty nigh mad at me and dad? It was our trap you was ketched in."

"Not a bit of it!" replied Selden as she helped him from the canoe. "It was an accident, pure and simple. I was to blame for poking around instead of attending to my business. But you needn't go to any trouble. I can

sleep anywhere. I have blankets, and I'm used to roughing it."

"Here's our camp," she said. "You need help. Lean on me and I'll help you up the trail. It's only a short spell now."

Slowly they climbed the path to the cabin. Halfway up Selden gasped and staggered. He felt the warmth of her strong young arm about his shoulder. "I'm all right now, Miss Mateel."

"My name's Sunny," she replied quickly. "And you ain't all right, neither."

When they had entered the cabin and she stood in the full glow of the lamplight, Selden half smothered an exclamation. The girl was bewilderingly beautiful. Intent on making him comfortable, she failed to notice his astonishment, but eased him to the big armchair, bolstered it up with blankets and pillows, and, kindling a fire, made tea and fried some of the inevitable bacon and potatoes.

After they had eaten she bathed and bandaged his injured leg. "Dad'll fix it up better when he comes," she explained. "He knows just how strong to make the yerbs to heal it up."

"Thank you," he said, settling in the comfortable chair and leaning back wearily.

"I reckon I'll go to bed," she said presently, as she put a stick of wood in the stove and adjusted the damper. "I'll leave some fire, for you mebby'll get chilled some toward morning. If you need anything jest call and I'll come."

"Good night," said Selden as she stood before him for an instant. "Won't you shake hands? You're a bully good fellow!"

"Sure!" exclaimed Sunny, with a boyishness and camaraderie that was good to see.

For a while Selden sat gazing out of the window. Slowly his overwrought nerves quieted and his eyes closed, only to blink open again as the pain of his injured leg throbbed spasmodically. "Naiad!" he murmured. "Pretty! Huh! 'Pretty' is an insult. The girl is outrageously beautiful—and she doesn't know it, either."

CHAPTER IV.

With a cheery morning greeting Sunny Mateel entered the camp kitchen where Selden lay propped up in the big chair.

Taking the two buckets from the bench near the door, she disappeared up the little trail toward the spring. Selden rubbed his eyes, so quickly had she passed in her noiseless moccasins. "Pail's gone," he said. "And I'm awake —blame the leg!" He grinned nevertheless. The "romance" he had craved seemed nearer than ever before. "Let me see," he soliloquized. "We'll call this Act One. Scene: Morning in the Mountains. Trapper's Cabin. Hero seated in father's armchair with chewed leg. Enter Wood Nymph fresh from a —a—well, I suppose it's a feather bed. We'll call it a 'downy couch' to preserve the flavor of romance. Nymph takes buckets and then disappears, left, tripping o'er the lea. No, she didn't trip, either. She walks sensibly and naturally. Let's see. Ouch! I can't use this leg, that's certain."

He settled back in his chair. "Well, I left the Wood Nymph at the spring. What next?"

He was answered by the heavy, soft *pad pad* of moccasins on the cabin porch. "That's either a grizzly or her father, judging from the step. Whew!"

A shadow fell across the doorway, and Selden glanced up to meet the gaze of the biggest man he had ever seen. He hastened to explain his position. "Good morning! I don't belong here. Got caught in your bear trap. Your

daughter found me. Helped me to get here. Sorry to inconvenience you. My name's Selden. Miss Mateel has gone to the spring——"

"Reckon you've told me the whole story," interrupted the big man, slipping a great pack from his shoulders and entering the cabin. "I feel pow'ful tender about your gettin' ketched in that there trap. Me and Sunny knowed where it was. I ought to took it out this spring. Got by me somehow. But bless my buttins if I don't make it up to you. Hurtin' you much?"

Selden shook his head. "Pretty stiff and sore. Wish you would tell me when I'll be able to get around again."

"Well, I'm your doctor, and I'll have you spry enough to ketch a weasel by next week—if the bone ain't hurt none. What you say your name was?"

"Selden—Ward Selden. I'm from the new railroad. Been working as engineer—civil engineer."

"I reckoned you was one of them surveyin' fellers by your clothes. My name's Mateel, Jed Mateel. I'm Sunny's pa and do trappin' likewise."

The great gray-bearded figure stooped and examined Selden's injured leg. "No bones tetched. Muscles ain't cut much, and the cord at the back ain't even scratched. That was what I was afeared of. I can fix you up quick. Hello! Here's Sunny!"

The girl set down the pails and ran to her father. "Dad," she said, "he ain't hurt bad, is he?"

"N-o-o. You bile some water and git some bandages and my box of yerbs." Then he turned to Selden. "Where'd you say you was from—the new road, mebby?"

"Yes. I was on my way to Newhall."

"Uhuh. Your gettin' ketched in that trap makes me think of Uncle Clem Putter's b'ar trap and a city feller. The feller hired Uncle Clem to guide for him—now this here'll smart a leetle—and the man walked right plumb into one of Uncle Clem's traps. He was some mad, too, but Uncle Clem he fixed him up, and when the city feller got so'st he could walk and was a goin' home, Clem took him over and showed him another b'ar trap, all set and ready. 'Now,' says Uncle Clem, 'I reckon to make it up to you for gettin' ketched in the first trap. Don't you go to steppin' in this one or you'll get ketched ag'in. Now I figure you're not gettin' ketched in this one makes us even.'

"The city feller was some mad. He up and cussed Uncle Clem somethin' pow'ful for a man what wore eyeglasses and collars, and he asked Clem if he thunk he was a ijjit.

"Uncle Clem he jest h'isted his braces with his thumbs and ses, ses he, 'No-o-o,' kind of slowlike, 'but there's no tellin' but what you might.' Uncle Clem's moughty close in his dealin's," added Mateel as he finished bandaging Selden's leg. "Thar now. In a week all you'll ever know about bein' ketched in that trap'll be a leetle stiffness. And don't you worry any about bein' a bother to us. We're glad to have you."

After breakfast Mateel helped Selden to the porch, and later the woodsman made him a makeshift crutch. "Now you can limp around some," said Mateel, standing the crutch against the porch timbers. "Reckon Sunny'll be right glad to talk to you. She gits lonesomelike, howbe she never says so. Now I got to do a leetle ploddin' in the garden patch. Weeds is poppin' up like school childern comin' out at recess."

A few days later Selden, who sat watching the old man shape a setting pole, asked suddenly: "Are you pretty busy this time of year, Mr. Mateel?"

"Nothin' to sweat on," replied the old man. "Why?"

"Well, I thought I'd ask you a few questions about Newhall, and about getting there. You see, I'm a free lance—just prospecting for something to do.

I understand that the Newhall Company has had trouble about the water rights——"

"Uhuh. Ezra Newhall he sent for me to come up there. He owns that company, body and soul and buildin's. He ain't been able to get a man to tend dam nights sence Tommy Crogan was shot by the Canucks. He offered me the job, at good wages, too—for summer. He even h'isted in the insinooation that I was scared to take it when I said I didn't want it. But I got other reasons for not, and I got Sunny to take care of likewise."

"Well," said Selden, "I walked from Nennassing, on the new road, this far to get to Newhall and find something to do; something a little out of the ordinary."

"Ye did?" And Jed Mateel's blue eyes expressed approval mixed with a touch of humor. "Well, that's a pow'ful long jaunt, goin' it alone. So you come acrost the divide? And you're lookin' for a job 'a leetle out of the ordinary,' you say? Well, Newhall's the place to find it."

Selden nodded, glancing at Sunny, who flushed as she realized that he had caught her watching him.

"If you're lookin' for that job you might get suited to Newhall. Reckon you know the Canucks blowed up the dam with dynamite and shot Tommy Crogan—killed him—and nary a track of 'em to trail 'em by. They took to their canoes and run the Nennassing River into Canady. Now Ezra Newhall's lookin' hard for a man for that job—of tendin' dam at nights sence it's been built up ag'in. It cost the company a pile of money to build her over. She was a big dam."

"One of the biggest in the United States, I believe," said Selden.

"I reckon so. But say, it ain't no money for you. Only seventy-five a month and found. 'Course that's good money for us——"

"I don't care particularly about the wage. I want to get started with the company. I understand they're cutting more timber than any other lumber company up North."

"Y-a-a-s. But the Canady company, the St. John's folks, runs 'em clost for gettin' out timber. These here lumberin' concerns is cuttin' too much timber. Folks in years to come is goin' to curse 'em for it. Why, even I can see the difference in the big rivers sence I lived here. They're dryin' up—slow——"

Sunny came out on the cabin porch attired in a clean fresh gingham. Selden glanced up, and his eyes were filled with unconscious admiration for the girl.

"Huh!" grunted Mateel. "You smell jest as fresh as goin' to camp meetin'."

"I'd have to wait a long time for my dad to take me," she said, glancing at Selden.

"I reckon you would," said her father positively. "These here woods and rivers and storms and sunshine and them things is my camp meetin's. Every day here is as good as Sunday anywhere else, I take it. Good folks makes camp meetin's, mebby, but camp meetin's don't allus make folks good. But you said, was I busy this time of year?" he added, turning to Selden.

The young man nodded. "It will be a week before I'll be able to get about. Could you manage to get me to Newhall by canoe?"

"Reckon I could—or Sunny could," said Mateel.

"You thinkin' of takin' the watchin' *nights?*" asked Sunny presently, becoming grave and looking down at her dress.

"Yes, if I can get it."

"They'll shoot you—them Canucks," she said slowly. "They shot Tom Crogan 'cause he tried to stop 'em from dynamitin' the dam. Can't you take to

nothin' else in the woods besides *that* job?"

"I haven't any experience, except in railroad work and construction. Of course I shall be glad to get anything for a start. But that job seems to be going begging for a man. And I'm the man, if they'll have me."

"You can't tell what will happen," said Mateel. Mebby you would do first rate. There's such a thing as luck. Why, onct Uncle Clem's cat nearly led to him gettin' his head chopped off, fer a fact!"

"Now, dad——" began Sunny.

"I warn't there," continued Mateel, waving his daughter's interruption aside with a gesture of his hand. "If I'd 'a' been there I mought a learned some good new, long-handled, double-bitted cuss words to save up for a special happenin'. Uncle Clem, what lives down the trail a spell toward Newhall, come into his cabin with a chin-high armful of wood one day and he stepped on the cat layin' by the stove. Wood was so high he couldn't see over it. Well, he'd jest fixed up a kind of pantry business for Aunt Lib, all leetle doors and cupboards and sech, and bein' middlin' good with tools, had made them basswood doors right thin and handy; panels no thicker'n a good piece of birch bark. Well, when he stepped on the cat it sort of upsot his reckonin' for the next step, and he pitched blim-blam, headfirst, through one of them cupboard doors. There he was a kickin' and tryin' to pull his head out ag'in, and the cat was settin' up on the top shelf a spittin' and fussin', and Aunt Lib was scared to death. She says the only thing that saved Clem from a sudden visitation of Providence or paralysis was his head bein' inside the cupboard. It kind of smothered the worst of the cussin', I reckon. Anyhow, Aunt Lib she dug Clem out, and the door come along with him, bein' screwed to nothin' but them leetle brass hinges. Clem's winter cap was all that saved his brains, I reckon. His head ain't any too hard."

"Yes," said Sunny, laughing with Selden. "It did happen. They haven't painted the new door yet. I was up to Aunt Lib's last week. She ain't my real aunt, jest 'dopted me, she says."

Mateel, who had been sitting on the porch step, arose and lighted his pipe. His blue eyes twinkled. "Come purty nigh bein' a serious thing for Uncle Clem. Aunt Lib couldn't get the door offen his neck. She made him go out and kneel down by the choppin' block so'st to chop off the remains of the door —and him swearin' all the time—when along come Ezra Newhall's gal, Elvira Newhall. She seen Aunt Lib with the ax up over Uncle Clem's head, and she screamed. That, and Uncle Clem's langige kind of mixed Aunt Lib, and she nicked Clem's ear a leetle with the ax. That sot him to swearin' ag'in real strong and healthy. Ezra Newhall's gal got up from that faintin' spell that she put on, mighty lively. Clem's lazy, but not so turrible lazy when it comes to cussin'."

"Now, dad, you know the last part of that ain't so," said Sunny.

Jed Mateel raised his shaggy eyebrows. "Ain't so? Why, you can see the new door and a nick in the ax any time you go by Clem's place. And the ax handle is all warped out of plumb owin' to the heat of Clem's langige——"

Mateel paused. "Go git my rifle—quick!" he whispered.

Sunny sprang into the cabin, and returned with the rifle. Mateel drew it up slowly, and just as Selden saw a brown patch down by the river, a patch that seemed to melt into the surrounding brush, the little rifle barked.

"Got him!" said Mateel, handing the rifle to Sunny. "Got him through the shoulders, by the way he went down."

Selden spoke before he realized what

he was saying. "It's June——" he began, then checked himself.

"And they ain't no stockyards or no meat markets or no game laws for quite a few steps from here," said Mateel, unruffled. "Howcome, if I ketched a sport killin' deer just for killin' and not because he needed the meat—why, I'd take him over to the warden's shack myself."

"It was a splendid shot, and the longest kill I've ever seen," said Selden.

"Yes," said Mateel simply as he reached for the knife in his belt. "Yes, it was a pretty good shot. That leetle thirty-thirty carries up good, but you ought to see my boy Joe shoot. I'm jest a lookin' on when he takes up the rifle."

As Selden hobbled down toward the river to watch the old man cut up the deer, Mateel spoke: "Them Canucks is mighty good shots, most of 'em. Now from what I could figure out, the feller what shot Tom Crogan was one of the best of 'em. He drilled old Tommy jest between the eyes. It was moonlight, but a man's forehead, bein' mushroom white at night, kind of wavers and jigs around like when you look at it over the front bead."

CHAPTER V.

Jed Mateel, his sleeves rolled to his elbows and the neck of his flannel shirt unbuttoned, sat with chair tilted back against the outside wall of the cabin. The night was warm. Mateel smoked his short pipe with unusual deliberation between each puff. He gazed out across the meadow to the evening hills that glowed with the soft fire of sunset. Finally he dropped his chair forward, arose, and stepped into the cabin, returning in a few minutes with a letter. Slowly he read and reread it, until twilight blurred the lines. He heaved a great sigh, carefully folded the letter, and, glancing about, reached up and tucked it securely between the topmost log of the wall and the roof edge.

"I can't jest swaller it all to once," he muttered. "Maybe I ought to tear it up. But I want to read that letter ag'in afore I either tell Sunny or don't tell her."

For a long time he stood gazing toward the river. "It's jest plain murder—not killin', but murder——" he said finally. "And my boy Joe—they can't be no mistake now—he done it. Folks'll say 'Jed Mateel's son'; and I ain't never seen the inside of a jail. 'Course fist fightin' comes natural to any man—but shootin' a man——"

The old man reached toward the hidden letter. He hesitated as the sound of voices and a girlish laugh came to him from the river. "There's Sunny now," he said, "jest havin' the sprightenist kind of a time with that young Selden. He's a good, solid, straight kind of a boy, but I wisht he was gone. It's onginerous, I know, but every day he's here is goin' to mean a month of thinkin' and wonderin' for Sunny. She never met his kind afore, and he's like to fill her head with ideas of betterin' herself and sech. Not a pu'pose mebby, but jest like ketchin' the measels. That allus means city life, and city life ain't for Sunny or me. It seems like nowadays folks ain't never satisfied to be jest as they be. 'Allus wantin' to better themselves—which mostly means gettin' round-shouldered, short-sighted, an losin' the taste for plain food—and dyin' when they ain't half through livin' yet."

Again came Sunny's laugh, as melodious as a song, in the June evening.

Jed Mateel smiled, despite the lugubrious tenor of his soliloquy. "If folks wants to better themselves, why don't they stay where God put 'em, and commence the good work by tryin' to be honest and chirpy, and helpin' the other feller that's down? There's a mighty lot of improvin' to be did that-a-way,

afore folks needs high learnin' and sech. And they can do it right where they be, without movin' to town or goin' in debt for things they don't need. Uhuh. But my conscience is gettin' tol'able long-winded to-night. Reckon I'll commence improvin' myself by takin' things as they be and makin' the best of 'em. Charity ain't the only thing what begins at home. But my boy Joe——"

The old man entered the cabin, lighted the lamp, and sat for a while, pondering. As the sound of voices drew nearer he got up and went to his own room. "I can't hardly face her to-night, knowin' what I know, and she bein' so happy."

Up the trail through the June evening came Sunny and Ward Selden, the latter hobbling along on his improvised crutch.

"Dad's gone to bed," said Sunny. "And it's just too pretty a night for to go to bed. You feelin' all right, dad?" she called.

"Uhuh," came from the inner room.

"Dad gets fits of goin' to bed early, or settin' up readin' the Bible ever since my brother Joe went to Canady," whispered Sunny, as if excusing her father's absence to Selden.

"Your brother Joe?"

"Yes." And Sunny nodded. "He's to work for the St. John's Company, lumberin'. You was sayin' dad was a good shot with the rifle, but you ought to see Joe. Folks says he's the best shot and the daringest canoeman in this country."

"I'd forgotten that you had a brother," said Selden.

"Yes. But he ain't like me or dad. He's smaller, but awful quick and strong. He's got black hair, all curly, and gray eyes." Sunny sighed. "My hair ain't curly," she added, seating herself on the porch.

"It's better than curly," said Selden, smiling. "It's wavy, and just about wonderful."

Sunny tossed her head. "Oh, that's what you say *now*. But when you get to Newhall you'll forget all about that."

"No," said Selden gravely. "I don't think I shall. If I knew as much about the woods and its folk as you do, I'd be quite proud of myself. I shall not forget."

"But if you only had jest that much eddication and no more, and knew what could be known by schoolin' you wouldn't be proud. I reckon what seems wonderful to you up here is jest plain livin' for us. And I reckon what seems wonderful to me, like you knowin' all them stories and songs and books, and figurin' railroads and sech, is jest plain livin' for you." She pondered a moment, and then added: "It's funny—folks allus wantin' other folkses' things."

"For instance?"

Sunny hesitated. "Well," she said finally, and with considerable wistfulness, "if I could jest know by heart that story—the one you talk and then sing, I'd make it last out my whole life. The one you was tellin' me when we was out on the river to-night."

"Oh, 'Aucassin and Nicolette'! Why, I didn't really think you half heard me. I memorized it once. I'll see that you get a copy of it."

"Oh, will you!" she exclaimed, and he knew her enthusiasm to be real and straight from her heart. Sunny's perfect frankness was one of her greatest charms.

"Dad's asleep," she said finally, and Selden grinned outright. That assurance was audible.

"Your leg feelin' better?" she asked after a silence.

"Yes. That reminds me I must turn in, for I've got to get up early to-morrow morning. Your father has promised to take me up to Newhall in the

canoe. I want you to know what a glorious time I've had here. I must thank you again for taking me on those canoe trips. You're an excellent hostess. Some day I'll try and return this hospitality."

"That's nothin'," said Sunny, rising and standing in the doorway. "Dad was wishin' we had more rooms so you wouldn't have to sleep in the little cabin——"

"But you have made it as neat and as comfortable—don't ever think of that. I noticed that you repacked my pack sack for me when you were cleaning out the cabin the other morning. Thank you for that, too."

Sunny flushed to the soft line of dusky hair shadowing her temples.

"Yes," she murmured, gazing past him toward the edge of the forest. "What does 'eyes of vair' mean, Ward?"

"Oh, from 'Aucassin and Nicolette'? Let me see. If I did know I've forgotten. I'm not sure, but I think it means 'eyes of blue.' However, my preference is for eyes of gray."

"You would be likin' gray eyes mostly?" asked Sunny, with unusual pensiveness.

"Yes, especially with black hair and arched black eyebrows——"

"Oh, Jimmy!" exclaimed Sunny, laughing. "Even I could tell you mean me." And she disappeared in the unlighted depths of the cabin.

Selden, somewhat taken aback, searched for his pipe. He had laid it on the beam running under the edge of the roof. As he fumbled in the darkness his fingers touched the sharp edges of a folded paper. Unthinkingly he drew it from the crevice.

Finding his pipe, he unconsciously slipped the letter in his pocket that his hands might be free to fill his pipe and light it. Later he hobbled through the dew-heavy grass to his cabin. When he had lighted the small shelf lamp, he thought of the letter, and glanced at it, but did not read it. Then, untying a parcel taken from his belongings, he unwrapped a small, narrow volume, the "Aucassin and Nicolette" of his town days. With a pencil he wrote above his name on the flyleaf, "Sunny Mateel, From——" And he slipped the letter between the leaves of the book, thinking that perhaps it had been mislaid by Sunny or her father.

The kitchen door was open, but there was no light in the room when he came back to the Mateels' camp. He found the table, and placed the little book on it.

CHAPTER VI.

Rounding up sturdily through the mist of the June morning came Jed Mateel to the river edge, where Selden, overanxious not to be late, awaited him on the rocky shore.

"Seen you was gone from your bunk," said Mateel. "I calc'lated you'd be waitin' here instid of settin' to a breakfast what's waitin' for you. Hot coffee don't do no hurt these cold mornin's. Keeps the river chill out till the sun gets to work. Jest chuck your pack under the canoe and come along up."

"Thought I was late as it was, and I didn't want to bother you," said Selden.

"What! And go without breakfast because you oversleept a leetle? If you stay up in these here woods long, boy, don't you never go to work without breakfast, even if ye have to wait till the follerin' mornin' to get it. 'Sides, Sunny would be feelin' worse than she be a'ready if she hears you run off without eatin'."

"I'm sorry Sunny's not feeling well," said Selden, placing his pack beneath the canoe and following Mateel up the trail.

"She ain't what you call sick," grumbled the old man, striding along toward

the cabin. "She's jest actin' blue like, s'ef she'd heard suthin' like bad news."

As they neared the cabin the old man paused and let Selden enter ahead of him. Then Mateel reached up to the niche where he had hidden the letter. It was gone.

"Didn't see nothin' of a letter layin' around on the porch, did you?" asked Mateel as he entered the doorway.

Selden nodded. "I was looking for my pipe," he explained, "late last night, and I felt up under the beam and found the letter. I slipped it in the little book I left for Sunny. I didn't read the letter——"

"Well," said the old man, "it jest had to be so, I reckon. And I reckon likewise Sunny'll remember that book and that letter all her life."

Selden gathered from the old man's somewhat ambiguous utterances that the letter had had some heavy significance for the Mateels. However, he was innocent of it all, and the hot coffee had an inviting odor. The table was neatly laid for breakfast. Catching Selden's eye, the old man smiled wistfully. "Sunny she said to tell you good-by and to say thanks for the book. She's gone up to see her Aunt Lib Putter. They live quite a spell from here, so she started early."

After breakfast Mateel leisurely lighted his pipe and sat on the porch step gazing toward the river. Selden, somewhat anxious to be away, finally asked if it were not a pretty long trail after they left the canoe to cross the delta to Newhall.

Mateel, turning the burned-out match in his fingers, puffed at his pipe and nodded. "Yes, it do be some ways."

Selden questioned him with his eyes.

"I never make no bones of Nelson's Falls," continued Mateel. "Most folks leaves the river there and walks across to Newhall. Me—and sometimes me and Sunny poles right up the rips. It saves about five hours—if you make it."

"That means we'll get to Newhall tonight?"

Mateel nodded. "Usually two days. But we'll make it in one. I was jest waitin' for the sun to come up good and strong. They's a bit of quick water right above here, and when it's foggy it's better left to itself. We'll go now."

Then Selden realized what a woodsman could do toward making speed without hurrying. Mateel seemed to move with his usual great-limbed leisure, but the younger man had to trot to keep up with him. A turn of Mateel's wrist and the canoe lay right side up. An easy heave and it was launched. Selden stepped in, and Mateel followed. They shoved out into the river beneath the climbing mist robes of the morning. Before Selden could realize it they were far beyond the clearing of the camp. He turned to look back. A bend in the river intervened, and he set himself to paddling with a vim.

"About here," said Mateel presently. "You can put up that bow paddle." And as Selden did so, the old man rose to his feet with the huge spruce setting pole in his hands. Selden sat watching the river pile down toward them between the rocks.

A heave of Mateel's broad shoulders and the little craft climbed a sliding wall of water that leveled to a stretch of spattering waves. At each thrust of the pole the canoe shot ahead smoothly despite pitch, cross current, turn, or swirling pool. A deer came to the river to drink. Selden watched until they were opposite it. Then to his amazement he heard a sharp *crack,* and turned to see Mateel, despite the swift current, boyishly striking the water with his pole and laughing as the buck bounded up, turned in the air, and plunged toward the shelter of the bushes. Then the woodsman caught the canoe as it drifted swinging in the current, and

proceeded upstream as easily as before. Selden had seen poling, but nothing that paralleled the complete assurance of his companion in a more than difficult piece of quick water.

In the quiet reaches above the first rapids Selden took up his paddle and swung to the work. They journeyed silently and steadily up the forest-banked river. Noon found them, so Mateel said, more than halfway on their journey. By mid-afternoon they had entered the rapids known as Nelson's Falls, and were working slowly up the heavy rapids above. Selden, sitting quietly in the bow, studied the channel, noting the worst places and estimating the danger of running these rips in the opposite direction should he at any time return to Mateel's camp.

For an hour they had worked up the quick water when the old woodsman suddenly checked the boat and dropped back of a gigantic bowlder in an eddy. Selden, glancing ahead, saw a canoe with a single occupant flashing toward them. Following it some two hundred yards came another canoe. Selden looked back at the old man, whose eyes were fixed on the nearer craft. The man in it, kneeling amidships, was paddling with all the lithe quickness and strength of the trained riverman. Dodging and turning, down the river he came, heading for the rock behind which Mateel's canoe waited. A dozen yards above the rock, the man rose to his feet, braced himself, and drove his paddle through the foam of the rips. Selden could see that he was exerting all his strength and quickness.

Suddenly he heard Jed Mateel shout: "The left side, Joe; take the left——" But the other either did not hear or deliberately disregarded the well-meant warning. Down the right-hand channel he plunged, missed the rock by a finger's breadth, and flashed past, smiling. "Get 'em!" he shouted, and Selden saw the gleam of white, even teeth, and noticed that the man's hair was black and curled closely round a small, strongly poised head.

Almost instantly above the roar and lash of the rapids he heard the sharp *zing* of a bullet richocheting from a rock. A puff of rock dust stung his face. Then came the blank, dead report of the rifle, muffled by the roar of the waters.

"Thunder!" he exclaimed as he spat the rock dust from his mouth. "They're shooting at us!"

Mateel stood, bracing his weight against the setting pole to hold the canoe in the eddy. "They can't get you there, behind that rock," called Mateel.

"But they'll pot you——"

As he spoke a second bullet flipped alongside the craft.

"They won't shoot again," said Mateel. "In jest about two seconds they'll be too pow'ful busy keepin' from bein' drownded."

On dashed the second canoe, the bow man, now grasping his paddle, ready to fend off from the rock. Selden noticed the swarthy face and the wide cheek bones of the half-breed. The man in the stern had risen to his feet and was scanning the two channels. Too late he endeavored to swing the canoe to the left-hand side of the rock. He realized in a flash that the man ahead had won through the right-hand channel by sheer luck.

Down the pitch they plunged, struck the rock with a splintering crash, and Selden saw the gray bottom of the canoe flash past as it upset. Then, far below on the current, a head appeared, and then another. He watched the two men battered and swept from rock to rock until a bend in the river hid them from sight.

"Now I reckon there's room for us," called Mateel, and dropping back a canoe length he forced the boat up past the rock and along the quieter water near the shore.

"Going back for them?" queried Selden, glancing over his shoulder.

"And them a shootin' at us that-away? No, I reckon not. 'Sides, they'll come out in Bald Eddy, jest below, mebby some sick, but not drownded. That kind can't be drownded."

"But, Mateel, why did you stand up and let them shoot at you? Why didn't you 'scrunch' down behind the rock? Why, great Scott, man——" As Selden's head cleared of the confusion of events he began to realize that the old man's action had been deliberate.

"Why?" echoed Mateel. "Why? Well, because the feller they was shootin' at—was—my boy—Joe."

And Selden, conscious of the tragedy in the old man's voice, was silent. Bit by bit he recalled the story of the shooting of Tom Crogan, the dynamiting of the dam, the mention of Sunny's brother Joe, "who had been in Canada for some time," as she said.

Then he thought of the letter that Mateel had asked about, and immediately he realized that it had something to do with Sunny's absence that morning at breakfast. Then the old man's admission: "It was my boy Joe."

"They don't fire at a man unless he's wanted pretty badly," soliloquized Selden as he turned to his paddle. "And the irony of it—my giving Sunny that letter which must have been from the son to the old man, and in that book, of all things!"

That night as he turned in in the little spare room next to the clerk's above the Newhall store, and endeavored to sleep, the vision of an oncoming canoe, its occupant's bright face flushed with the wild joy of danger seemed to recur incessantly. Following it came the chaos of the wreck as the second canoe struck the rock, and above it all the smiling face of Sunny Mateel. He rose and lighted the oil lamp at his elbow. On a chair lay his pack sack. As he fumbled in it for tobacco he found a tiny package wrapped in coarse brown paper and tied with white string. "Something new!" he exclaimed.

Slowly he untied the string, and from the brown paper envelope slipped a lock of raven-black hair tied with a soft, beautifully tanned thong of white doeskin. Holding the paper close to the light he read the scarcely legible scrawl: "Charm against bullits. Sunny."

"We don't believe in 'em, as a rule," muttered Selden, and he grinned boyishly. "But this is an exception—and—by cracky, so is she!"

CHAPTER VII.

The village of Newhall socially and architecturally crowded as close as it could to the eminence of the general store in which Ezra Newhall paid off his men and transacted his local business. Originally his office had been at the new mill, near the river, and close to the Great Heron Lake dam, but since the dynamiting of the dam he had removed to the store, which he owned. This was an advantage. It gave him the pulse of the village and incidentally an opportunity to keep an unobserved check on the clerk's transactions. Despite the credit system obtaining in the woods, clerks had been known to be carelessly liberal in dispensing merchandise and supplies to certain of their close friends. There was no such leakage of profits in Newhall's store.

The new village, a collection of rough, unpainted board shacks and a few more substantial log cabins, lay on an eminence at the western end of the great Newhall dam that controlled the waters of Great Heron Lake. Round the village and crowding close to it, circled the untouched wilderness. Far to westward rose the dim line of hills marking the Canadian boundary, a great physical boundary that swung

toward the north and east, where through a notch ran the brown sweep of the Nennassing River.

Ezra Newhall, gaunt, goat-bearded, keen-eyed, stood near the sluiceway of the dam, directing the closing of the third gate that would eventually lower the heavy tide of the Nennassing River to a shallow stream winding through a mud-incrusted river bed.

There had been difficulty in getting the drive of lumber through Pickerel Falls, a succession of rapid stretches a few miles below the southern end of the lake.

Newhall, in shutting off the natural flow of the lake toward Canada, knew that he would tie up the drive of the St. John's Company, situated on the Nennassing a few miles across the border. Nevertheless he issued his orders peremptorily. *His* lumber threatened to be hung up. That was enough. The dynamiting of the Great Heron Dam the preceding spring—and it was tacitly understood on both sides of the line that the St. John's boys had done it—was reason enough for Newhall to shut off the flow of the Nennassing, to say nothing of the cherishing of his own immediate interests. The new dam had been erected at tremendous expense to the Newhall Company.

The matter was then under advisement by the Canadian and American Waterways and Forestry Commissioners, and gave promise of being "under advisement" indefinitely.

Several years previous to the establishment of Newhall as a village, Ezra Newhall had grasped the possibilities of the marsh-edged, unfrequented Great Heron Lake, and had interested capital enough to build a great dam at its northern end, shutting off the flow of its natural outlet and diverting the waters to a "cut" at the southern end of the lake—a cut that connected with the so-called Great Heron River.

Ezra Newhall's interests, his mills, and Milltown City, lay to the south, eighty miles below on the Great Heron River, down which he drove his lumber each spring. To the north ran the Nennassing, past St. John's and the St. John's operations. The spring flow of the Nennassing, controlled by Ezra Newhall, virtually held the St. John's Company at his mercy. They had asked to have a representative at the Great Heron Dam that they might take advantage of a head of water either before Newhall began to drive or after his drive was in.

Fearing to establish the leverage of a precedent, Newhall refused them flatly. They offered a fair toll. This he also refused to accept. Then they appealed to their home government, which in turn appealed to the United States government. The matter was to be arbitrated—in the press. Unfortunately, the chairman of the arbitration committee held stock in the Newhall Company. His patriotism was shocked at the dynamiting of the dam. The new structure cut down dividends. The matter was under advisement. So far under, indeed, that the massy technicalities of international law threatened to bury it forever.

Unaware that the quiet, lounging figure he had seen in the store the night before was Newhall himself, Selden, arriving at the dam, looked round casually, noted with a keen eye the solidity of the structure, and finally stepped up to the lean figure of the old lumberman.

"I'm looking for Mr. Newhall. They told me at the store that I'd find him down here somewhere."

"Old Ezra Newhall?" queried the lumberman.

"Not necessarily," replied Selden. "I believe I said *Mr.* Newhall."

"He was down here this mornin'. What you want to see him for? Mebby I could hunt him up for you."

"Thanks. I'll hunt him up myself."

"Huh! Some of you Canucks be

mighty short spoken and independent sometimes," said Newhall, eying Selden sharply.

"Canucks?" said Selden in unaffected astonishment.

"Never mind that. I see you're a Yankee. Now what do you want? I'm Ezra Newhall myself."

"Well," said Selden easily, "you've proven that I'm not a Canadian. Now if you'll prove that you are Mr. Newhall I'll tell you what I want."

The older man's eyes twinkled. "You don't know nothin' about lumberin'—saw that the first peek at you. You sized up that dam as if you knew buildin' pretty good. Gov'ment inspector, mebby?"

Selden smiled. "No, I'm a civil engineer."

"Not so turribly civil," chuckled Newhall. "what do you want to see *me* for?"

"Nothing, till I know to whom I'm talking."

Newhall grinned, stroked his chin, and studied Selden for a few seconds. Then he shouted to one of the men on the dam: "How much water, Tom?"

"Fourteen-six now, Mr. Newhall."

"All right. Get No. 3 down. We need the water."

"Yes, sir." And the riverman returned to the gate.

Selden decided to be as brusque as his questioner. "I want work," he said simply.

"Nothing you can do round here," said Newhall.

"All right," said Selden cheerfully. "I'll wait till something turns up."

"Get fired from the new railroad?" asked Newhall.

"No, I quit," said Selden quietly. But he flushed nevertheless, not realizing that Newhall's apparent rudeness was in reality his method of trying out a man.

"You don't say why you quit," continued Newhall.

"I don't intend to," replied Selden, smiling. "But I'll say this much, I didn't have to, and I was asked to stay."

"No need to get sassy," said the old man, eying Selden shrewdly.

"I'm glad you've come to that conclusion. I think it was about time. Now if I had been your senior I should have told you that some time ago."

Ezra Newhall chuckled. He drew a jackknife from his overall pocket and clumsily pared the corner of a broken thumb nail. When he looked up again Selden was standing, back toward him, watching the men on the dam. Newhall grinned appreciatively. "You come up with Jed Mateel yesterday, I understand?"

Selden turned about. "Yes."

"Suppose Jed told you about the Canucks blowin' up the dam last year?"

"It was in all the papers," replied Selden.

"Jed's a great talker when he gets to goin'."

Selden was silent.

"Reckon Jed told you I offered him the job of tendin' the gates nights?"

"Did you?" queried Selden.

"Didn't say so," snapped Newhall. "Said 'I reckoned Jed told you I offered it to him.'"

Out on the dam the gate tender seemed to be having trouble with the mechanism of Gate No. 3. A spurt of water showed beneath it. The spurt widened and spread to a bubbling pool. Newhall, instantly alert, shouted to the tender and ran along the footboard of the dam. Together he and the two gate tenders shouldered at the lever, but the gate would not drop back into place.

Selden, seizing a gunny sack, began filling it with gravel from the river bank. He tied the mouth of the sack with a strip torn from his handkerchief and began filling another sack.

"Give us a hand!" shouted Newhall.

Selden shook his head, and beckoned to them. "If you want to stop that

leak," he said, gesturing toward the dam, "just get these sacks and dump them on the upper side of the gate. It's clogged with a sunken snag in the guides probably. The water will force the bags through and carry off the snag or bank up the sacks against the leak. Either way will answer."

"All right," said Newhall. "Here, give us a hand!"

Selden did not offer to help. "I furnished the idea and you'll have to furnish the transportation," he said casually, seating himself on the edge of the bank. "It will work out all right."

"Dummed cool," muttered Newhall, tugging at one of the sacks.

Finally they lugged the sacked gravel to the dam and dropped it on the upper side of the gate. Selden watched the level below the dam with half-closed eyes. Suddenly a geyser of water spurted up, and he caught the glint of one of the sacks as it shot beneath the gate. "Now!" he shouted, jumping to his feet. "Open her up wide and then drop her down!"

The turmoil of waters ceased as the gate slid slowly in place.

Newhall, drawing a bandanna from his pocket, mopped his face. Shuffling along the footboard, he fronted Selden. "Can you shoot?" he asked suddenly.

"Yes."

"Heard about Tommy Crogan?"

"Yes."

"Well, I got a job for a night watchman that don't drink and ain't easy to scare and can shoot—if he has to. It's fifty a month and board at the camp——"

"Say seventy-five," interrupted Selden. "I'll need the extra twenty-five dollars to establish and maintain my plant."

"Your plant?"

"Yes. Do I get the job?"

Newhall nodded.

"All right," said Selden. "Then I shall install a small electric-lighting system and string some reflectors and bulbs from one end of the dam to the other. There's enough waste water to run a dynamo. Then I can see what's going on nights."

"You're the man for the place," said Newhall. "Come along up to the store and order what fixin's you want. Reckon it'll take two weeks to get 'em here. Hines at the store'll give you a rifle and cartridges."

"All right, Mr. Newhall. And I want you to build a little shack at the eastern end of the dam. I'll bunk there. It will be cool at night under those birches, and it is the highest spot on the bank. In the meantime I'll post a notice in the store to the effect that high-voltage wires will be installed about the dam. That news will reach Canada soon enough. There are mighty few men willing to risk running into a live wire —and men that would tackle 'most anything else for excitement, at that."

CHAPTER VIII.

Early one July morning, shortly after Selden had turned in to sleep, after his night's vigil, a messenger arrived at Newhall—a breed riverman who brought word from below that the drive was in and safely behind the booms at Milltown.

Ezra Newhall immediately routed out the clerk, and together they consulted the time book. Finally Newhall left the store and proceeded toward the little shack where Selden slept. On his way there the old man, seeking within himself for an excuse to let Selden go, finally brought himself to face the fact that he had no good reason to discharge the young man other than a kind of intuition that Selden was too clever, too able, to be satisfied with his present accupation for long. "He knows as much about the whole system and the water-rights question as a lawyer, a'ready," soliloquized Newhall. "Now

if he was to leave here mad, mebby—but, no. He said somethin' the other day about gettin' a vacation for a spell when fall come. Don't know what he's plannin', but summer's dull and the pay roll is long enough as it is. He can't get far on what money's comin' to him now. Besides, I can get a night watchman for half the money now that the drive's in."

As Newhall stepped carefully along the running board he noted with a grim, satisfied smile the system of wires and reflector lights that Selden had installed. "He's a good one!" Newhall admitted to himself. "But he knows too much."

Selden, awakened, sat up in his bunk. "Glad you came down," he said sleepily. "I wanted to ask you——"

"For that vacation?" queried Newhall.

"No, about something else."

"Well, if you don't mind bein' disturbed I'd like to have you explain the workin' of this here lightin' plant to me. I been a mite curious about it right along."

"Why, certainly!" said the young man, slipping into his trousers. And he explained in detail the simple switchboard, the circuit, and the running of the dynamo. "It's in first-rate shape. A boy could run it now," concluded Selden.

"Uhuh. Well, what I was going to say was this: I reckon we don't need you any longer. The drive's in."

"All right," said Selden coolly. "I expected you'd see I was worth more to you than this. I expected a promotion, but not so soon."

"I'm thinkin' of puttin' in a cheaper man," stated Newhall, flourishing his bandanna and blowing his nose vigorously.

Selden smiled, despite an inclination to do otherwise—and to the point. "If I can't serve you in a higher capacity, I suppose that settles it, Mr. Newhall."

"I'm sorry——" Newhall began.

"Hold on! Don't get sorry for anything!" And at Selden's brusque exclamation Newhall blinked and coughed. "You've found me capable and steady. Tacitly you promised me a position for some time to come. To be frank, you're the kind of liar that never goes on record—the worst kind, Mr. Newhall. I've also sized you up a bit, and I'll tell you just why you're letting me go. It is because you're afraid of me—of what I know. Do you get that?"

"See here!" began Newhall.

"If the St. John's boys had wanted to they could have picked me off with a rifle a dozen times and then put the dam out of commission. I knew that. This is too near the border to be a healthy job. They didn't choose to try for it. That's why I'm here."

"Of course—of course," said Newhall, stuffing the bandanna in his hip pocket. "But I don't calc'late there's any one goin' to come close enough at night while them lights are goin'."

"They wouldn't have to," said Selden briskly. "One man could go up the lake a few hundred yards and drop a float in the rift where the draw begins. He could pay out a few yards of fuse, and, ten to nothing, blow the gates clear over the Nennassing Mountains, and twenty watchmen couldn't stop him."

"Them Canucks ain't got brains enough to think of that," said Newhall, with a surface assurance that he did not feel. "But they must be some way of guardin' against that, too."

"There is," said Selden indifferently.

"What is it?"

Selden laughed. "I couldn't quite bring myself to give you that information—now. But I'll illustrate for you. For some reason or other the prime mover in the last escapade of the St. John's boys has a reason to feel friendly toward me. I was told so by a person whom I cannot doubt. However, I was also told that if I should give up my

place here, or should happen to be away for a night or two, things might happen. Of course, I took some of that with a grain of salt, but in the main I believe it's true."

"You can't swing no bluff like that on me, young feller."

"Very well, Mr. Newhall. But I did think you were a better judge of men. You have trusted me in letting me care for your property. Now you don't trust me when I tell you something that I'm positive is so."

"Where do you calc'late to go from here?" asked the lumberman.

"Pertinent, that, now that you're no longer my respected employer. Well, I'm going downriver to St. John's. I'm going to stay up North in the brush. I like this country. It's big, and there are some big doings on the horizon."

"I suppose, after studyin' the situation, you figure to do some mighty tall engineerin', and like as not give the St. John's people a head of water 'most any time they want it by changin' the channel of the Nennassing and leavin' Newhall high and dry and Great Heron Lake a frog pond, or somethin' like that?"

"That wouldn't be impossible," replied Selden.

"See here, Selden, I ain't goin' to stand no insinuations or threats from nobody. If you got any idea of tryin' to get even with me——"

"Even—mush! I'm not that kind, and you know it. Just one thing more before I draw my pay and go; I'll wager my reputation against that horsehair watch chain of yours that within forty-eight hours you'll wish you had kept me at any price."

CHAPTER IX.

About ten o'clock that morning, Selden, garbed in a new outfit of flannel shirt, khaki trousers, and moccasins, stood looking at the tumbling tide of Nelson's Falls. He had come down the river trail, headed for Mateel's camp. He shifted the pack sack from his shoulders, and, sitting on a log, filled his pipe and smoked.

"Hope that forty-eight-hour scare I gave Newhall does not materialize," he muttered, grinning. "He'd almost be able to make out a case against me as an accomplice if anything did happen. I wonder just how much influence Joe Mateel has with the St. John's boys and if Sunny is really holding them off until I'm out of their way. Doesn't seem probable, but one can't tell up here. She surely wouldn't have written that letter about it, if she hadn't had a reason for doing so. She's not the kind to scare up situations."

Selden had but a few dollars left of his July wage, and he decided to walk to Mateels' and hire the old man to paddle him downriver to St. John's. Of course he had his home bank account to fall back on, but he wisely realized that folk who begin falling back on reserve funds seldom stop until they reach the bottom. He had a certain pride in making good at his new venture of free lance, and he was one who criticized himself fairly.

The noon sun and the low *boom* of the rapids lulled him to daydreams. He awoke suddenly as a shadow fell across the shingle at his feet. Beside him stood a squat, swarthy-hued breed.

"Hello!" exclaimed Selden, standing up. "Where did you drop from?"

"Bo' jou'! Bo' jou'!" grunted the breed. "Ah mek to go to dat Mo'sieu Mateel hees place."

"Good! Will you take a passenger?"

The other's keen black eyes swept him from head to foot. "You wan' make traverse to Mo'sieu' Mateel hees cabane?"

Selden nodded, wondering where he had seen that keen-eyed, wide-cheeked face before. Perhaps among the Newhall habitants—he was not sure.

"Ah'm goin' run dees rivaire down to Mateel hees camp. Mabbe you laik to come weet moi in de canoe?"

"Don't mind if I do," replied Selden.

"Den Ah get dat canoe." And the breed paced up the shore several yards and drew a canoe from the bushes. Selden, somewhat astonished at this, pondered. "Wonder how he came to make such a good connection with my plan? That canoe is wet. He must have run down behind me and then run the boat ashore and come down here on foot to find out who I was. Seems queer."

As Selden embarked he noticed that the bow of the craft had been badly smashed, and recently, as the newness of the repair showed. "Had a bad smash-up," he said, kneeling and taking up the bow paddle.

"Oui. But Ah feex heem all right. Heem jus' strong laik de firs' taime."

Again Selden pondered. "Now it's natural to say where and how an accident occurred first and explain the details afterward. This chap is cautious. Wonder what he's up to?"

Whatever that might be, Selden soon ceased to speculate about, becoming completely absorbed in the excitement of running the rapids. When they neared the big rock in midstream, from behind which he and Mateel had witnessed the perilous passage of one canoe and the instant wreck of another, the breed rose to his feet and scanned the roaring current. From above there was no way of judging which channel was the practicable one until almost upon the rock, but Selden felt the canoe sagging toward the left quite a distance above the hazard. They ran the pitch quickly and easily, but the engineer's scalp grew tight nevertheless as the big rock flashed past.

A few minutes of dropping from level to level, dodging, sliding, checking, and even swinging clear round and drifting through an opening stern first —but always with the assurance of mastery—and they were out upon the lazy current of the river, gliding smoothly along beneath the strokes of two vigorous paddles.

Selden was hardly prepared to see the rapids just above Jed Mateel's camp so soon. He had not realized that down-stream travel often shortens a journey by half. As they passed the last pitch he looked ahead for the smoke of the camp on the hillside.

"Guess that's Mateel's," he said, glancing back at the breed.

"Oui. Dat ees Mateel hees place."

"What in thunder are you buckling on that gun for?" asked Selden as the breed laid his paddle across his knees and strapped on a holster.

"Ah'm jus' deputy shereef dees taime. Don' you make for to mak' signe. Eef you do, den Ah shoot——"

"Oh, you go to blazes!" said Selden. "You wouldn't dare pull a gun on me even if you wanted to."

"Ah swear you een for to help arres' dat Joe Mateel——" began the breed.

"Well, you'll have to swear a little louder then, Mr. Man. You tricked me into this, and now you want me to act as a fancy piece of armor plate for you. Afraid to do your own work?"

"Non. Ah no 'fraid of hany mans."

"That so? Well, I suppose here's where I get out and let you sneak up behind me to the cabin—is that it?"

"Oui."

"Suppose the Mateels let fly and get me—what about that?"

"Dey don' do dat. Dey know you."

"Well, 'you have the drop.' I believe that's the proper thing to say at this place in the chapter." And Selden stepped from the canoe, with the breed following, and the latter held the Colt with its muzzle centered in the small of Selden's back.

As they approached the slope toward the cabin, Selden made a plan. He knew

that the Mateels would probably be on the alert, especially if Joe Mateel was harbored in the place. The breed had tricked him into an uncomfortable position. He would endeavor to return the courtesy. And, despite the thought that possibly Joe Mateel was guilty of the shooting of Crogan, Selden's sympathies were all with Mateel. If Joe escaped, that was a side issue just then.

Within a few paces of the cabin the deputy told him to halt. At that moment he heard Sunny singing, in quaint colloquial verse, a line from "Aucassin and Nicolette." That decided him. He slipped his hand up to his shirt collar and unbuttoned the two top buttons. "It's hot!" he exclaimed, as if explaining the action. The breed, standing behind him, could not see the polished brown of the shoulder holster beneath Selden's shirt, nor the glint of the square-stocked little automatic pistol. Just then Sunny, on some errand or other, came to the door. "Oh, Ward!" she exclaimed, and then hesitated as she saw the breed.

"How are you, Sunny? It's mighty hot, isn't it? May we have a drink of water?"

"Sure!" And, smiling, she brought the dipper. As she came close to Selden, he leaned forward slightly and glanced down at his left shoulder. She stood with the dipper in her hand, puzzled. But as she saw the butt of the little automatic, her quick mind awoke to the situation. Selden took the dipper and raised it to his lips. He tilted his head, and, as he did so, he felt a slight tug at his shirt front. Then he threw the dipper of water over his shoulder and squarely in the breed's face.

Sunny, her smile gone and her gray eyes blazing, stood with the muzzle of the automatic pressed against the deputy's ribs.

"Here, give me your gun while you take a drink," said Selden. "I ought to have called your bluff down at the river. But it's nine to one you had better do as Miss Mateel says, now. If she empties that gun into your system, you'll simply fall to pieces."

The deputy handed his revolver to Sunny. "You, Gregoire!" she said reproachfully. "You, Gregoire!"

"I didn't know you were acquainted with the party of the second part," said Selden, wiping his forehead. "Well, I'm glad that's over. I was expecting something to happen."

"Ward!" whispered the girl. "Ward! Joe's asleep in the back room. Go in and tell him about this—but, oh, don't let him come out here. Send him away—quick! Tell him there's some one coming up from the river——"

Selden stepped into the cool shade of the cabin. "Here's where I take another little chance. Waking a hunted man isn't apt to be healthy—to the wakeist."

But Jed Mateel, coming from the woods, solved the problem. He brushed past the breed without even nodding, entered the cabin, and, shouldering Selden aside, shook his son to wakefulness. Selden returned to Sunny. Presently he heard a whistle, long and shrill, and then two sharp answering notes.

"He can go now," said Sunny, lowering the pistol.

"Hold on!" exclaimed Selden. "Don't let him have that gun of his yet!"

"The best rifle but one in these woods is kiverin' him right now," said the girl. "Joe is gone—and he won't dast to follow."

Bareheaded, she stood facing the dark-visaged breed. The sun glowed lustrously on her rippling black hair. Her gray eyes were blurred with tears. "Go, Gregoire!" she said, and her voice trembled. "I know you was only doin' your duty as you seen it. So was I."

Noting Selden's quizzical expression, she smiled wistfully. "Gregoire la Croix, it was. He asked me to marry

him once. It was at a dance. He had been drinkin' liquor. Joe and him was friends afore that. Joe, my brother, like to 'most killed Gregoire that night. Gregoire is really half Indian—and he'd like to get even with Joe and me."

CHAPTER X.

There were six canoes in all. For three days the twelve St. John's boys had poled up the shallow, turbulent, rock-strewn channel of the Nennassing, camping at night on the high, wooded banks until they were within a few hours' journey of Newhall Settlement. On the fourth day they remained in camp, philosophically awaiting nightfall. Their canoes, drawn up the steep, raw mud banks of the half-empty stream, lay overturned here and there in the seclusion of some dwarfed cedars. Several of the men slept, stretched beneath their canoes.

Pierre DuLac, the huge, ruddy-haired, iron-limbed leader of the expedition, reclined with half-closed eyes beneath the shade of a bush. He smoked indolently, turning his head from time to time to glance toward the depths of the forest.

Near him squatted Jules la Rue, a little, bow-legged Frenchman, grizzled and keen-eyed. From the edge of Jules' high-topped moccasin peeped the bone handle of a skinning knife. As Jules shifted his position, the polished handle of the knife shone in the sun.

Big Pierre smiled somewhat scornfully. *He* was unarmed, save with herculean muscles and the careless bravery of youth. Old Jules la Rue spat in the ashes of the fire and grunted. Each understood the other's silent comment. Each appreciated the other's special prowess.

Opposite the two sat a long-limbed, black-haired half-breed, carefully shaping a setting pole with a crooked knife. He was Cæsaire Garneau, nicknamed "The Lou'-Garou." He smiled as he witnessed the silent interchange of comment between his companions, and his smile was crooked and scornful. He was unarmed save for a superhuman skill with paddle and setting pole. His forte was speed of retreat in perilous waters by day or night. He was rivaled as a canoeman only by "Wild Joe Mateel," Jed Mateel's outlawed son.

Nine of the twelve St. John's boys slept while three kept watch. Pierre DuLac with huge indolence, Jules la Rue with open alertness, and the Lou'-Garou with the slit-eyed craftiness of the wolf. Nominally they were the three leaders of the expedition. Not a man of them carried rifle or six-gun, and not a man of them but would have faced either without a shadow of fear. They were picked men. Alec McLean, the Scotch superintendent of the St. John's Company, had "retained their services" through the summer months, paying them a considerable wage in advance. One by one he had summoned them and tersely explained that they would not be needed around camp, but if they contemplated a fishing trip, South, for instance, the wangan would outfit them with canoes, blankets, and provisions. There would be no need for rifles, he explained, nor, in fact, for rods and lines. The water was so low that the trout were about gone from the Nennassing, he told them.

At this, Pierre DuLac had smiled; so had Jules la Rue and Cæsaire Garneau. The others had listened and acquiesced stoically.

McLean had a further conference with the three who had smiled. Not a word was spoken about Newhall, yet three days after the conference, six canoes lay side by side in the dead water level of the Nennassing River, opposite St. John's, and in them sat twelve as rugged and fearless rivermen as the North country ever mothered. The canoes were all headed upstream. That had been three days ago.

"Ah t'ink mabbe day poliss he get Joe Mateel mabbe dees taime," said Jules, nodding to Big Pierre.

"Ah don' t'ink dat dey fin' heem," growled the huge, ruddy-haired Frenchman.

The Lou'-Garou glanced at them, but said nothing.

"W'en we mak' traverse fraum dees place?" queried Jules presently.

Pierre pointed to the western horizon. Jules nodded. Each knew that the other wished to formulate some plan of attack on Newhall. None of them would offer a direct suggestion.

Presently Garneau, "the Wolf," rose, and, going to his canoe, returned with a package which he opened slowly. Before each of his companions he laid a small coil of black, wiry fuse and several sticks of dynamite. They said nothing. Again he went to the canoe, and returned with a wicker-covered jug. "Petrol," he whispered, and hid the jug in the bushes.

His companions nodded, and glanced at each other.

Then Jules, old, bent, grizzled, jerked his thumb toward the sleeping men. "Ah t'ink, den, dat you go firs' to dat post offeece, and den dey come een laik dey don' know dat hany mans of St. John's ees dere. Firs' one, den one, den one, laik dat, hein?"

Big Pierre nodded gravely. "Ah mak' de beeg fight laik hell. Den you mak' traverse to dat dam—an' mak' flambeau?"

Jules and the Lou'-Garou grinned. "Oui," they replied softly.

"Den Ah mak' to sleep," said Big Pierre. And, arising, he strode briskly to his canoe.

"Ah t'ink Ah go for sleep," echoed Jules, and he, too, found his blankets and stretched himself in the shade.

But the Lou'-Garou still sat, his eyes narrowed, slowly shaping the setting pole. His head was turned sideways, and he seemed to be pondering. Suddenly he straightened up, brushed the shavings from his clothes, and crept beneath his canoe. He had planned the retreat that had been puzzling him all that long afternoon. Whatever the outcome of the reprisal might be, with him lay the responsibility of a quick and successful return to Canadian territory —with his men. He would lead, and the others would follow. That was tacitly understood. No one had spoken of it, yet he would not sleep until he was reasonably certain of a feasible plan. He would wait until the gates had been blown from the dam. Wait until the river had risen to somewhere near its normal height, and then run to Canada on the liberated waters, and none knew the natural channel of the stream better than he.

The afternoon sun drifted imperceptibly toward the western treetops. The curled white shavings from the setting pole cast long, writhing shadows on the grass as the afternoon breeze moved them. Two or three of the men awoke and stretched. One arose, and, taking a tin cup, started for a spring a few rods distant. He returned to camp hurriedly and without drinking. He awoke the Lou'.

"Ah jus' see dat Gregoire la Croix!" he whispered.

"W'ere you see heem?" queried the Wolf.

The other pointed toward the forest.

"And den you come back to dees rendezvous?" questioned the Wolf, with blunt sarcasm.

The riverman nodded.

"You wan beeg fool, Ah t'ink. But Ah feex heem, jus' same."

He touched Jules, who awoke, grumbling. They whispered together, and then quietly awoke the rest of the men. Not long afterward, the bushes parted, and La Croix, breathing heavily, came to the center of the group and greeted most of the men by name. They replied pleasantly, but La Croix noticed that

they glanced frequently from him to Jules and Big Pierre. Feeling that he was unwelcome, La Croix determined to play boldly, and to that end he squatted near Jules, and, taking out his pipe, asked for tobacco.

"Why you don' come back to St. John dat las' taime——" And Jules nodded toward Newhall. La Croix knew well enough that he referred to the dynamiting of the dam.

"Ah mak' to run fraum dat place—an' hide," he replied, grinning.

Suddenly Jules' arm shot out, and La Croix found himself flat on his back. Jules pushed back the deputy's coat, exposing the little silver badge of his office.

Not a word was spoken. The tense silence struck chill to the half-breed's heart. He knew his men, or most of them. He realized, now, that they knew in a way that he had turned traitor in becoming an employee of the law, and an employee of American law. He was in the service of the police. That was bad enough. He had stumbled upon their camp, and knew their plan. That he had done so unintentionally they would not believe. But they did not know of his latest treachery, the attempt to arrest Joe Mateel.

He glared round at his erstwhile comrades, who drew back quietly, leaving him in the hands of the Wolf and one other.

"You mak' to arres' Joe Mateel, Ah t'ink," asserted Big Pierre, and La Croix knew then that while Pierre was not sure of this, he suspected treachery in that quarter. He drew himself up, and, glancing at Big Pierre, replied boldly: "Joe Mateel he mah fren'. Ah don' mak' to com' een dees camp."

"You don' mak' to go hout," laughed Pierre.

"That's right," said a quiet voice, and the men, ringed about La Croix, started. Then Joe Mateel stepped from the shadow of the cedars and strode toward the group. He leaned his rifle in the crotch of a tree. La Croix's face went gray.

"Trailed him all the way down here," said Mateel, pushing back his hat and squatting easily. "He thought I was ahead of him. Might know me better than that. Tried to get me up home. Sunny just poked a Gat in his ribs, and he changed his mind. He's got a gun on him somewhere, but you needn't worry. He can't shoot quick enough to find it out the same day."

Mateel spoke rapidly and with the ease of one secure in his own ability. Several of the men stared at him, open-mouthed. They had anticipated his appearance—should he ever appear to them again—as a hunted man. Joe Mateel hardly noticed them.

"Well," he said, casting a level glance at La Croix, "I know what the boys are here for. I'm sorry I can't be with them on this thing. They know why I can't take the risk. But you——" He turned toward the group. "Hadn't we better settle *this,* before it makes trouble?"

Several of the men nodded. Big Pierre glanced toward the setting sun. Cæsaire Garneau, the lean Wolf, frowned thoughtfully. "Oui," he said presently, "Ah t'ink dat eet ees bon dat he fall hout de canoe an' get drown' dees nuit."

The deputy, face to face with Mateel, seemed to lose his known and ordinary courage. "You don' keel moi laik dat?" he said, addressing Joe Mateel.

"No, nor shoot you in the dark," replied Mateel. "I don't care what the boys do with you. But if you *do* slip through them, I'll finish the job, as sure as you shot Tommy Crogan."

To La Croix's vehement denial of Joe Mateel's charge, the latter paid little attention, but turned away and talked with the Lou'-Garou.

La Croix, with hands bound behind him, stood watching the play of the sun-

set across the treetops. As twilight gathered, he shivered a little, although the air was warm. Down below he could hear the pur of the black waters. A star grew keen-edged in the west. Around him the group of Frenchmen—his old comrades—conversed in whispers. He wished that they would build a fire that he might see their faces, but he knew they would not. He overheard Jules tell Mateel suggestively that after the gates were once opened full on the Newhall dam, should a man stumble and fall from the running board, he would not come out of the undertow alive. Again La Croix shivered. Presently a figure stood before him in the dusk. It was Joe Mateel. His hat was off, and his forehead seemed strangely white beneath his tumbled black hair. Tommy Crogan had been shot in the forehead at dusk.

"I expect you're going to get put out in the shuffle," said Mateel. "I'm elected to help you off. The boys think I ought to, as things stand between you and me. You've got one chance—for I hate to put a man out that hasn't got a chance to fight back. If you accept this chance, it means that you take your canoe and light out for the line, and keep on going until you get lost north of the big hills. You know that country and the Injuns up there. For my own sake I hadn't ought to give you *that* chance, but the boys don't like my idea of handing you over to the law." Mateel advanced a pace, and, round about, La Croix heard the rustle of moccasins in the grass as the group drew nearer.

"Who shot Tommy Crogan the night the dam was blown up?" Mateel's voice was low and tense.

Several of the group muttered in astonishment. "Why ask such a question?" they reasoned. "Every one knew that Mateel shot the watchman." La Croix was sullenly silent.

"Come, hurry up!" said Mateel. "We've got other business. It's your chance."

"Den you let me go—now—eef Ah say?" asked La Croix.

"Yes," said Mateel. And "Oui," breathed the Frenchmen.

"*Ah* shoot heem," muttered La Croix.

"Louder, Gregoire!" said Mateel, with strange gentleness. "I want all the boys to hear it."

"*Ah* shoot Tommee Crogan," repeated La Croix, "aftaire he shoot fife taimes by me."

"Yes, and you emptied the magazine of my rifle to do it," said Mateel. "Do you suppose I'd needed more than one shot? That ought to been evidence enough that I wasn't a-handlin' the rifle. Then you threw the gun away in the bushes and dug out. When they found the gun, it was up to me, eh? Thought you had Joe Mateel for trimming you that time you were drunk and tried to insult Sunny, eh? I'd like to go at you with my hands—now—but you're whipped. You heard what they said. If this river scrap wasn't a fight for our grub and our right to live, I'd hand you over to the sheriff now. But our business is bigger—worth more—than you, dead or alive. Get out of my sight—and don't ever get between daylight and my rifle again!"

CHAPTER XI.

Dusk was gathering round the cabins of Newhall Settlement when Big Pierre DuLac shouldered his way through a group of idlers and entered the store. Ezra Newhall glanced up from the bundle of receipts he was checking. The Frenchman smiled, leaning against the counter. "Tobac'," he said, flinging a coin on the counter.

The clerk gave him a cut of chewing tobacco, and was about to change the coin. Then he stepped to Newhall and whispered.

"Canady money, eh?" said Newhall.

Then, to Pierre: "Canady money don't go here any more, my friend."

The big Frenchman smiled innocently. "Oui?" he said pleasantly. "Ah don' t'ink Ah'm your fren', but dat monee, she good monee."

"But it don't *go* here!" exclaimed Newhall. "We don't take it."

"Dat ees bon! T'ank—Merci—for dat tobac'," and the Frenchman pocketed the plug of tobacco and lounged across the store.

Two or three habitants, seemingly attracted by the argument, drifted in through the doorway. The clerk, shrewdly enough, knew that they were St. John's men, but Newhall, intent on the unpaid-for tobacco, failed to grasp any significance in the appearance of the downriver boys.

"Hah!" exclaimed Big Pierre, striding toward one of the habitants. "Ah hask mah fren' eef Canada monee she no good."

Newhall started as Jules la Rue, silent, sinister, quick-eyed, entered the store. Unlike Big Pierre, *he* had not shouldered his way in, but had cleared a path with his glance.

"You got good monee?" asked Pierre, gesturing toward Newhall. "He say dat mah monee no good—Canada monee no good. Ah wan' tobac'——"

"Who say dat?" snarled Jules, sweeping a glance round the store. He noticed two or three of his friends had followed him in quietly.

"Ah t'ink Le Canadaw ees de bon plac'——" began Pierre, but he was interrupted by the appearance of the Lou'-Garou, tall, lean, long-haired. The Wolf stepped inside and affected a slow surprise at seeing the other Frenchmen. They exchanged a perfunctory greeting, and Pierre explained to him, as to a stranger, his pretended predicament.

"Hah!" grunted the Lou'-Garou, drawing a plug of tobacco from his pocket. "Dees ees le bon tobac' hof St. John, mah fren'."

Ezra Newhall stepped to the recently installed local telephone, connecting Newhall Settlement with Milltown. Pierre and Jules exchanged glances. Pierre nodded. He had counted the Frenchmen present. His nine followers —not including Garneau and La Rue— were there. Presently La Rue and the Wolf strode toward the door. The Newhall men, many of whom had drifted in, separated to let them pass. The place was tense with expectancy.

When they were gone, some one whispered: "The St. John's boys!" And a red-haired lumberman of Newhall swore roundly. All eyes were focused on Big Pierre, who leaned easily against the counter, a little nearer to the hanging oil lamp than he had been originally. So he stood for perhaps a minute. He saw one of his companions lift a heavy boot from one of the racks above his head. "Here! What you doin' with that boot?" said the clerk. His answer came instantly. The boot was hurled at the light above the post-office pigeonholes. With a crash the lamp fell to the floor.

"Hoop!" cried Big Pierre. "Ah wan' room for to mak' de beeg fight!" and, clearing a circle with his huge arms, he sprang forward, jumped in the air, and turned with a kick. The hanging lamp dropped with a crash and spatter of glass.

"Dees way!" called Pierre, and his nine companions, some of whom had mingled, unnoticed, with the last of the crowd, plunged through the smoking darkness toward him. They drew together at the upper end of the store, and, seizing the long bench in front of the counter, ripped it from the floor and massed behind it. Using it as a battering-ram, they rushed toward the doorway. It was closed and locked. Grunting, kicking, and the thudding of blows punctuated the darkness. Some one yelled for a light. The Frenchmen laughed.

"Heyeh! *Hoop!*" shouted Pierre, and, gathering headway, the dauntless nine swept down the aisle between the counters, carrying a stray chair, boxes, and a sweating, cursing tangle of humanity before them. The door was locked. That was of little moment. Door, rickety frame, and half the front of the store fell with a crash into the street, and on top of it came a plunging chaos of arms and legs. Ezra Newhall's rifle was as useless as a nursing bottle would have been.

Out in the twilight, the Frenchmen were distinguishable by their individual bulk and their long voyageur's sashes. The Newhall boys rallied and drove the little band of St. John's toward the woods.

Swinging the broken bench above him like a flail, Big Pierre felled man after man as he retreated with his comrades. Close to the edge of the forest he called to his fellows. Suddenly he flung the splintered bench top at his pursuers, and, gaining pause, cried mockingly: "You cry laik gran' bebe for mak' light. Mabbe you haf' light now, hein?"

Several of the Newhall men turned as he pointed toward the river. Along the dam ran a path of bluish flame, and the roof of the mill was swathed in a tide of running fire. Pierre and his companions leaped to the woods, scattering like quail. They would assemble again at the canoes.

A quarter of a mile below the dam, the six canoes lay hidden in the brush. Presently a figure crept through the dusk and crouched near them. Then came another and another.

"La Rue?" whispered the first figure.

"Oui, Pierre. 'Ow you mak' heem?"

"Bon!" growled the big Frenchman, winding his handkerchief round a torn wrist. "Were ees da Lou'-Garou?"

"Ah don' know. Ah see heem aftaire he make flambeau hon de dam. Den he go."

More Frenchmen drifted in and squatted beside the canoes.

"Ve go fin' heem?"

"Ve vait," said La Rue, peering through the shadows.

From their concealment, they could see the twinkling lights of the dam, each intense in its cuplike reflector. The petrol that the Wolf had used had burned out. The timbers of the dam were too heavy to take fire immediately.

"Den Ah t'ink dat Lou' he go for to mak'——" and the big Frenchman threw both hands upward expressively. La Rue nodded.

Even as they watched there came a faint, blunt report, and one of the lights was blotted out. Again came the far sound of a rifle shot, and another light was gone. Still again the rifle sounded, and another light popped out, leaving a blank in the chain of illumination. La Rue, saturnine, silent, smiled grimly. Pierre laughed like a boy. "Joe Mateel," he said, and La Rue grunted an affirmative.

Upriver the enraged crew charged down on the burning mill to find no one there. They turned toward the dam. As they stood, stunned and dismayed, the rifle cracked from across river, and another electric light was blotted out.

Ezra Newhall, rushing out on the footboard of the structure, examined the gates. They were intact. Beneath him a bullet whizzed and thumped into a timber, and the air was filled with particles of flying glass as still another light went out. The Newhall men began to realize that the St. John's boys had much the better of it. Some of the lumbermen turned and tried ineffectually to "sand" the blazing mill, but the flames were too strong for them. The light of the conflagration spread across the river and illumined the dam, magnifying each hewn timber and glistening on spike and bolt.

"What's he shooting them lights out fer?" queried a lumberman.

" 'Spect he's waitin' till the fire in the mill dies out," replied a voice. "Then the dam'll be dark, and a man could step out and monkey with the gates, mebby."

"Why didn't they do that first?" questioned the man.

"The Frenchers likes to show off. That's where they gits their fun out of this," replied the other.

Jimmy Caine, the new watchman, asked Newhall's permission to shoot any man that attempted to step out on the dam from the other shore.

"No," said Newhall. "Might be one of our boys. You wait."

"Wait for what?" queried Jimmy Caine.

Newhall did not answer. The shadowy figure, seemingly creeping along the edge of the far shore, absorbed his attention. The light from the burning mill waned and flickered. The lights on the dam had all been extinguished. The wires had been cut by a bullet from the rifle across the river in the brush.

Newhall continued to gaze at the shadow that crept toward the footboard. Was it a shadow?

Presently in the darkness a small spot of red fire glowed like the end of a lighted cigar. Above the spot of fire was the Lou'-Garou, coolly igniting the fuses that led to the sunken dynamite beneath the three gates. Again the spot of fire glowed. This time nearer to the crowd on the river bank.

"Here! Gimme that rifle!" cried Newhall, looking round for the watchman.

Caine handed the gun to him. He drew it up, when his arm was grasped, and a voice, gasping with fatigue of hard travel, said chokingly:

"No! No—more—of this. Don't shoot, Newhall! I tried to get—here—sooner—and stop—it. But don't—be a fool and—murder—some one." And Ward Selden, white and reeling, struggled with Newhall for possession of the gun.

Coolly the Lou'-Garou stepped to the far shore, trotted down the river trail, and hallooed to his companions across the river. "Ah feex heem," was his only reply to a dozen questions.

Several of the Frenchmen turned their canoes over and were about to launch them after the Lou' had joined the group, but he stopped them. From upriver came the dull, trembling thump of dynamite exploded under water. With a roar and a rush, the liberated waters of Great Heron Lake spread to the wide reaches of the dry river bed. The Wolf had perfected his retreat. The Newhall rivermen, should they attempt to follow the St. John's crew, could not launch a canoe immediately below the dam in the tidelike turbulence of the suddenly liberated waters. By the time the river had spread to somewhere near its normal level, the Frenchmen would be well on their way downstream, running the quick, easy current of the old channel. Daylight would find them well across the Canadian line.

That the Frenchmen had not more completely destroyed the Great Heron Dam was somewhat of a puzzle to Newhall. They had but dropped three light charges against the gates. The main structure was still intact.

"There's somebody with brains behind this raid," he said, addressing a crowd of his men that night. "Them Frenchers, left alone, would have blowed up the whole thing."

Selden, stepping forward, was about to speak, when Newhall, realizing his presence more thoroughly since the scuffle for the gun, and remembering the young man's remark about "keeping him at any price," leveled a lean forefinger at the other's face. "I jest said some one with brains was behind this raid—and I guess you're it!"

The crowd, expectant and eager for fresh excitement, surged round Selden. Angered at their attitude, he struck out, fighting his way toward Newhall.

"What do you think I am? What do you think I came back for? Would I do that if I'd been in it?" he cried.

Two lumbermen crushed his arms to his sides.

"We're pretty nigh sure what you are now," said Newhall venomously. "And we're goin' to put you where you can rest up a few years—and think it over."

CHAPTER XII.

According to his agreement with Selden, Joe Mateel had waited for him at the little temporary camp above Newhall, where, the evening before, the young engineer had left the old man, promising to return no later than noon next day. From that camp they were to have dropped down the Nennassing to St. John's.

Jed Mateel had refused to go to Newhall, maintaining that he could not appear there so recently after his son had left home under the urgency of the deputy's visit. So Selden had set out alone, walking—or, more properly, running—across the delta from the Great Heron to the Nennassing at Newhall, arriving at an unfortunate hour and much later than he had anticipated.

Mateel waited until noon the following day. Then, with ponderous deliberation, he launched his canoe and returned to his cabin. Sunny met him at the riverside. "Thought you was goin' to St. John's?" she said.

Mateel stepped heavily from the boat. "He didn't come back," he replied. "I ain't been near to Newhall sence Joe's been—sence Joe's—gone away."

"Didn't come back!' exclaimed Sunny.

Mateel nodded wearily. "Seems everything is goin' wrong. I didn't figure young Selden 'u'd get mixed up in it; how come it?"

"Mebby he got hurt," said Sunny. "Mebby he got hurt in the raid——"

"What raid you talkin' about?' asked her father quickly.

"Why, the St. John's boys——"

"So *you* knowed it—and tole him, eh?"

Sunny nodded. "Yes. But you knowed it—and didn't tell me, likewise, dad."

"That's diffrunt. I wondered how he come to know it. He tole me somethin' that made me suspicion they was that in his mind, goin' down to Newhall. I didn't say nothin'. I reckon Joe he tole you."

Sunny was silent. She gazed at her father's gigantic form, slightly bowed now, and something in his attitude appealed to the mother in her nature. "You're tired, dad. You ain't lookin' like you was gettin' your good sleep nowadays. You jest come up to the house and set down and smoke, and mebby then I can talk to you." And she gathered up the paddle and pole and swung the empty pack sack to her shoulder. Smiling back at him, she started up the little trail to the cabin porch.

"No use arguin' with a gal—'speshully your own," soliloquized the old man, following her. "Now if a woman can't make her way with you *sayin'* things to please you, then she'll be doin' things to please you, the nex' whipstitch. That jest make you feel like a ongrateful cuss—after that—ef she don't talk too much."

Sunny brought the big armchair to the porch, and then his "home" pipe and tobacco. Contrary to her usual custom, she remained standing opposite him, her back against one of the hewn posts and her supple arms stretched above her head with her fingers clasped together in the dark masses of her hair. Her head, slightly tilted back, brought her clear-cut profile against the background of the weathered brown timbers of the porch. She gazed at her father through half-closed lids.

Presently she dropped one hand to her breast and drew out a letter—*the* letter from her brother Joe that Selden had found and left upon the kitchen table with the little book.

"Dad," she began, ignoring his start of surprise, "I been studyin' this letter of Joe's. I'm thinkin' likely you read it all right, but that you ain't *understandin'* it all right." Her brows drew down in a little frown above her clear gray eyes. "Now he says: 'I'm comin' up-river to get away from a couple of fellows what has been doggin' me for a week, for the shootin' of Tommy Crogan.'

"Now," she continued, drawing a deep breath, "Joe says they're after him for the shootin' of Tommy Crogan, but that don't say he *did* shoot him. They *expect* he shot Tommy."

"Well?" said Mateel, shifting his leg across his knee. "Well?"

"But he didn't!" asserted Sunny, smiling bravely in the face of her father's stubborn and melancholy disbelief.

"How do you know he didn't, Sunny?"

"'Cause he said he didn't. And Joe never lied to a man or a woman yet—and he wouldn't—even about shootin' a man."

"He never said so to me," said Mateel slowly. "He jest come and said they was after him. He was runnin' away from the *law*. Why was he sca'd of the law?"

"I dunno about law, dad," said Sunny, dropping to one knee and reaching her arm round her father's shoulder. "But don't you understand? You acted like you thought Joe did it the minute he come home, and ever sence. You didn't ask him out flat. And Joe is jest as proud and stubborn inside as you and me, dad. He wouldn't 'a' said he didn't do it, 'cause it cut him deep, your suspicionin' him that way. He knowed I couldn't believe it, and he tole me right away that it was Gregoire la Croix, usin' his gun. Joe ain't no murderer, dad."

"La Croix!" he exclaimed. "And that skunk come up here tryin' to arrest my boy!"

Mateel's great, gray head sank slowly and his beard rippled over his chest in a white wave. He looked like some primeval god sitting in judgment—doubting, pondering, weighing the ways of men and beasts. Presently he lifted his head, and his far-away gaze vanished as he straightened his shoulders. "Too quick to jedge my own kind," he said. "How—be, suthin' inside of me kept a-fightin' agin' the idea of Joe doin' such. Sunny, I reckon you're right. Thank the Lord for it, Sunny! Your ma was like that—always stickin' up for folks instid of suspicionin' 'em. Thank the Lord for it, Sunny! Now mebby I reckon I can spot out that new trap line and commence makin' forms for the winter trappin'."

Sunny rose from her knee and stretched herself luxuriously. Mateel watched her with affectionate eyes. "Dad," she said presently, turning full upon him, "dad—ain't you always a-trustin' me, no matter what I do?"

"Course I be!" he assured her warmly. "And I allus will."

"'Cause your trustin' of me'll keep me trustin' myself and Joe. And I only got you—and Aunt Lib."

"Yes," drawled her father whimsically. "And I ain't sayin' you *got* young Selden, but I reckon you could have him 'most any time you wanted to jest look at him twict. Why, his eyes is jest a-poppin' after every step you take. Course he ain't said nothin', and he don't need to. But his looks is as noisy as a ole hen on a hot summer day."

Sunny, balancing on her toes, dropped to her heels suddenly. "You think he likes me, dad?"

"Likes you? Huh!"

Despite her natural buoyancy, she felt

subdued. Suddenly an inexplicable shame burned in her face and tingled in her ears. She flung her arms round her father and hid her face on his shoulder. "Dad!" she said softly, looking up at him sideways. "Dad!"

"The grindstone's broke," said Mateel, smiling.

"Grindstone?"

"Uhuh! Thought mebby you had a ax to grind."

The girl thrust both hands against his chest, but with one great arm he held her for a moment. "Don't mind my jokin' you," he said tenderly, and unaccountable tears gathered in Sunny's eyes. "I was that glad to know Joe tole you that he didn't do it. You was goin' to tell me that you liked young Selden. I knowed it. Now I saved you from blushin' to do it. If he does come around some day askin' you to marry him—and you jest can't help sayin' 'yes,' nohow—don't forget to tell him first that the Mateels is mighty plain folks and poor and honest—bein' too poor to be anything else, I guess. Tell him we has always lived in the woods. He'll understand jest exactly what you mean by that."

"But he knows all that a'ready, dad."

"Yes. But he's a leetle young—yet—to know that sech cantelopin' around like that Aucassin and Nicotine business ain't anything like married life up here in the woods."

And Sunny realized that while her father, who had laboriously read, word by word, that "Ancient Song" from Selden's little gift book, had made no comment at the time, he had not been as indifferent to the spirit of the tale as he had seemed.

CHAPTER XIII.

Selden took his arrest as a joke until the evening of the second day of his confinement in the little log storeroom back of the general store. He paced round his gloomy quarters, regretting, as much as anything, the fading of the afternoon light from the chinks between the logs. "Couldn't get away if I wanted to," he said. "That old fool Newhall treats me like a desperate character. Hello! I didn't notice this keg had been opened. Huh! Spikes. They're constructive. I need a saw, or an ax."

He smiled as he filled his pipe and lighted it. "Evidently he is willing to trust me with matches," Selden soliloquized. "Said I might smoke if I were careful. Well, he's got some sense left to realize that dynamite and fire are not my individual tools."

His pipe glowed in the dusk. He wondered how soon the clerk would arrive with his supper. He was hungry. Besides, he wanted a word with the clerk. From the store in front came the sound of some one entering, walking about, talking, and finally departing. Selden listened intently for a while, then lapsed to his former stolidity. Again some one entered the store. He could hear the pad of moccasins and the creak of the wide boards. He heard talking and presently a laugh, clear, low, and musical. He started and was all attention.

"I could swear that was Sunny's laugh," he told himself. "But what if it were? I'm here and she is there. Probably she has been told that I'm on my way to St. John's."

For a while he sat musing. He thought he heard a scratching on the timbers of the wall. "Three," he counted. Then "Three" again. "Think I'll move over to that side and listen."

With his ear to the wall, he counted the sounds once more. He replied in kind. "Oh, hang it, get down to the Morse code!" he said, laughing.

From a crack near his head a bit of paper fluttered, and in the fading light he picked it up and read: "Shingles. Sunny."

"Illuminating," he reflected. "And consoling. 'Shingles.' They're outside. 'Sunny,' she's outside. Perhaps her dad's around somewhere, too. 'Shingles?' "

He glanced above his head. A few feet above was the beginning of the roof. Standing on the keg, he was able to reach it with his hands. Without hesitation, he pressed strongly upward. Several of the long, cedar shakes with which the place was shingled gave way. He reached through and tore several more from the round, unhewn rafters. Then he pulled himself up and dropped clumsily to the ground outside. Getting to his feet, he glanced round in the dusk. He saw a faint star. He could hear voices out in front of the store. Down toward the river a dog barked. On his left, and flattened against the timbers, was a dimly outlined figure.

As he started back, Sunny stepped toward him. Her hand was on his arm. "S-s-s-h, Ward! Not that way! Come round this side."

He felt her tremble, and he spoke quickly: "Sunny, I can get away now. Don't you get mixed up in this. I'll manage. Why, you're shaking with fright now."

"With what?" she asked quickly.

"Why, nervousness——" he began.

"Nervous nothin'! I was a-tryin' not to laugh out loud at the way you come down jest like a frog. And you grunted, too."

"Well, I know that I cut my hand on some broken glass. That's funny also."

"Oh, now, Ward, you're jest a boy, after all, ain't you? But we got to hurry."

She stepped quickly away toward the edge of the distant woods, Selden following silently. When they were safely within the shelter of the trees, she stopped suddenly. "Oh, Ward, you got any tobacco?"

"Yes, plenty of it. Why?"

" 'Cause I forgot that. I got everything else Joe tole me——"

"*Joe* told you?"

"Yes. I was in the store afore I come round back. I come with Aunt Lib Putter. Reckoned you'd hear me laugh and kind of expect me. I laughed on purpose."

"Well, you're an expert, then. It sounded natural enough to me."

"I jest didn't have to try *much,* knowin' how I was goin' to get you out and fool ole Newhall."

"But, Sunny, people will talk about this. You're taking risks. Great Scott, Sunny, I'm grateful! I would do anything for you, but it doesn't seem right to——"

They had come to the edge of the river. In the darkness he could not see her face, but he judged her expression from her voice.

"Dad is makin' stretchin' boards for the winter trappin'. I tole him I was comin' up to see Aunt Lib—so I took my canoe and come. Me and Aunt Lib come over to Newhall to buy some things. They's nothin' against that, is they?"

"But you, down here, and helping me to get away——"

"Oh! Well, Joe is about two rod from here. He took my canoe when he come downriver. You needn't to worry."

Sunny whistled. The call of the little white throat answered her.

"That's my brother," she explained. "He's goin' to St. John's, too. He ain't safe this side of the line—but he didn't do that shootin'. It was Gregoire la Croix, the man you come to our house with."

As she spoke, a figure appeared in the dusk. "Joe!" she called softly.

"All right, Sunny. Hello! You're Selden. Sunny told me. Shake! I owe you one for puttin' it on the breed La Croix. You beat him at his own game. Pretty good for a city man.

Goin' to St. John's, so Sunny says. So'm I. Got to go quick. We'll travel together, eh?"

"Glad for the chance," said Selden heartily. "We're in the same boat this time."

"Yes," said Sunny, "and it's my canoe, too. Now, Joe, don't you go takin' all the chances you know how jest because you are lucky. If you break my canoe——"

"I'll use her just as if she were a soft-boiled egg, Sunny. Goin' to be a moon pretty quick. Good-by. We're goin' to slide. Good-by, Sunny."

"Good-by, Joe. But ain't you got nothin' you want me to say to dad?"

"No. But you might say I got away safe."

"Good-by, Sunny," said Selden, extending his hand. "I'll write and let you know how I make out. I'll tell your brother how your father stood between him and the two men who were after him on the river. They shot twice, and your dad didn't flinch a hair. I think probably Joe doesn't know that."

"Will you?" she asked eagerly. "Now that'll pay me for the lecturin' Aunt Lib Putter'll give me when I get back."

Joe Mateel had launched the canoe, and stood, setting pole in hand, waiting for Selden. As the latter turned toward the boat, a third figure sprang through the stunted cedars. Selden dodged, but he was too late. The man was upon him. Without a second's hesitation the young engineer struck out and up, heaving his shoulder into the blow. Without a sound, the man crumpled up and wilted to the rocks.

"Good one!" exclaimed Mateel, who had leaped to help Selden. "Say! You can travel with me right along."

Selden turned quickly to Sunny. "Run!" he said. "Before he comes out of it!"

"But maybe he's hurt."

"Quite probable. I didn't hit for fun. I don't know who he is, but——"

Joe Mateel, chafing at the delay, whirled on his sister. "Sunny, you git!"

And, strangely enough, Sunny, perhaps subconsciously influenced by the habit of earlier childhood, obeyed with alacrity.

"Who was it?" asked Selden, a few minutes later, as Joe Mateel, doubled up in the stern of the canoe, laughed till the boat trembled.

"Who was it?" echoed Mateel. "Didn't you know? You hit him as if you did. It was old Ezra Newhall."

CHAPTER XIV

As Selden's eyes grew more accustomed to the darkness, he became alive to the ruggedness of the stream they were traveling. One moment, and a bulk of rock seemed to speed toward them, sweep to one side, and pass with a sibilant rush. The canoe, in reality traveling rapidly downriver, seemed to be standing still. Not until they ran afoul of a floating log did Selden realize that his companion was not alone running the river, but was putting forth every effort to make speed. The log slid under the bow of the canoe. Selden held his breath as Mateel, stooping to the pole, shot the craft over the wallowing, slime-covered log. Selden let go the breath he had caught and caught another quickly.

Mateel laughed. "She'd 'a' dumped us if we hadn't hit her fast, before I punched her up with the pole. Can you swim?"

"Yes. I'm not afraid of getting drowned. What gets me is the strangeness of everything. A while back I was looking at the water and imagining it was fathoms deep. Then right there I saw the tops of the river grasses and felt the canoe touch bottom several times. Gave me a queer sensation of astonishment."

"You ain't used to it, that's all,"

grunted Mateel. "Some of the best rivermen we got ain't worth the trouble of drowndin' when it comes to workin' a bateau or a canoe in the dark. Why, Sunny can give some of 'em pointers. Reckon it comes kind of natural, like shootin' and trappin' and such."

"Yet you spoke of my not being used to it."

"Well, that's part of the game. Now I know this river like my own clothes. Don't seem nothin' to me. It's been my work since I was fifteen. You can't make a feller a good canoeman just by practicin'. A good man on the drive, or in the canoe, or trappin' or huntin' or even fishin' is born that way, same as a good hoss trader. Workin' at it helps, but it has to be in a feller's blood."

"I imagined so, in your case, that day you ran Nelson's Falls and took the right-hand channel past the Grindstone."

Mateel laughed boyishly. "La Croix and the sheriff got dumped. Knew they would. Knew they would follow me, for neither of 'em had run just that piece of the river before. Used to carry around. If they hadn't got dumped, the old man would 'a' slipped his pole under their canoe and upsot 'em afore he'd let 'em catch me."

"He did a bigger thing than that," said Selden quietly. "He stood up and let them blaze away at him after you flashed past. He didn't flinch. One bullet hit the rock and dusted me, and another struck alongside the canoe. You were right in line, and I guess they didn't see us at first."

"So La Croix was pottin' at me, eh? Didn't hear it. Reckon I was too busy, and the rips are noisy right there."

Mateel became silent. The click of the setting pole came regularly as they sped on down the darkened river. An edge of the moon rounded over the trees of the eastern shore, silhouetting a tiny, pyramid-shaped spruce top in its center, black on burning silver.

Presently the canoe swerved, and Selden saw that they were crossing the river. They were dropping in a swift diagonal toward the left-hand shore.

"The boys always camps on the right-hand side goin' down, and on the right-hand side comin' upriver. If they do follow us, they'll be lookin' for our camp on the right side. I aim to let 'em get past us and then we'll turn in and get some sleep."

"And pass them later in the night, when they have gone into camp below?"

"That's it."

"Do you think they will send any one after us, from Newhall? I doubt it."

"Well, you needn't to, after that jolt you give old Ezra. He'll try and get you now harder than ever."

They landed, and Selden carried the pole and paddles up the slope and returned for the packs. Mateel shouldered the canoe, and, carrying it up the bank, hid it in the brush. "I'll get a fire goin' back here from the edge, and we'll fry some of Ezra's bacon. 'Tain't the first time I cooked his bacon, neither. You can fetch up some water. We got some hard-tack, so coffee and bacon and sailor bun'll go pretty good."

"But, Manteel, won't they see the fire and smell the bacon and coffee? Why, I'm so hungry I could smell an empty coffeepot a mile to-night."

"Well, if they do smell it, course, we can't stop 'em, or invite 'em to grub with us. You see, by the time they get a whiff of our cookin', it will be too late to call. They'll be right on top of the worst part of Sawyer's Rips and can't turn back to supper."

"That is what the noise is about below?"

"Yes. And you didn't know it, but we come pretty nigh runnin' them rips ourselves. I got a leetle too far down before I commenced to cross over. I was thinkin' of what you said about the old man—my dad."

Slowly the full moon rounded above

the woodside and cast a bluish-white radiance on pine and spruce, on fir and cedar and hemlock. A black bear, lumbering through the birch grove near the river, paused and sniffed suspiciously, suddenly rising to an upright position with nose elevated and nostrils like a pig's. The moonlight glistened on his black pelt, wet from crossing the stream. Presently the bear dropped to the mossy ground and rolled luxuriously, to again rise up and sniff the fragrance of frying bacon. Above him, on an arching limb, an awakened red squirrel peered down timidly, his tail quivering. Had it been daytime, he would have censured the bear roundly. Finally the black shape swung away and shuffled out of sight, grunting. With the smell of the bacon came an odor that spelled caution. The bear was old and had bought his wisdom with many scars.

Opposite Selden, Joe Mateel squatted by the tiny fire, munching hard-tack and bacon. Selden, who had just finished drinking his coffee and was about to pour himself another cup, was surprised when Mateel grabbed the pot from his hand and emptied it on the fire. A puff of steam arose, and the fire went out with a sounding hiss.

Selden half rose to his feet, but Mateel pushed him back. "Newhall boys!" he whispered.

Then Selden, crouching behind a cedar, peered out, and saw a canoe whirling down the swift current. Following it came a second and a third. None of the men were poling, but running "on the paddle," noiselessly.

As the last canoe came opposite to where they were concealed, the man in the stern, an Indian in Newhall's service, glanced toward the bank on which they were camped. Selden saw him shift his paddle and bear heavily on it to cross to the left-hand side.

"The only one in the b'ilin' of 'em that knows anything," whispered Mateel. "Sure enough he's smelled somethin'."

The moon, drifting higher, silvered the black water as the Indian's paddle spread a fan of ripples at each stroke. Slowly the canoe crept toward the concealed watchers, although it was drifting swiftly downstream in the sweeping current. The Indian spoke to his companion. Suddenly the canoe came about cleverly, facing upstream.

"Got to stop that," said Mateel. "He's goin' to call on us."

"Are we going to run for it?" queried Selden, tense with excitement.

"Run nothin'! They're goin' to run. We're goin' to finish our supper—in a minute."

Reaching behind him, Mateel pulled his rifle from its case.

"Say! Mateel! Not that——"

"You set still, mister. It's a good light—and I ain't goin' to hurt nothin'."

Slowly the riverman lowered the muzzle of the carbine. Selden held his breath. What was his companion about to do? Surely not——"

"Whang!" snarled the thirty-thirty, and the shaft of the Indian's paddle flew into myriad splinters below his hand. Mateel rose to his feet, and, parting the branches, stood in plain view of the canoemen.

"Now, Charley," he called to the Indian, "run *Sawyer's* on the paddle. That'll keep you from thinkin' too much of anything but your job. When you ketch up with the rest of the boys, tell 'em Joe Mateel's upriver, eatin' supper, and will be down to see 'em pretty quick."

CHAPTER XV.

As the helmless canoe swung round in the swift current, the bowman passed his paddle back to the Indian. In an instant they were lost in the darkness of the shadowy western shore.

Joe Mateel, displaying the utmost composure, kindled another fire and

made fresh coffee that they might finish their interrupted meal. His concentration on the task of the moment amused Selden, who laughed.

Mateel, grinning, glanced up from the little fire.

"Kind of enjoy it myself," he admitted. "Howbe, they sure will lay for us now. I was just figurin' how to slip 'em up. They won't come back up for us right away. They're all busy about now keepin' out of the water."

For a minute the riverman ceased coaxing the fire with his hat. "Got any relations?" he asked presently.

"How's that?"

"Got any folks expectin' you home, or that you're takin' care of—a—a mother, or a sister or brother or somethin'?"

"No. No one."

"All right. That's settled. Now you ain't thinkin' of gettin' married, be you? They's no girl a-waitin' for you somewhere?"

Selden smiled. The other's frankness had not the least tinge of curiosity.

"All right. Reckon you're as free as I am. Now you think mebby that the boys down below is sca'ed off. Well, they ain't. They'll get us if they can, and they won't do it with gloves on, neither. Now we might as well be drownded as back in Newhall, just now, eh?"

"Almost as well. Why?"

"What's your front name, anyway?" queried Mateel.

"Ward."

"All right, Ward. I just want to say there's no laugh comin' runnin' Sawyer's at any time. But at night and on the wrong side of the channel, as I'm figurin' to do it, it's takin' four chances to nothin' that you get dumped. I *did* run the left side once. I was in a hurry, but it was daytime then. There's some moon, but it won't last long. The Newhall boys, specially Injun Charley, 'll be watchin' and waitin' for thee, as the song says. They'll camp at the foot of the rips, now they know we're up here. Now it's this way: We can leave the canoe and make it by trail to St. John's, or we can take a chance on the left side of the rips and save four days' walkin', if we get through." Mateel paused and lifted the bubbling coffeepot from the fire.

Selden, smoking and watching him, pondered. Presently he took his pipe from between his teeth. "I've got a lame leg," was all that he said.

Mateel laughed. "That's the how!" he exclaimed. "I never did like to walk when they was enough water handy to float a canoe."

Hastily gathering up their few utensils, they embarked. As a precaution, Mateel lashed his rifle and the bow paddle to the thwarts. Then he had Selden sit amidships on the bottom of the canoe. Stripping off his moccasins, the riverman tied them by the thongs to his belt. "Scared?" he asked, as they plunged toward the ominous roar of the rock-strewn and dusky river bed.

"Yes," replied Selden frankly. "Why shouldn't I be?"

"Well, you got a right to be," called Mateel, bracing himself as they crashed into the first lift of the rapids.

The canoe soared, hung for an instant, and shot down into a moonlit turmoil of waters. Rock after rock glanced past. Once they struck, and Mateel threw all his weight on the setting pole to ease the little boat over the sunken bowlder. Twice they plunged, bow down, through the backlash of crowding waves that washed inboard.

Selden gritted his teeth and wished for something to do—longed for some physical action as a relief to the nervous tension. He realized keenly how his companion had earned the nickname of "Wild."

For one tense moment he questioned Mateel's sanity as the canoe swung round and drifted dizzily stern first to-

ward a barrier of dim, wave-washed rocks, glittering and black in the moonlight. Then he appreciated the other's skill, for, as they dropped between the bite of rock and rock, Selden felt the canoe checked; and, as they slowly worked upstream again, he saw that Mateel had purposely dropped through stern first that he might immediately work to the right and out of the pocket of rocks by poling a few yards upstream. Had they run between the rocks bow first, they would have had neither time nor room to turn and escape the second and immediately impassable barrier of rocks below them.

As they "straightened out" again and ran on downstream, Selden caught the faint gleam of fire—a red spot that glowed and diminished on the opposite shore. He gestured toward it, and Mateel, shipping his paddle, with which he had replaced the pole, crouched in the stern of the canoe, watching the eastern bank.

Slowly they swung round in the eddy below the rapids. Anxiously Selden turned his head to catch the glimmer of the red spot as they again pointed downstream. In front of them lay a narrow streak of moonlit water, illumined through a lane in the trees of the far shore. Once across that bar of light, and Selden knew they would be practically safe from immediate pursuit. The gleam of red was the camp fire of the Newhall boys, who little expected Joe Mateel to keep his word and come down upon them before daylight.

Again the canoe swung round, and the clear-cut edge of a strip of rocky and untimbered river bank struck sharply against the moon. Even as he looked, three distant figures strode along the moonlit crest. Selden turned his head and glanced at Mateel, who nodded.

"They're goin' back up the river trail to jump us while we're asleep. They'll find a cold camp. Old Ezra must 'a' made 'em a good figure for them boys to risk disturbin' my sleep like that."

"Strange, the other three on shore didn't see us cross that streak of moonlight," said Selden, as they rounded the bend below the rapids and paddled quickly downstream.

"That's because they was all took up watchin' their friends cross that place on the other bank. They *expected* to see 'em cross it—and they weren't expectin' us."

"If they had seen us?" said Selden tentatively.

"Well, it's all dead water—stiller than a graveyard in the woods—from here to St. John's. 'Bout nine miles, I reckon. If we couldn't 'a' dodged 'em along shore somehow, we'd 'a' had to take to the brush. Six of 'em might 'a got us. If they'd stuck to the canoes—well, mebby I'd 'a' winged one or two of 'em chancin' that would scare 'em all off. I don't like to do that. Them boys is poor, just like me, and bein' laid up costs money. Then, mebby they'd 'a' winged us. Can't tell just how mad they was. Anyway, they'd 'a' been some het up afore they got us. Yes, some!"

CHAPTER XVI.

Clement Uriah Putter, or "Uncle Clem," as his Newhall friends called him, differed from them essentially in that he had a goatee and a pension. This latter distinction, meager as it was, enabled him to spend most of his time puttering, as Joe Mateel facetiously remarked, round home. Uncle Clem trapped a little, hunted a little, and worked a little less. His chubby and resolute wife, Aunt Lib, spent her time in cheerful industry about the home, in the garden patch, and, when winter came, in the placid contentment of knitting innumerable socks and mittens for which the lumbermen paid her well. When her goodman was at home, she vigilantly checked his occasional lapses

into the highly colored and picturesque vernacular of the camps. When he was absent, she worried about him until he returned. When their immediate little world swung smoothly, they united in a congenial criticism of Newhall Settlement, "horse, foot, and dragoons." When the settlement had been theoretically readjusted and Uncle Clem had lighted his third pipe for the evening, Aunt Lib never failed to introduce Sunny Mateel's name.

Sunny was the unvarying pièce de résistance of their scant and primitive menu of gossip. They loved her as if she had been their own. She was their niece by adoption. Her beauty, her ignorance, her natural cleverness, her frankness, native wit, and her future were discussed until the discussion wound and intertwined itself into such a speculative tangle and took on such a romantic effulgence that Sunny became the veritable child of their imagination. Together they bore for her a multitude of hopes and fears, as conscientiously as though she had been their own daughter.

Quaint and lovable as they were, these folk of a generation past barely escaped being caricatures to the Newhall settlers. Aunt Lib's immaculate household and her unquestionable veracity won for her the respect of her distant Newhall neighbors, despite their "up-to-date" vulgarities. Uncle Clem's linguistic ability, especially under stress of circumstance, placed him among the foremost of his associates.

"Clem Putter!"

"Yes'm."

"Take your feet off'n the sewing machine!"

"Yes'm." And Uncle Clem's chair clumped to the floor of the little room just off the kitchen.

Aunt Lib bustled about the stove getting supper. The October evening was crisp and starlit. The ham and eggs had a delicious, almost an inspiring, fragrance. Uncle Clem was affected. His head was turned toward the kitchen. He sat with one hand grasping his goatee, quite as if he had pulled his head round with it to watch Aunt Lib.

"Why, Clement Putter! If you ain't got a hole in them socks a'ready!"

"Yes'm."

"They was clean washed and darned when you put them on this blessed mornin'."

"Yes'm."

"And you got a hole in the heel a'ready."

"Yes'm."

"Well, how did you get that hole in 'em?"

"Ye—um—eh—walkin up so peart to get home to you'm."

Aunt Lib smiled happily as she turned the slice of ham. She was pleased, but Clement was not to know it. "Home to your supper, more likely!"

"Yes'm."

Aunt Lib was not pleased. "Say no'm onct, Clem, if you ain't forgot how."

"Yes'm."

"There you be with your feet on that sewin' machine again. They're big enough without you stickin' 'em up so suspiciouslike."

"Yes'm. Thought mebby if I stuck the holy one under the needle and worked the treadle dingus with my other foot, mebby I could sew up that hole afore you seen it."

"My! But you're gettin' smart, Clement. You ain't talked so much before your supper sence the hard cider give out las' spring. You got suthin' on your mind. Been to Newhall to-day?"

Uncle Clem shook his head. Then he again seized his goatee as if to steady this method of negation to a noncommittal poise.

"Find that ax you lost last winter in the sugar camp?"

Again he shook his head.

"You seen Sunny to-day?"

"Yes'm."

"Uhuh! Then that's it! Well, supper's ready, Clement. You put on your shoepacks and draw up. No use askin' you any news while you're eatin'. Reckon I can wait till you're filled up."

"Yes'm."

Aunt Lib sighed. She poured a cup of tea for her goodman and one for herself. He reciprocated by passing to her a portion of ham and two eggs. Aunt Lib sighed again as she poured a careful spoonful of ham gravy on a half biscuit. "Sunny ain't ailin', be she?"

"Who? Her? Sunny? No-o-o, not just ailin'."

He fixed Aunt Lib with a vacant stare, chewing meanwhile quite vigorously.

"Well, Clement, you needn't to try and hyperize me. You only did that onct, I guess, when you ast me to marry you—and got me to say yes. You—you think Sunny's thinkin' too much about that young Selden up to St. John's. Is that it?"

Clement Putter studied his wife's good-natured face, or appeared to do so, for a long minute. His expression conveyed the suggestion of a delicate hesitancy between taking another mouthful of ham and making an inteliigible reply. Aunt Lib stirred her tea with undue vigor.

"Yes'm." And Uncle Clem forthwith became the possessor of another mouthful of ham and egg. Meanwhile he displayed a singular dexterity with a hot baked potato, the skin of which he juggled to a final emptiness without a single verbal accompaniment.

Aunt Lib was mildly amazed. "Clem, be you feelin' well?" she asked.

"Yes'm."

"I calc'late you'd say 'Yes'm' if you was a-dyin'."

"Yes'm. But I ain't.

"No, it don't look like it. Was Sunny feelin' downsomelike, or peartsomelike, as usual?"

"Yes'm."

"Clement!"

"P-p-peartsomelike, as usual, Libby, I guess."

"But you said she was thinkin' too much about that young Selden. How do you know that?"

"Uhuh! She was."

"Did she say anything leadin' you to suspicion she was thinkin' of him?"

"Yes'm, uhuh!"

"Clem, you sound jest like a cow talkin' confident to a spring calf!"

Uncle Clem took refuge, so to speak, in manipulating a second plateful of baked potato and ham and egg. Aunt Lib gazed dreamily into the saucer of her teacup. The tea-leaf fortune in it was puzzling and not at all satisfactory. "Well," she said, with a sigh, "if she *does* marry him——"

"Or he was to marry her——" interrupted Uncle Clem.

"Why, like as not, they'd just move away to the city——" she continued.

"And forget all about her Aunt Libby and her Uncle Clem," he concluded, drawing back his chair and surveying the empty platter and potato dish sadly. He still seemed disinclined to retail his visit with Sunny. He knew that Sunny's pie—baked to-day and warmed over Sunday—was intact in the cupboard. He wanted some of that pie. He mentioned it gently, suggestively.

"Now I like to forgot that pie!" exclaimed Aunt Lib, with brazen disregard of the Saturday-night custom of no pie till Sunday. Uncle Clem wisely forbore to remark on the unusualness of this. A second piece, even, seemed ineffective as a stimulus to further conversation.

Aunt Lib began to fear that she had made an unnecessary and wasteful sacrifice to her curiosity. With some asperity she remarked: "If all that pie and ham and eggs and potatoes don't put you to sleep afore I turn my back to wash the dishes, you might jest go

on and finish about Sunny. Can't you see I'm itchin' to the soles of my feet to know? You're that stubborn!"

Uncle Clem chuckled, rose, and, feeling along the window sill, found his pipe, which he filled and lighted. Then he gazed at the ceiling. Aunt Lib washed the dishes with the quiet stealth of an officiating undertaker.

"Waal," he began, tilting back his chair, "she's too good lookin' for him or any feller around here. She ought to marry some of them royal families and be a princess. She could look the part, all right."

"Huh!" snorted Aunt Lib. "How many families now ought she to marry? You been readin' one of them Sunday papers from the city lately, down to Newhall?"

"Yes'm."

"Thought so. Royal families! And you fit for your country onct! Huh!"

"Now, see here, Libby!" said Uncle Clem, catching hold of his goatee as if to steady himself through the rising storm, "I was jest imaginin' that. Course she's got more sense than that, even if she had the chance."

"Folks do say young Selden is right in the office down to St. John's, workin' up some big scheme," said Aunt Lib. "He was always a mannerly actin' young fellow. Sunny might do worse." And Aunt Lib laid a polished plate gently upon the stack.

Uncle Clem cleared his throat. Aunt Lib, back toward him, suspended operations at the sink; that is, to the extent of only dabbing gently at the sink corners with her dishcloth.

"I seen Sunny to-day, down by the p'int toward Newhall. I was comin' along the river trail, and she was standin' lookin' across the river—lookin' toward the north. Her canoe was layin' half up the bank. It was right nippy cold, too, but she didn't seem to pay no attention. She jest was leanin' on her paddle, lookin' straight ahead. I come up pretty clost behind her, and I says 'Woof!' kind of loud. She didn't jump, not Sunny. But she turned around and looked at me a minute with them gray eyes jest kind of mistylike, from lookin' across the river so long, I guess——"

"Yes!" exclaimed Aunt Lib breathlessly. Her plump hands were on her hips, and her elbows were high.

"And what you think she says?" asked Uncle Clem, grinning.

"Goodness to gracious, Clem Putter! How do you think I know?"

"She says: 'Hello, Uncle *Ward!*' I dunno. My name used to be Uncle Clem onct."

Aunt Lib rattled the dishes busily. Her goodman, satisfied that his recital had been quite dramatic enough for the occasion, relapsed, and puffed his pipe. The cat's after-supper pur resounded in the silence like mimic thunder.

Aunt Lib dried her hands, rolled down her sleeves, and set the kettle on the back of the stove. "I wonder what we can give 'em?" she said, half to herself.

Uncle Clem coughed. "You seem moughty certain that Sunny's a-goin' to marry that there young Selden, Libby."

"Just as certain as I was five years before you asked me, Clem. Reckon you forgot that. It's nigh onto forty years now."

"Reckon I hain't. You was the prettiest gal in the village—and I was a'most sca'd to death, 'bout then."

"Scared of me?"

"N-n-o-o; of myself, Libby. But about givin' 'em somethin' if that gal do go and get married. Why, h'm! Good advice don't cost nothin'—good advice based on forty years of married experience and specially valuable afore folks gits married—if they take it. Now, I could tell Sunny——"

"Clem, if you say one word to that child—either for or agin' gettin' married, or bein' in love with her young man, I'll——" And Aunt Lib rose to

her physically and morally effective highest. "I'll cut off that goatee of yourn with the sheep shears some night when you're asleep. Then who'll ever believe you when you say you fit at Bull Run or Appymattox?"

CHAPTER XVII.

The northern "line" of Jed Mateel's traps extended in a great loop toward St. John's, and was some eighty miles long. The loop swung back on itself not far from Mateel's cabin. That his operations encroached on Canadian territory he may or may not have known. In the fastness of the frozen wilderness, landmarks become obliterated. The uninhabited, bleak solitudes of snow and ice and silence discourage official investigation. The occasional free trapper of the North country, much like his old-time brother, the privateer, bears no too fine distinctions in his calling.

Stray Canadian trappers, chancing upon Mateel's line, left his traps undisturbed. Those great, broad racquette tracks were known and respected. The father of "Wild Joe Mateel" had the reputation of keeping his word to the letter—and in the unwritten code of the wilderness that letter was perilously strict in regard to the pilfering of furs.

It chanced that Mateel, making the round of his line one November morning, came upon Ward Selden and one of the St. John's men. Selden carried a transit, and his companion a light spotting ax and a chain. Mateel, some few rods behind them on the Great Heron River trail, slackened his pace instinctively, curious for a moment to see what they were about. Then, quickly bethinking himself, he hallooed, and Selden swung round, hesitated, and waved a welcoming hand.

"You're sure lookin' fat as a seal!" was the woodsman's greeting. "Suppose we kin save time by not askin' each other what he's a-doin' on the wrong side of the line, hey?" And Mateel chuckled.

Selden smiled. "Yes. I'm glad to see you. Was coming over, but I've been pretty busy. I wrote a letter to Sunny. I thought perhaps she might have read it to you."

"If she got it she didn't say nothin' to me—and I reckon she would. But either you or me is on the wrong side of this here international boundary, I take it."

"Yes. You are a few rods over the line. You see, the Great Heron dips into Canadian territory for several miles before it swings back to the United States again. It runs almost parallel to the Nennassing, here, for a few miles. I wonder why they didn't use the Great Heron as the boundary all the way through?"

"That's a long story, havin' to do with the Injuns. I'll tell you about it some day, mebby. How you makin' it with the St. John's folks?"

"Oh, well enough. I'm rather on probation, in a way. They don't know much about me, but I'm working out something that will help me to their notice."

"Uhuh!" And Mateel glanced at Selden's companion, who stood a few paces down the trail.

"How is Sunny?"

"Right well, I reckon. Been worryin' a leetle about Joe, mebby. But I calc'late Joe's takin' care of hisself?"

"He's back in Camp 42—a long way from the main camp and visitors," replied Selden. "We've become acquainted, and we're as thick as thieves now."

"Uhuh! Joe has his likes and choosin's. If he do like a man, he'll stick to him for keeps."

"I believe it. Would you take a note to Sunny from me?"

"Reckon I could tote it. Go ahead and do your writin'. I'll set by and smoke a spell."

"You know, Sunny didn't reply to my last note. Perhaps she didn't think it was worth while, or perhaps she didn't get it. This will explain, for I promised I'd write to her and tell her how I succeeded at St. John's."

"Reckon she didn't get that letter. Think mebby she would answer it if she did." And Mateel took the hastily written note and stuffed it in his pocket. "All right, son. A while back you was sayin' you expected to make good on some plan for the St. John's folks. If you do want to make good, right here's about the best place to do it." And Mateel swept a huge arm around in a large, illustrative gesture. "I've thunk about it a hundred times—how the Great Heron cuts into Canady here, and what might be did on Canady ground, lookin' to—well, gettin' a head of water for a spring drive on the Nennassing, for instance. I see you're gettin' ready to peek at it through that leetle spyglass of yourn. Well, you take a long look. It is wuth money if it's handled right."

Selden's heightened color told that Mateel's generalities about the Great Heron and the Nennassing were more or less pertinent. "I appreciate that, Mateel. I'll tell Joe I saw you. He'll be glad to hear from you."

Jed Mateel shifted his traps from one shoulder to the other as he prepared to resume his journey. "Yes, and if you don't mind, you could tell Joe I was mistook. And tell him I understand now." And, without further speech or adieu, the big woodsman turned and crossed the rocky bed of the stream, leaping from bowlder to bowlder with the ease and agility of a boy. Again striking into his line, he swung through the dim woodland, a magnificent figure, white-bearded, straight-shouldered, well poised. That indefinable something suggesting efficiency radiated from him as he strode along, at one with the keen vigor of that bright November morning.

CHAPTER XVIII.

Sunny, who had returned from a visit to Aunt Lib Putter's, was just making biscuit when her father came in. To her astonishment, he flung his pack in one corner and his cap in another, and, seizing her beneath the arms, lifted her ceilingward as though she had been a child.

"Why, dad!" Her expostulation was smothered with a hearty kiss. Then, holding her from him at arm's length, he studied her face. "Lookin' a leetle, just a leetle shadow of a guess slimmer than you was last summer. But, my stockin's! You're the best-lookin' gal in——"

"Dad, you quit that! You been doin' suthin' you dassen't to tell me of, and you're jest carryin' on to cover it up."

Mateel laughed as he brushed the print of her flour-covered hands from his mackinaw. "Yes, I been up to suthin' pretty bad to-day. I mowed down twenty-two miles between here and where I done it—so as to tell you."

"I know!" exclaimed Sunny, laughing. "You seen Joe."

"Nope!"

"Big Pierre!"

"Nope!"

"Cæsaire Garneau?"

"Nope! Now, why don't you quit foolin' and get down to business? You know who I seen."

"I got to tend to them biscuits. If you didn't see Joe, the rest don't count."

"Don't, eh? Then I reckon you don't want to see that letter I got in the left-hand pocket of my coat. It was give to me by a young feller with kind of light hair and——"

"Letter? Oh, well, it don't amount to nothin', I guess."

Mateel, rolling up his sleeves and turning back the collar of his flannel shirt, sought the washbasin. Sunny

busied herself about the stove, apparently absorbed in the task of baking the biscuit. She did, however, glance occasionally at her father's mackinaw which hung near the door.

As she set the table, the thought of Selden, and the part she had played in his escape from Newhall, recurred to her insistently. He had not written as he had promised, but had waited all this while, and she had waited until the joy of expectancy had become a mute indifference. It was not altogether a disappointment in not receiving the letter. Rather, he had failed to keep a promise, made hastily and lightly, perhaps, but a promise. *That,* to her, seemed ungrateful, almost unforgivable.

When they had finished supper and Jed Mateel was dozing in his big chair by the fire, Sunny came to him and sat on his knee.

"You been doin' suthin' you're ashamed of, and you're a-carryin' on jest to cover it up," quoted the old man. Sunny shook her head. "Where did you see Ward?" she asked, after a pause.

"Ward? Ward who?" asked her father, feigning ignorance.

"If you're jest set on teasin' me, dad, why, I don't know what Ward. Bet you can't guess where I was to-day."

"Aunt Lib's. Pshaw! That's easy."

"Why?"

"Saw the blue clay on your moccasins where you crossed the edge of the branch down near the bog."

"Well, I did go to Aunt Lib's. You might tell me about Joe."

"Well, Ward says Joe is at his old place—Camp 42—and they're acquainted some. Guess the Newhall trouble has blowed over a leetle. I tole Ward to tell Joe that—well, I was mistook, and that things was all right now."

Impetuously Sunny threw her arms round her father's neck and kissed him. Her loyalty to her brother Joe was as unspoiled as it had been when she wore short dresses and ran barefooted after him through the woods. "I'm glad of that, dad. Joe'll be glad, too. I wish I could see him."

"Yes. I reckon he'd be glad to see both of us. Mebby if you had 'a' sot down and answered Ward Selden's first letter he might 'a' sent a invitation for us to visit the St. John's camp, hey?"

"His *first* letter?"

"Yep. Said he writ you one afore he give me the one for you."

"So he *did* give you one for me?"

"Yes. Guess he wouldn't resk sendin' it like he did the last. Some letters gets lost in that Newhall post office. I'm mighty sure of that."

Sunny was silent. One of the heavy braids of her black hair lay across her arm and shoulder. She knotted and unknotted the doeskin thong with which it was fastened. So Ward *had* written, and the letter was lost. And he had written again. She had thought unkindly of him. Although a sensible, healthy young animal, her emotions were touched as she recalled her mental arraignment of him. The slow tears came to her eyes, and she turned her head away. Despite the robustness of her nature and her occupations, to do injury to any one, even in thought, was to her natural honesty of heart a sin indeed. Hastily she brushed her hand across her eyes, and turned a smiling face to her father. Perhaps her tears had been tears of happiness, after all. Wisely she refrained from an analysis of her emotions. Rather, she rumpled her father's hair, brushed it softly with her palms again, and pleaded with her sweet gray eyes.

"It's in the left pocket of my mackinaw," he told her.

She slipped from his knee and ran to get the letter.

"Ward thinks he's found the kind of work he wants," she said presently. "Sends his regards to Aunt Lib and

Uncle Clem and Ezra Newhall. Yes, him, too. Says he was hopin' to come over and visit us, but wasn't invited yet. He jest said that to be mean. He knowed he was welcome."

"Mebby he jest says that to kind of see how we would take it if he did come over. Course he is welcome."

Sunny folded the letter and sat gazing pensively at the cabin wall. "Wish I had more schoolin'," she said presently.

Her father groaned. "It's a-comin'!" he ejaculated. Then: "I wisht you had, Sunny."

"What's a-comin', dad? You gettin' the stomach ache?"

"No. Spring's a-comin' after Christmas. But don't you worry about eddication. If I ain't wrong about Ward, he ain't a-goin' to worry about it. I reckon you and me and Dan'l Webster on the clock shelf, thar, can answer that letter suitable, mebby."

Sunny shrugged her shoulders.

"Course," continued her father, "I only was jokin' 'bout me helpin' on that letter."

Something in his tone caused the girl to turn her head. She found him gazing at her wistfully. She rose and came to his chair. "Dad," she said softly, "I wouldn't say anything in a letter to Ward that I wouldn't jest as leave you'd see it."

"Well, Sunny, girl, I wouldn't jest say *that*. But you and me do get along first rate, considerin'. I'm about as handy as a bear at dealin' cards when I come to try to understand wimmenfolks. Since your ma's been gone, Aunt Lib and me tried to bring you up best we could, with Uncle Clem offerin' heaps of advice durin' the proceedin's. Nacherally I done the most of the raisin' of you, for Aunt Lib had her hands full keepin' Clem right side up. But you're like your ma was. We couldn't sp'ile *that* with all our fussin'."

Sunny was unusually quiet, and her father, never prone to moralize at length, chuckled. "Uncle Clem, he allows he's responsible for your good bringin' up. Says to me onct—howbe he had been skirmishin' a leetle with the hard cider—that he was descended from the Puritans, which accounted for his sense of discipline. I tole him I reckoned he was, and, like lots of them old original campaigners from England in the early days, he had kept on descendin' ever since. He got some het up about it."

Sunny laughed. "But Uncle Clem means all right, dad."

"Yes, that's what friends allus say about their weak-minded friends, 'they mean all right.' So does a hornet when it's attentin' to its own business. But hornets don't allus do that."

"I know Uncle Clem *is* a little lazy, and swears——"

"Lazy! A *leetle* lazy! Why, Clem has to cut a switch and lick hisself to get hisself started uphill. Clem——"

"Now, dad, you're making that up. I'm going to bed."

"So be I. I'm some tired. Hard work, bringin' mail clear from Canady."

He was just drifting into a restful sleep when Sunny called from her room: "You awake, dad?"

"Uhuh."

"Was Ward lookin' good, dad?"

"Fat enough to kill."

"Happylike?"

"Whatlike?"

"Happylike?"

"Oh, jest middlin'."

A long pause. Then a sudden question that partially penetrated Jed Mateel's drowsy brain. "Is he lame yet?"

"No. I rubbed in some of that eel oil afore I went to bed."

"I mean, is *Ward* lame yet?"

"No, I reckon not. But your dad'll be if you wake him up sudden like that again."

"Why, I thought you were awake all the time I was," Sunny assured him

as she tucked Selden's letter beneath her pillow.

CHAPTER XIX.

Midway between Clement Putter's homestead and Jed Mateel's cabin, and somewhat to the south of the trail between them, were several acres of burned-over land, sparsely dotted with clumps of small firs and occasional seedling pines. On a low hill stood three mammoth pines, the sole survivors of big timber in that bush-grown and tangled acreage of rank grasses and charred twigs. Just beyond the pines, on the southern slope of the hill, an old, disused log hut squatted, serving as an infrequent shelter to an occasional wilderness prowler—a famished lynx caught in a sudden downpour, an inquisitive porcupine, or that lithe, stealthy black cat of the woods, the marten. The little red fox, however, gave the place all its solitude. Less wild, but infinitely more cunning, he never entered a place with but one avenue of retreat.

Toward the abandoned cabin, unseen until approached closely, Sunny led Uncle Clem Putter. She halted and pointed toward the south across the light sheath of early snow. On the clear, keen air of that crisp November morning drifted a faint scarf of smoke, hardly discernible, in its dun evasiveness, against the steel gray of the atmosphere.

"I can smell it," said Uncle Clem. "But I can't see it. My eyes ain't as young as yourn."

"I smelled it from the trail this morning, and came over here to see what it was. There's some one in that old cabin. So I came down to see you, and get you to go there with me. Now, Uncle Clem, I'm going over to find out."

"All right, honey. Come along." And Uncle Clem started toward the three pines.

"No!" exclaimed Sunny. "Like as not it's some breed trapper that don't know he's in dad's territory. You stay here behind these bushes and just wait."

"Hold on, Sunny! Whoever he be, he's not there now. See them tracks, fresh, goin' toward the river? Canady moccasins, 'count of the heeltab, eh?"

But Sunny grasped Putter's arm and dragged him down behind the low firs. "S-s-s-h!" she warned. "He's comin' back."

"Well, what be we scared of?" asked Uncle Clem. "What we hidin' for?"

"I don't know," whispered Sunny. "But I just feel there's something queer goin' on. Let's wait and see."

"Well, if you feel there's somethin' goin' on, there's sure to be. Sure as the almanac. Aunt Lib gits them spells and she's allus right. One thing that's goin' on is that I'm gettin' the rheumatiz kneelin' in this snow."

Sunny, peering through the thick screen of bushes, moved a cautioning hand in Uncle Clem's direction as he knelt behind. Two men passed noiselessly. The man in the lead, a starved-looking, gaunt, broad-faced breed, ragged and wild, glanced nervously from side to side as he strode toward the cabin. Following him, and muffled in heavy mackinaw, came the lean, dominant figure of Ezra Newhall.

Not until they had disappeared round the edge of the distant hill did Sunny relax and glance toward Uncle Clem. He nodded.

"It's him; La Croix, 'most starved to death, by his looks, and Ezra Newhall a follerin' like a boy goin' to steal grapes. Guess you *have* fond out somethin' what needs lookin' into and watchin' out for. *Now* what you goin' to do?"

"The meanest thing I ever done yet," replied Sunny, rising. "I'm goin' over behind the cabin and *listen*."

"Hold on, Sunny!"

"Uncle Clem, you wait here. I can

run faster than you or La Croix or Ezra Newhall."

"But, Sunny——"

"They don't dast to lay a finger on me, Uncle Clem, even if they did catch me listenin'. I'm goin'."

"O-o-h! A-a-h! Weugh!" groaned Uncle Clem, rising stiffly. "A-a-all right, Sunny—seein' you're halfway there by now. Wonder what devilment Newhall's a-brewin' now? Weugh! That thar knee j'int's a-crickin' like a old wooden hinge. Nothin' ever 'sca'ed her, I reckon. But by Hick'ry Jackson! Them fellers'll see her tracks the minute they comes out of that shack. She wants to get back afore they get started. Reckon I'll jest mosey over kind of nacherallike and see what's goin' on."

Clement Putter had no particular reason to fear either of the men in the cabin, yet he mistrusted their actions in connection with this isolated rendezvous. Despite his talkativeness and his general peculiarities, he was at heart quietly, almost stubbornly, courageous. He would have faced an invading army single-handed to protect Sunny. He pushed through the low firs, to see her hurrying toward him. "Huh!" he grunted, halting with one hand shaped above his eyes. As she neared him he saw that her face was pale and that she was breathing heavily. "Why, Sunny——"

"Hurry!" she gasped. "I don't want them to know we've been here. Come!"

"But they kin read our tracks like a book in this snow," said Uncle Clem as they sped down the trail toward her father's cabin, the girl ahead, running lightly. Uncle Clem followed at a limping trot. "Dratted if I'll run another step!" he panted, subsiding to a walk. "I ain't done nothin' to be sca'ed about."

Sunny stopped and faced him. "Why—I'm not—scared," she panted. "I wanted to get away before they came out. We can walk now, I reckon."

"Guess we'll have to, if there's goin' to be any 'we' to it. My, but you're leadin' your uncle the sprightenest kind of a barn dance this mornin'. What was they doin' in that cabin?"

"Uncle Clem, Ezra Newhall ought to be hung!"

"Oh, I allus knowed that," said Putter, grinning. "You jest found that out?"

"No. But let's keep walkin', and I'll tell you. You know dad heard that Joe saved Gregoire la Croix from bein'—bein'—put out of the way by the St. John's boys. Gregoire was to go up North and stay there. Seems he liked to starved to death, hidin' away—afeared to go into Canady account of the Hudson Bay Company bein' after him for debt, and afeared to stay here 'cause he shot Tommy Crogan. He said he did it. Joe made him."

"Huh! You don't say!"

"Yes. And he promised not to come back. But he did. He just told Ezra Newhall that he found out Ward Selden was plannin' to make a cut in the Great Heron River and take the flow into Canada for the St. John's Company next spring; for the drive. Ezra Newhall said he suspected as much for a long time. Well, they talked about Ward and Joe and dad and the St. John's Company. Ezra Newhall seemed in a big hurry to get away from him. But he promised Gregoire he would fix it up for him to go to the Klondike and would give him money for the ticket and clothes if he would see that Ward Selden was put out of the way down at St. John's. He told Gregoire that they was to be no shootin' or no knifin', but Ward Selden was just to disappear. Gregoire la Croix asked Newhall to get him some clothes and some whisky and some grub. Gregoire is goin' to start for St. John's to-night after meetin' Ezra Newhall at the burned mill to get his things."

"So that's what honest Ezra's up to, eh? Well, we'll get your dad and put

a stopper on *that* mighty righteous quick!"

"Yes, and we got to let Ward know, and Joe, that La Croix is back here again."

" 'Tain't necessary. We kin stop him right here."

"How?" asked Sunny.

Uncle Clem pondered. "Well, we mought ketch him at Newhall——"

"Gregoire can get provisions at Newhall and be on the trail down the Great Heron and pretty near the line before we can get dad and catch up to him. 'Course if Gregoire don't see them tracks he might stay around and start to-morrow mornin'——"

"That's right," said Putter. "We better git your dad right away quick!"

"We've just got to let Ward know——" began Sunny as they neared Mateel's cabin.

"And Joe," interrupted Uncle Clem.

"And Joe," she said, her face flooding with color as Uncle Clem smiled grimly.

CHAPTER XX.

Gregoire la Croix's taint of Indian blood came to the surface as, upon Newhall's departure, the breed saw the tracks made by Sunny Mateel's moccasins. He followed the light imprints on the thin snow from the cabin to the firs. Dropping to his knees, he studied Putter's tracks carefully. "No vair beeg mans," he muttered. "No Mateel. But dat Sunnee——"

He glanced up the trail toward Mateel's cabin, hesitated, and finally, with a curse, he hurried to his own shelter to reappear shortly with a tattered pack sack on his shoulders. Swiftly he followed Newhall's tracks toward the settlement, overtaking him at the edge of the forest. "Thought I said eight o'clock to-night at the mill?"questioned Newhall.

"Oui. Dat w'at Ah t'ink. But Ah don' laik to stay close to dat Mateel hees cabane. Ah go now."

"Well—wait over by the mill. I'll bring you the grub and a coat myself. It'll be dark in half an hour."

"Oui, dat ees bon. Ah wan' leet w'isky an' some racquette. Mabbe she snow beeg in leet taime."

"Snowshoes? Well, I guess that's so. But you don't get whisky. You'll freeze to death on whisky."

"Non! Ah——"

"See here, La Croix! I'm running this. I'll tell you what you get and what you don't get!" And Newhall turned and plodded toward the bleak desolation of the settlement.

La Croix skirted the clearing, slipped stealthily along the river edge, and hid beside the burned mill. Presently through the gloom of the winter afternoon Newhall loomed, bearing a bundle, and across his shoulders a pair of short, broad "packers" snowshoes. He hastily dumped the bundle at La Croix's feet and unslung the racquettes. "I charged 'em to ye," he said hurriedly. " 'Gregoire la Croix, deputy sheriff of Lomax County.' Dated the bill back to where you was deputy. That's how it reads on the books, in case you don't do what you say. If you're aimin' to beat me out of 'em——"

La Croix laughed bitterly. He dropped to his knees and began stuffing the things in his pack sack. "Ah t'ink mabbe you get hall de pay for dees t'ing w'en Ah feex dat Selden, hein?"

"See here, La Croix, no shootin' or knifin' or like a that. You stand in well enough with them St. Francis Injuns to get 'em to kidnap Selden till past June. They's none slicker at doin' a job like that than them boys. When Selden's put away I'll send the money to your missis at Au Sable—fifty dollars apiece for the two that help you. You get the four hundred I promised—but if you try any monkey work, why——" And Newhall's pause was eloquently suggestive.

"Dat hall right. But eef you don'

send dat monee—den Ah com' veet mah frens an' Ah keel you. Ah shoot you veet mah carabine fraum dat dam some taime. Dat hall."

"You get a move on!" commanded Newhall, with a bravado not entirely genuine. "I'll take chances on you."

When La Croix rose from his knees, Newhall was gone. The breed slipped into the stiff new mackinaw, lashed the snowshoes to his pack, and swung it to his shoulders, but instead of taking the river trail toward St. John's, he retraced his steps toward the deserted cabin on the hill.

Within a quarter of a mile of it he circled through the forest toward the south, keeping well within the shelter of the rigid trees. Finally he deposited his pack and snowshoes beneath a low cedar, and crept cautiously toward the edge of the clearing round the cabin. In the heavy dusk of the winter night he was able to creep within a few paces of the place without being discovered should there be any one within.

Listening, he heard a smothered cough and an exclamation. Again came the sound of the cough, and a voice rumbled:

"Clem, mought jest as well go outside and bark as to do that. If the breed's anywhere near he's heard it. Reckon he's lit out fur good. Guess me and Sunny'll go along down to your camp for to-night, so as to git a good start in the mornin'." And Jed Mateel, followed by Clement Putter and Sunny, stepped from the cabin, and, crossing the clearing, hurried down the river trail toward Uncle Clem's place.

La Croix, grinning, rose and ran back for his pack and snowshoes. He came boldly out into the clearing, entered the cabin, and built a fire, over which he cooked some meat and boiled a pail of strong tea. With the first light of the new moon he left the place, and, crossing to the river trail, started on a trot toward Mateel's camp. Once he paused to take off his coat, roll it up, and hide it beside the trail. Then he trotted on, breathing easily, all the primitive Indian awake in his warming pulses. Down the long, cold trail he sped, a flitting shadow in the thin light of the crescent moon. An hour, and he was at the clearing round Mateel's cabin.

With hand and shoulder he tried the back door of the house. It was bolted on the inside. He seized a length of unsplit firewood and battered the door in. Lighting a lamp, he searched from room to room. In Sunny's bedroom he found what he wanted, a carbine, hanging in its leather case, and beside it a belt half filled with cartridges. Seizing the rifle and belt, he set the lamp on the kitchen table. He saw that the place had been made neat against a prolonged absence.

"Dat Mateel he mak' traverse to St. John, Ah t'ink. Ah t'ink dey go by dat h'ole trap ligne, by gar! Nex' taime eet ees Gregoire la Croix dat tell dat Sunnee, 'han's up!'—an' den——"

Drawing the cartridges from the belt, he stuffed them in his pocket and flung the belt in a corner. He looked about him, debating with himself whether or not he should set fire to the place. Finally he blew out the light, and, shivering a little, started down the trail on a trot, the cartridges clicking in his pocket.

CHAPTER XXI.

Next morning early Jed Mateel and Sunny faced a heavy snowstorm as they left Uncle Clem's cabin and crossed the frozen river to enter the chill, silent fastness of the winter woods.

The old woodsman's true instinct for "weather" had anticipated the early snow, and two pair of snowshoes hung across the pack on his shoulders.

Sunny, in short skirt and knee-length blanket coat, gay stockings, and high-topped moccasins, trod lightly behind

her father, her bright face framed by the scarlet of her Canadian toque. To follow his pace was no ordinary task, and she regretted that the snow, while deep enough to make heavy walking, was not quite deep enough to call for the use of the racquettes. On snowshoes she could have easily equalized the difference in stride and speed.

Withal, Sunny was happy in that her father had consented to her accompanying him to the St. John's camp. He determined to warn Selden and Joe of La Croix's reappearance. Moreover, he wished to see his son, and the journey would not take him much farther than his usual round of the traps. Sunny reasoned with herself that while she would be glad to see Selden, there would not be much to say. She had explained in her last letter to him the nonreceipt of his first note, and she had written with her usual frankness of her mistaken loss of confidence in him, and had apologized for it.

While she was not aware of it, the fact of her apology had touched Selden more than anything she had ever done. He appreciated the fineness of character that had prompted her to this, and he knew the genuineness of her apology.

No, there was not much to say logically, but Sunny unconsciously longed for the swift gleam of admiration in Selden's eyes whenever she met his glance. No one, she thought, had ever looked at her quite as he had, giving homage to her beauty without offense. True, she had known admiration of a sort before, in the Newhall store, for instance, where the lumbermen had stared at her with covert suggestiveness. And Gregoire la Croix. She shivered with disgust.

Why she should care for Selden, beyond the natural desire of youth to laugh and talk with youth, she could not understand. Her thoughts went far beyond her power to express them in speech. She felt and knew that he cared for her. He had told her that he had no relatives, no kin, but had been a foundling. He had known little of affection and much of hard work. He had spoken to her frankly and unaffectedly of his hopes and plans. And because he had spoken without self-consciousness, or a more serious intent than to be friendly with her, he had builded better than he knew. Unversed in subtleties, yet the girl's unspoiled instinct told her that his heart was clean. The hunger of youth for youth's eager confidences, youth's buoyant bonhomie, possessed her. Would he understand or misunderstand her visit? The keen pride of her nature chased the rich blood to her cheeks at the thought. She pushed back her toque and unbuttoned the throat of her mackinaw. Her father's huge form, striding regularly before her, seemed unreal. Awake, she dreamed along the trail, plodding past snow-laden cedars whose weighted branches swept the snow beneath; past gaunt and rigid beech and birch and maple; past the dusky green of spruce and fir, till down the trail she caught a glimpse of the little halfway cabin of the "ligne."

Her father stopped and gestured toward the camp. "We mought's well eat a bite and rest a bit, Sunny. We can't more'n make the Canady line and the second camp afore night. You tired?"

She shook her head and laughed, her face glowing with health and youth. Her fine gray eyes, her straight black brows, and rich, dusky hair—starred here and there with a stray snowflake—and the sweet curve of her lips, half smiling as she gazed far away to some illusive dream future, held her father's eyes as with an enchantment. He sighed as he turned and plodded on down the trail. Sunny, swinging her toque by its tassel, came more slowly.

Shortly after they had crossed the Great Heron River that afternoon, both

on snowshoes, as the depth of snow had increased steadily, Mateel halted suddenly and swung round, peering through the slanting flakes.

"What is it, dad?"

"Don' know. Can't git it out of my bones that somethin' is followin' us. I don' know."

"Lucivee, mebby."

"Mebby," grumbled Mateel, striding on again.

Through the gathering twilight of the afternoon came the shrill bark of a fox, intensifying the succeeding silence. Mateel shifted his rifle from one hand to the other, and plodded on. Sunny noticed that he carried his head bent and a trifle sideways, as though scanning the forest at the side of the trail. She was again thinking of Selden's letter when she saw, in a haze, her father's rifle jump to his shoulder. The spitting *whang* of the thirty-thirty ripped through the woods, and its echo met the report of another rifle, fired from the dusk to the right. She plainly heard the thud of the bullet as it struck her father. Then followed the click of the lever as he threw in another shell and fired again. "Missed!" he exclaimed. His arms wavered. Slowly the rifle sank in his hands, and he staggered to a tree and leaned against it. "I'm hit, Sunny. Who did it, I dunno, unless——"

"Dad! Oh—dad!" she cried.

"Don' know, less'n La Croix ambushed us."

She picked up the rifle, glancing through the dusky stillness of the winter evening. "Is it hurtin' you?" she asked breathlessly, coming to his side.

Mateel shook his head and coughed. A streak of red seamed his white beard.

"You got to get to the shack, dad—quick! You *got* to."

"I'm a-goin' to, Sunny. I ain't dead yit, my gal. I'm a-goin' to live to git the fella that shot me."

CHAPTER XXII.

With a groan Jed Mateel sank to the browse bed in the shack. Sunny, scraping away the snow that had drifted in the open doorway, closed it, and, hastily unstrapping the packs, found the blankets. On the little platform of earth in the center of the shack she built a fire, and by its light slipped the coat and undercoat from her father's shoulders.

"It's gone clean through, I reckon," he said, twisting his shoulder uneasily.

"Not through your coat at the back, dad. Can't you sit up a little so I can see?"

Mateel turned himself on his elbow, and rose slowly to his feet. With his knife Sunny slit away the soggy patch of shirt on his shoulder, and with it came a little, vicious twenty-five-thirty-five copper-nosed bullet.

"Went clean through," said Sunny, hastily washing the wound with water made from melted snow. "It ain't bleedin' much, dad. If it had been a soft-nose bullet, it would 'a' killed you."

"Let's see," said Mateel as she helped him on with his jacket and mackinaw. "Huh! A twenty-five-thirty-five, same as you had for that leetle gun of yourn for shootin' wild geese. Well, I ain't afraid of a leetle pill like that if I ain't bleedin' inside."

"You jest lay down now, dad. I got to get wood for the fire, and for all night. To-morrow I'm goin' on to St. John's camp for help. I'll get Joe."

"They's plenty wood split and piled on the south side of the shack. I cut it las' fall. And you ain't goin' to resk goin' in for help. I'll be all right in the mornin'."

"But it ain't far to the camp," she insisted. "It's jest acrost the Heron and northeast about six miles, ain't it?"

"Yes. But if it's La Croix——" he began.

"Why, he's gone now, or else he'd

stayed and finished his job—and you. He dassen't come around here ag'in."

Sunny sensibly refrained from argument or comment, but with calm forethought cooked and ate her supper and prepared to sleep. Her father shifted his weight on the browse. "Sunny, git me a drink," he murmured.

She brought him water, and he drank greedily. She put her hand on his forehead and felt the pulse of oncoming fever.

"It's quit snowin'," said her father presently, staring at a square of starlit sky through the smoke hole in the roof.

"Yes. You go to sleep, dad. I'll sing 'Barbara,' if you will."

"Well, now! You ain't sung 'Barbara' sence Ward Selden come to our place."

Sunny rose and brought in wood. She piled quite a quantity of it near the bunk. Then she came and sat, with legs crossed Indianwise, beside her father. Softly she smoothed back the long, silvered hair from his forehead. His eyes closed. Carefully she reached to his wrist and felt his pulse. He smiled. "I'm tryin' to sleep, Sunny, but I got a burnin' hole in my chest. I'm tryin' to sleep, Sunny."

With her hand slowly stroking his hair and her gray eyes fixed on the square of starlit sky framed by the smoke hole in the roof, she sang, in the quaint minors of the early days, her mother's song of "Barbara."

Mateel smiled, opened his eyes, closed them wearily, and drew a deep breath. Sunny, heedless of anything save the immediate charm of the old-fashioned melody, sang on, of Barbara, the winter's night, the sleigh ride through the storm, the lover's question, all, to the end. Then taking up the plaint again, half crooning it, she sang more slowly and softly. Her hand ceased its slow movement to and fro, and rested on her father's forehead. She drew it away, damp with tiny beads of sweat.

Quietly she crept to the other side of the fire, replenished it, and snuggled in her blankets. Round about the isolated cabin the trees creaked softly or cracked shrilly as the frost rent their tense fibers. The low *hush* of the wind in the hemlocks came with the regular, easy sweep of the surf on a calm summer day.

Sunny, weary from the journey and the shock of the unwonted attack on her father, drew the blankets about her head.

"I feel jest like cryin'," she said to herself. "And I could, if I jest let go. Reckon I better pray and save my feelin's to take me to St. John's with." She began the olden-time child's prayer that kindly Aunt Lib had taught her: "Now I lay me——" It had heretofore sufficed, but it seemed inadequate now. Her manifold emotions demanded larger expression. She could not frame in words the bitter fullness of her heart.

CHAPTER XXIII.

In the dawn of the gray and chill winter morning, Sunny arose and rekindled the fire, which she had replenished at intervals during the night. She spoke to her father, who did not answer. Alarmed, she knelt at his side and spoke to him again. In the flicker of the flames she saw that he breathed and was seemingly in a heavy sleep. Perplexed, she hesitated an instant. Perhaps it were better he slept undisturbed. She returned to the fire, made tea, and ate some camp bread and bacon. She melted more snow, and placed the little pail of water beside her father. Then, taking her snowshoes, she slipped out, closed the door, and began her journey to the distant St. John's camps.

She knew that she would cross the Nennassing, as well as the Great Heron, before she reached the camps. The

blaze of the trap line was a guide no longer as it swung round with the Great Heron River and ran back toward their home.

The early winter morning, sharp in its still cold, nipped stealthily at her cheeks and fingers despite the heavy wool toque and beaver mittens. Once or twice she stopped to rub her nose and cheeks with the powdery, dry snow. Finally the keen exercise heightened her pulses to a pitch that warmed her through and through. The sun, rolling slowly over the giant pines, threw forked and diversified rays through their cloudy purple tops. The snow, shot over with paths of sunlight, glittered blindingly in contrast to the soft half light of the interior woodland.

An hour of toil, and she had reached the Nennassing. Beyond its northern shore, and some three miles northeast, lay the St. John's camps. Sunny estimated that her progress was about three miles an hour. She crossed the frozen river, and, taking a diagonal from the sun, plodded through the silent forest, pausing from time to time to "line" her course by some prominent landmark. She did not realize that the small extent of uncut timber in her immediate territory was surrounded by a network of lumber roads extending from the main camp to the outer camps, but La Croix, who had followed her from near the shack, knew this, and quickened his pace. Like a wolf he had slunk about the shack in the early morning, not daring to enter, as he dreaded meeting Jed Mateel. Yet the breed was positive that he had wounded the other—perhaps had killed him.

When Sunny left her father that morning, La Croix reasoned that she had gone for help. Undecided, he had waited until she was well on her way. Then he followed her, thinking to overtake her easily, but she had had a long start and he had spent a restless night. Not until she had crossed the river did he come within sight of her. She had stooped to tighten a thong, and he imagined that she saw him, for she arose and quickened her pace. He lengthened his stride. The girl must not reach the camps. If she did, Selden and Joe Mateel would be warned.

Climbing a rise of snow-covered rock, Sunny turned breathlessly to scan the trail up which she had come. Within forty yards was the half-breed, plunging along her trail, his lips curled back from his teeth and his gaunt face beaded with sweat. Her first instinct was to run, but she knew he could overtake her in a short race. She drew all the courage of her health and strength to her aid, and, glancing up in natural surprise, called: "Bo' jou', Gregoire! You're out early this morning!"

The half-breed, taken aback by her natural acceptance of his presence, slackened his pace, and stood gazing up at her, his eyes narrowed to mere slits of light. "Oui—Ah'm jus' hout on mah ligne."

"Yes. Going to the camp?"

"Oui," he lied, glancing away.

"So am I. Dad got hurt yesterday when we were coming down the trail. Got shot by accident. It was nearly dark. Probably some hunter for the camps mistook him for a moose. He's big enough."

The half-breed grinned, and Sunny could have strangled him. Her pleasantry had been deliberate. She wished to appear as unconcerned about the shooting as possible.

"Dad wasn't hit bad," she said lightly. "And I'm glad you're going to the camps, Gregoire." La Croix's eyes gleamed. "You know all the trails, and I know I'm safe anywhere with you. You see, I don't know this part of the country."

"Hola! Dat ees bon!" laughed La Croix. "Ve mak' to go to dat camp now, hein?" Then he added, with oily

assurance: "Mabbe you lof Gregoire some taime, hein?"

He had stepped close to her. She loathed him, and feared him, but back of all that lay a picture of her father, alone, stricken, perhaps mortally wounded. Almost as her lips framed a reply, she recognized as her own the sheath of the carbine that he carried. That explained the twenty-five-thirty-five bullet. The rifle *was* hers. She knew the wide, deer-hide lacing on the cover. She was positive now as to who shot her father. Here was the supreme test.

"Mebby—I—did—like — you — once —Gregoire." Softly she said it, and the warring emotions in her heart trembled on her lips as she spoke.

La Croix drew a step nearer. "Ma belle!" he exclaimed hoarsely, stretching out his arms.

Sunny, watching the hand that held the rifle, drew back a step, pretending a pretty confusion. La Croix dropped the rifle, and, pacing forward, took her in his arms. She shuddered as he bent over her and kissed her on the lips. "Hah! Ma belle!" he whispered. "You lof Gregoire mooch!"

With all the calmness and deliberation she could summon, and with all the quick strength of her splendid thigh muscles she drew up her knee and kicked the breed full in the abdomen. With a groan he fell back, gasping for breath. She leaped forward, grabbed up the carbine, and, jerking it from its case, cocked it, and leveled it at him. On his hands and knees he wavered, groaning.

"I ought to!" she exclaimed shrilly. "Oh, God! I ought to!"

But there was no immediate need to shoot. The half-breed was sick.

Joe Mateel, driving his four big horses toward the main camp, glanced from side to side of the road. He wanted to whistle, but his lips were stiff with the cold. He made a few unsatisfactory attempts at "Annie Laurie." "Dum dull—this totin' and teamin', and some cold, too. Sittin' still and freezin' to death's mighty onsatisfactory, at three and a half per day. Wish suthin' 'd happen so I could do suthin' to warm up."

Slowly and with forgelike deliberation the great, snow-clogged feet of the horses rose and fell silently, sinking deep into the feathery snow of the roadway. The steam went up from their backs, and their nostrils were rimmed with frost.

"Gettin' kind of heavy right here," he remarked, jumping from the sleigh.

Over that particular grade, and about to climb back on the load, he hesitated, flung the lines from him, and, springing through the drifted roadside, ran heavily through the shallow depths of snow beneath the pines. "Hi—ee!" he shouted as he saw La Croix fall backward. "That's the stuff, Sunny! Give 'im another. I'm a-comin'."

When Mateel was near enough to see the leveled carbine in Sunny's hands he slackened his pace. Walking up leisurely, albeit breathing hard, he greeted her casually: "Hello, sis!"

"Oh—Joe!"

Striding to the breed, he kicked him in the ribs. "Here, you! Get up and explain—quick!"

Sunny, leaning against a tree, one hand over breast and the other clutching the rifle, breathed heavily. With head bowed she stood, striving against the sobs that shook her.

"Funny you're so scared of that breed and he ain't got a gun and you have. Here, you're all right now, sis. What was the row, anyway?"

The girl lifted her head. "He tried to—to kiss me. He did kiss me. I had to let him."

"You had to let him?" growled Mateel.

"To get my rifle. He had it."

"Oh! That's it. How'd he get it?"

"Stole it from our house after me and dad left for St. John's."

"What?" And the young woodsman drew back his boot, but Sunny grasped his arm before he could get to the prostrate figure. "Joe!" she commanded. "Joe! Don't you be a beast just because he is."

"He ought to be killed," growled Mateel.

"Mebby. But not by you or me, Joe. It's Gregoire la Croix. He shot dad last night. Dad's over in the line shack. He's alive, but I reckon he's hurt pretty bad, Joe."

CHAPTER XXIV.

As Joe Mateel reached for Sunny's rifle, she stepped away. "No, Joe, not you—the law——"

"What law? Where's any law but me—for him? Gi'me that gun!"

Again the girl stepped aside, deliberately drawing her brother away from La Croix, who had risen to one knee and was watching them. Slowly he drew up the other knee, and rose to his feet, glaring with the intensity of desperation at Joe Mateel. Sunny nodded slightly. The breed understood, and, turning, shuffled away. Mateel, intent on securing the rifle, forgot him for the instant.

"Sunny!"

"No, Joe; not you. It won't help dad any to shoot La Croix. And you can't catch me without snowshoes." She backed away while La Croix staggered down the trail, broke into a trot, and was making good headway toward retreat when Mateel spun round. Realizing that he could not overtake the other in the snow, he leaped again toward Sunny. She evaded him easily.

La Croix, glancing back, broke into a terrified lope, darting between the trees. Mateel stood staring at his sister. "Are you stuck on him?" he asked brutally.

"Now, Joe, cool off and listen. You'd 'a' shot him. No matter what he done—either shootin' Tom Crogan or dad, you couldn't prove it if he was dead. He's worth more alive. Would the law people believe you and the men from St. John's, even if they swore that Gregoire la Croix said he did the shootin'? Folks knows they was all mixed up in that, too. Would they believe them? They *would* believe La Croix if he confessed he done it. Can't you understand? Now you wake up and get a team and help get dad to camp for doctorin'."

Several hours later four steaming horses drew up to the camp office. McLean, the superintendent, stood knee-deep in the snow, talking to Joe Mateel. "Take your father over to my camp, Joe. The doctor will be here to-night. I telephoned. Mrs. McLean is a first-rate nurse. My girl Marion is with her and can help." He nodded to Sunny. "Just drive right up. Mrs. McLean expects you. I'll ring up town again and see if that doctor has started yet." Then the tall Scotch-Canadian plunged through the drifts back to his office.

Mateel spoke to the horses. In a few minutes the wounded man was carefully housed in the superintendent's roomy log camp and Sunny was explaining the shooting as best she could.

Mrs. McLean, a rosy, sweet-voiced, plump little woman, won Sunny's affection immediately. Marion, the superintendent's eighteen-year-old daughter, the fresh young image of her rosy-cheeked mother, was too near Sunny's age and too strikingly good looking in her golden-haired, pink-and-white perfection to be accepted otherwise than "on trust" by Sunny.

"Oh, no!" exclaimed Mrs. McLean as Sunny displayed some diffidence about accepting their generous hospitality for herself. "You're going to stay right here and help us take care of

your father. We have plenty of room. The camp is almost too big to be really cozy. We have four bedrooms upstairs. We can't think of letting you go until your father has recovered." And Mrs. McLean smiled in a motherly fashion as Joe Mateel, mumbling his appreciation, backed out and closed the door.

A few minutes later, as Sunny sat gazing disconsolately into the wide, blazing fireplace, Mrs. McLean came to her and, taking her mittens from her lap, smoothed the glossy brown beaver fur. "You won't object, I am sure, if I adopt you right away and call you Sunny?" And the kindly face beamed upon the dark, troubled one in open admiration for Sunny's fine gray eyes, her brilliant coloring, and splendid, tumultuous black hair.

"I'd like that," the girl said simply, glancing up and smiling.

Just then Jed Mateel called faintly. Sunny sprang up and entered the room where he lay.

"Isn't she stunning, mother!" said Marion McLean. "And, mamma, whom did she mean by 'Ward'? She asked if he were here—in camp—just now. Did she mean our Ward?"

Mrs. McLean smiled. "Yes, Marion. I think she meant our Mr. Selden. You know, he visited the Mateels' camp for several days. He was recovering from an accident. That was long before he came here."

"Oh! But she spoke of Mr. Selden as 'Ward.'"

"So did you, dear," said her mother again, smiling.

As Marion went slowly upstairs to arrange the guest room for Sunny, she pondered. "I wonder if he calls her 'Sunny'?" she asked herself. "She is just a dear, and so beautiful—and *awfully* proud." And she turned back the fresh white spread of the bed. "I wonder if she will like me?"

From her own room Marion brought a great, black bearskin rug—her choicest winter possession—and spread it in front of the bed. Again she went to her room and returned with her arms full of dainty linen, stockings, handkerchiefs, a pair of fluffy woolen slippers, and last, one of her own cozy, fleece-lined woolen nightdresses, a soft gray garment, beribboned, warm, and serviceable.

Wistfully the girl surveyed her offerings, hoping that the strange, beautiful guest might not be offended, but rather, find in them a token of friendship—of affection.

"She will be just as cozy as I am these cold winter nights," reflected Marion. "Won't we have fun reading? If she really knew how much I shall miss my big bear, she would like me a little, perhaps."

CHAPTER XXV.

When Selden called at the McLeans' camp, Sunny met him with all her old-time frankness and geniality. "Hello, Ward!" she said, extending her hand. "You've changed some. Have you really found that goddess you was tellin' me about? You look some older and more grown up, Ward."

Selden smiled. "But how is your father—eh—Miss Mateel?" And his hesitation was noticed by both Mrs. McLean and Marion, who had just entered the room.

"The doctor says dad's strong enough to get well again," she replied, smiling as she saw unmistakable admiration creep slowly into his eyes.

"I won't ask to see him," he said, turning to greet Mrs. McLean and her daughter, "but if there is anything I can do——"

"If you can keep Joe from goin' after Gregoire la Croix, and shootin' him, you'll be doin' dad and me a favor."

"Joe and I are great friends," said Selden. "I'll speak to Joe."

"Don't say too much, Ward. Joe is stubborn."

"Mr. McLean told me about the accident, and La Croix," said Selden. "I didn't think La Croix would show up again. I wonder what brought him over here. I understand he followed you and your father?"

Sunny nodded. She was about to tell Selden of the breed's real mission as Ezra Newhall's tool; in fact, to tell him all she knew and surmised. She wished to unburden her heart freely, even to speaking of her real solicitude for him and her haste to warn him, but the presence of Mrs. McLean checked her. And Selden also, she thought, seemed hesitant and unlike his real self.

Sunny's quick wit discerned Marion McLean as a factor in Selden's diffidence. A little jealousy tinged the happiness she felt at seeing him again. In reality, the presence of Marion and her mother had made Selden diffident —for Sunny's sake. He thought too much of her to risk cheapening her by assuming, in the presence of others, the old-time familiarity, much as he longed to do so.

For months he had idealized the absent Sunny. Naturally he found the pleasant companionship of Marion doubly enhanced by the vision of the other girl's contrasted beauty. Marion's sympathy, comradeship, kindness, was, through his imagination, as Sunny's own.

He glanced from one to the other. How vivid the contrast! The slender, golden-haired Marion, low-voiced, sweet, eagerly sympathetic; and Sunny, almost boyish in her camaraderie; virile, overflowing with the vitality of irrepressible youth and strength. Although untamed, she had a natural grace of poise and movement that was matchless, inimitable.

"You must come as often as you can, Mr. Selden," said Mrs. McLean. "We shall all be glad to see you."

Selden thanked her, and shortly afterward departed.

Many evenings he came, bringing with him as he entered the instant, crisp edge of the winter weather. Once he stayed to dinner, and was charmed by Sunny's ease of manner and her mastery of some erstwhile neglected domestic details. Evidently she was quick to learn and appreciative of the privilege. New vistas unfolded themselves to him, and after dinner he dreamed, lounging in one of the easy-chairs, smoking and nodding an infrequent accompaniment to McLean's after-dinner dissertation on "International Law."

Sunny and Marion, heads close together, were immersed in some scholastic mystery, Marion answering the murmured questions of her companion as they turned the page.

Mrs. McLean, with her book open on her knees, sat gazing into the leaping flames of the huge fireplace. Presently she bade Selden good night, pausing, as she passed Jed Mateel's room, to ask if he were comfortable. His voice, in reply, roused Sunny from her studies, and she rose and stepped to her father's room.

"Marion, you were up so late last night——"

"Yes, mamma," replied the girl, closing the book she and Sunny had been reading. She bade Selden and her father good night, and joined her mother.

"What!" exclaimed McLean, glancing round. "We're shamefully deserted, Ward. Well, about that argument for a protective tariff——" And the shrewd Scotch-Canadian superintendent of the St. John's Lumber Company, plunged again into a rather one-sided discussion, contented to have so good a listener.

At length Selden rose to go, and McLean, yawning, stepped to the door and glanced at the thermometer. "Uggh!" he shivered, as Selden slipped

into his mackinaw. "It's about forty below to-night."

"Is that all?" said Sunny, coming from her father's room. "Oh, you're going! Good night, Ward."

"Good night, Sunny."

McLean climbed the stairs slowly, still puzzling over a problem born of his recent dissertation. For a second Sunny stood at the half-open door with Selden. Then, stepping outside, she closed it behind her.

As he breathed the keen winter air, Selden felt his heart leap and his palms grow moist and hot.

In the dim starlight the girl stood, bareheaded, silent, gazing at him. He drew his mittens from his hands, and, dropping to one knee, found her fingers and kissed them. He could feel her tremble at his touch. Rising, he held out his arms. With a sigh she leaned toward him. He bowed his head above her upturned face, and her breath was fragrant and warm against his cheek in the cold of that bitter winter night. "Sunny! Sunny!" he whispered. "My own girl!"

She smiled up at him. Then gently pushing him from her, she stepped back, her hand against the door. "'Course —I—am!" she whispered. "Or I wouldn't let you kiss me." And there was an almost childish delight in her voice as she laughed softly. "But you was so long findin' it out, Ward!"

He was about to reply when she interrupted him. "Open the latch for me, Ward. It's frosted and might stick to my fingers."

He drew on his mittens, and gently pressed the big, wrought-iron latch. A flare of light—redoubled darkness—and Sunny was gone.

Halfway to his own camp, he paused in his quick stride. "She's just an angel," he muttered. "She's just an angel—but a very practicable one," he added, marching on again.

CHAPTER XXVI.

The storm that followed buried the camps window deep and obliterated the winter roads, smoothing all to a vast white level beneath the cold brown and green of the forest. Along the north shore of the Nennassing the skidways were piled high with logs.

From the main camp McLean issued orders to the numerous outlying camps, warning them to take advantage of every minute of daylight and make the winter's cut of timber the largest on record. Rumor had it that the young engineer, Selden, had outpointed the Newhall Company in the game of water rights. None knew exactly how, but all realized that something definite was afoot when the superintendent offered a handsome premium to the camp making the greatest showing that season. The competition became hot, the men striving, under the stimulus of inter-camp rivalry, as though playing a big, whole-hearted game, rather than working overtime for wages. Never in the days of the St. John's Company, and it was the oldest established camp in the Dominion, had there been such a cut of timber. Gaunt, tough-sinewed, tireless, the crews labored from twilight to twilight, ate ravenously, slumbered deeper than dreams, and rose each morning to go at it again like men whose lives depended on the issue.

McLean, a wise leader, appeared at each camp at judicious intervals, tarried briefly, and was gone, leaving behind him a terse word or two of praise or blame.

While many of the older lumbermen realized that the company was getting value and a half for each man, all felt the grim spirit of battle that inspired their chief, and lifted them above mere personal plaint or faultfinding. The boys of the "Maple Leaf and Beaver" took national pride in their company and its superintendent.

Once, as Selden visited an outlying camp, Cesaire Garneau the Lou'-Garou, nudged a brother axman and gestured toward the young engineer. "He de wan w'at goin' make hall de log go on dat Nennassing—w'en we mak' to drive een de spreeng."

His companion grunted. "He don' look laik vair hole mans to do hall dat," he grumbled.

"Mabbe dat so," said Cesaire, turning to his work. "But wan taime Ah look een hees eye. Den Ah see w'at ees beeg—here." And Cesaire tapped his forehead, and spat as he swung up his ax.

Selden, while nominally timekeeper and general assistant to McLean, in reality represented an immediately greater potency than the superintendent himself. McLean admitted that without a proper head of water in the spring the winter's cut would be a total loss. In Selden's word lay the assurance that the Nennassing would be bankful and overflowing the coming spring. Locked in McLean's office desk was a small blue print outlining the courses of the Great Heron and Nennassing Rivers from Newhall to St. John's. From a loop of the Great Heron where it paralleled the Nennassing, and a few miles from the camp, ran a line, dotted on the blue print, marked "Cut." The proposed channel averaged a width of some sixty yards and contemplated a course through a natural depression in the land between the two rivers.

At the southern end of the proposed cut, where it touched the Great Heron River, the ground, rose in a rocky barrier, some ten feet above the high-water mark of the stream.

Selden had already superintended the honeycombing of this obstruction with drills—hiring a crew of experienced drill hands from Montreal. At the completion of the work he had personally accompanied them back to their city as an additional safeguard against premature local advertising.

With the coming of spring Selden planned to unplug the drill holes, dry them, and charge them with dynamite. He figured that no less than half a ton of the explosive would be necessary to give immediate results. He, with McLean, deliberated long on the advisability of hiring a crew to handle the dynamite, wire it, and prepare the gigantic "shot." He finally agreed with McLean that they would load and wire the shot personally; losing time in the operation, but precluding the risk of discovery.

Another feature of the proposed coup caused some hesitation. Selden assured his chief that the turning of the Great Heron to the Nennassing would eventually inundate several square miles of forest near the camps, and would, in time, endanger them by flood. He advised a compromise with Ezra Newhall, after the working out of the first trial.

McLean, despite his faith in Selden's ability, had seemed somewhat skeptical as to the outcome of the plan. Selden had promptly asked his chief if he had ever seen 'Suncook Lake, in Maine, and its thoroughfare to Caribou Lake, adjoining it. McLean said he had. Selden produced a map showing 'Suncook Lake in its original bed and a dotted outline showing the inundated country and the distortion of the old river courses by artificial means. McLean was convinced.

Selden, dreaming over his plan, and not infrequently waking to the consciousness of the memory of Sunny's recent "good night," felt that he had at last found the big work he had sought. Moreover, the naiad of his dreams, not ethereal, but of real, warm flesh and blood, had allowed him to touch her lips in the starlight, to then vanish with a smile behind the great iron-latched door of McLean's camp.

He blessed the presence of work and worry that drove him from too much thinking of his goddess.

And Sunny?

Long since she had learned that Marion's relinquishment of the black-bear rug was a token of supreme affection. The two girls became warm friends and had many evening confidences before the great open fireplace.

Sunny, in her magnificent vitality, fairly filled the camp with good cheer and frequent laughter at her quaint colloquialisms and native wit. Shrewdly she studied the others' deportment and speech, and quickly she realized that to become as one of them, as Selden was, could not be accomplished in weeks or months, and she wisely gave over her first impulse to be as they were at once. That, she thought, would make her unnatural and stiff, and would be noticed by them all.

Without the words to express even to herself her appreciation of the natural courtesies of speech and manner of the others, she possessed an intuitive knowledge that guided her aright. She resolved to be herself, but to watch and mark with vigilance. Moreover, as her father progressed toward health, and frequently sat up with them beside the evening fire, her mind became pregnant with a new idea, and she longed for the old seclusion and freedom of their own home, that she might discuss her plan with her father.

The weeks—long weeks to the invalid, but short enough to McLean and Selden—rolled by in storm and cold.

Selden, calling in the evenings, was perplexed at Sunny's new attitude toward him. She was apparently as frank and cheerful as ever, yet a baffling aloofness, a something deeper than her eyes expressed, lay hidden in her heart from him. She was not displeased with him—*that* he knew. She was always glad to see him. Yet since that night, when she had slipped through the doorway and stood, bareheaded in the starlight, speechless and filled with a longing his lips but half satisfied, she had not seemed the same.

Sunny herself was conscious of the difference and Selden's knowledge of it. Womanlike, because it reflected a greater love for him and a greater sacrifice for his sake than he dreamed, she buried her secret the deeper, and crooned over it in her heart as a mother lulls her babe.

That he would some day ask her to be his wife, she knew, and the thought sent the joyful blood pulsing to her cheeks. What she would answer when he asked—ah! Perhaps that would not so please him, yet it was best. And her lids would droop and her lips would melt to a pensive smile that touched Marion to a quick, tremulous solicitude for her friend.

And so the time drew nearer when the invalid giant, Jed Mateel, and his daughter would leave the hospitable shelter of the St. John's camp and return to their old, free routine.

Several times Mateel had ventured out with his son, returning in the evenings weary and ravenously hungry. He laughed away all word of caution until kindly Mrs. McLean forbore to worry, but wondered at his hardihood. Finally he announced that he was going back to his traps, and further, that he had arranged with his son to pay the McLeans for their trouble.

Mrs. McLean had protested indignantly, reminding him that it was the company doctor that had attended him, and that Sunny's presence as a companion to her daughter made up a thousand times for any slight inconvenience that he seemed to think he had occasioned them. She concluded by saying that she would not accept one penny from them.

Big Jed Mateel had laughed, and blinked mysteriously. "Reckon you

won't," he said, and henceforth became silent on that subject.

One morning, a week after the Mateels' departure, McLean found a package in his office. It was addressed to his wife. That evening he brought it to the camp, and, curious as children, they opened it together. From a great wrapping of buff-colored, thick moose hide rolled a magnificent pelt, dark, soft-hued, and each individual hair was tipped with silver. McLean whistled. Mrs. McLean, running her fingers through the deep, glossy fur, sighed her amazement.

"Silver fox!" exclaimed the superintendent, with appreciation inherited from a Hudson Bay Company ancestor. "Silver fox, and, Mary, worth just about five hundred dollars right here in the woods."

Marion, peering over her mother's shoulder, gazed with incredulous eyes. McLean, glancing up, smiled at his daughter. "There is no name—no message—but it came from Mateel. I know that."

"Five hundred dollars? Why, that would have been enough for Sunny——" And the girl hesitated and flushed, finger on lip.

"Sunny's wedding expenses?" said McLean, laughing.

His daughter shook her head. "Oh, no! I didn't mean that! But something else."

CHAPTER XXVII.

With the melting of the snows in spring came the heavy night mists that blanketed the swollen Nennassing as it rolled, bankful, past the St. John's camps.

Grumbling and roaring in the distance, the mountain streams gathered headway, and, burdened with forest litter and churning, whirling fragments of rotten ice, swept down and out to the wild currents of the Great Heron and the Nennassing until only the mightiest of shore trees stood against the countermining of the gnawing, yellow waters.

At the camps out came peaveys and pike poles, and on went the calked boots and so'westers. Like two armies preparing for a mighty conflict, the Newhall lumbermen and the St. John's boys, armed and accoutered, chafed to be at the game.

Selden and McLean, toiling early and late, with the assistance of the Lou'-Garou and Big Pierre, unplugged, cleaned, and loaded the vents in the rock rib along the Great Heron River, with double charges of dynamite. Already the Newhall logs were running in the Great Heron, and the Nennassing's water mark fell daily, until McLean became alarmed at what he deemed to be Selden's stubborn procrastination. But Selden answered reasonably that to open a channel then would of course give them the Great Heron water, but with it would come an undesirable conglomeration of Newhall's logs at the mouth of the proposed intake. This jam might act as a very effective wall in cutting off the flow they wanted. McLean chafed. Selden smiled, and examined fuses

Late one night, lean, grizzled little Jules la Rue roused McLean, and entered the camp, dripping with rain, yet as stolid as a pine.

"Well?" And McLean, yawning, opened a cabinet and placed a bottle and glasses on the table.

"Ah com' fraum watch dat Newhall. She hall tie up—jam, by gay een dat helbow hof de Gr-r-eat Her-r-on."

"Pickerel Falls?"

"Oui." And Jules poured himself a satisfying measure of whisky and swallowed it hastily.

McLean slipped into his oilskins and boots. "Get Selden out, Jules. You know his camp. Tell him——"

"Dat Selden, he ovair by dat plac'. He watch dat Nennassing hall night, Ah t'ink."

"Good! Have another, Jules, and then get Pierre and come down to the cut. Call McCarthy as you go by and tell him to get the boys together and keep them ready—right on the job. Understand—not a man to roll a log till he hears from me."

McLean hurried to his office and telephoned to the upriver camps one by one. To each foreman he said: "You can start 'em when you get the signal. You'll hear it, all right."

Turning, he found Jules at his heels. "All right, Jules. Now for the finishing touch."

Down to the river they strode, stumbling along the soggy trail in the darkness. Ahead, a light gleamed in a misty halo of rain. Selden, pushing back his sou'wester, greeted them briefly. "Where's Big Pierre?" he questioned.

"Coming," said McLean.

"Well, we'll need a crew out on the point after the first rush. We'll have to pick out the stray logs and keep the inlet from getting plugged."

"When we get an inlet," said McLean nervously, smiling.

Selden flushed, and was about to reply. Instead he walked to the little brown battery standing beneath a tree, and seized the handle. "Grin, then!" he said, his overstrung nerves finding relief in the thrust of the handle. "There's your inlet!"

For a second nothing was heard but the *drip, drip* of the rain and the winnowing rush of the river. Then McLean staggered and fell on his face as the ground heaved and trembled. A blast of fire shot up from the distant river edge.

Stunned by the roar and crash of the explosion, Selden, swaying, dropped the handle of the battery and stumbled toward his chief. The lantern had been blown out by the concussion, and Jules, crouched on the ground, feeling for it. "Come on!" called Selden thickly. "We've got to get to high ground or swim."

With the first dull light of dawn a roaring crew of the St. John's boys swarmed to the "cut." McLean, standing on a rocky eminence, directed the work of keeping the channel open. The Great Heron, in full flood, swept down on the angle of the sixty-foot opening and dropped with a roar to its new channel, toppling trees down in its rush and sweeping them out on the broad, brown reaches of the rapidly rising Nennassing.

Selden, squatting by the wangan, drank hot coffee, and gazed dully at the hurtling waters. Presently he looked up to find McLean grinning at him. "Well, Ward, I see our timber is beginning to come down from above. You made good, my boy."

Selden nodded. "Guess I got little old Ezra's goat that time."

McLean grinned at Selden's lapse into slang. Presently his face grew serious. Turning to the engineer, he asked abruptly: "What made you leave the Hudson Bay branch and come up here?"

"I was looking for more trouble," replied Selden, laughing.

"Yes," began McLean hesitatingly. "So my brother Donald rather implied in his letter about you. He was your chief there. Naturally I looked into your last position before I took you on here permanently."

"Your brother? Donald McLean? Well, Mac, you are a stony old clam. You might have said so."

"Came near enough to telling you many times. So did Mrs. McLean," replied the superintendent.

"Well, he'll know I've been busy, anyway." And Selden finished his coffee and rose to his feet.

"Yes, and now I'm on the subject, Ward, did you plan this cut and all that it means merely to get even with Newhall, or to help me out of a fix?"

"I began to work it out as a piece of poetical justice for Ezra to digest. Then I became more or less interested in this camp, and—well—in you. Of course I knew it would place you with the game in your hands."

"So it was revenge first and loyalty to me afterward, eh?"

"It was. I'm not particularly proud, however, of injuring Newhall to help you. I was interested in the work for its own sake."

"How is Newhall going to float his logs?" asked McLean.

"He can't—unless you agree to let him have the water. The more water he tries to give the Great Heron, the more water he will have to give you. Heron Lake must be emptying itself pretty fast through the southern outlet. You would have to fill this cut to give him water above. That would cost real money. Why don't you make him an offer? Say you'll fill the cut for five thousand, cash. He can't roll a log till you say so."

"So you advise a compromise with him—even after he's pretty nearly put us out of business?"

"Why—yes. I'd say, play fair. Make him pay, but don't freeze him out."

"He tied us up for two seasons and tried to do it the third."

"Sure! But, Mac, there's no use rubbing it in. You're boss now."

McLean pondered his companion's words. He was pleased with the young man's attitude toward the situation, and toward an old enemy. Selden evidently had the right spirit.

"Now you're through here what are you going to do?" asked McLean, rising.

"I've been too busy to think of that," replied Selden. "Now you speak of it, I have heard that there's a good chance to develop power at Loring Falls, up in Quebec. I might interest capital in that scheme. It's a big one."

"Interest nothing," interrupted McLean brusquely. "You're going to stay right here on this job as assistant superintendent. I've found out that a firm—any firm—has got to be right up to date at every angle now'days to meet every turn and twist of competition. We need you. If old man Smeaton will O. K. it, I'll give you two thousand a year and found. Want it?"

"I'm worth more, Mac—but that will help some," said Selden, gazing across the river. "I like this country."

Selden grinned as McLean eyed him shrewdly. "Those logs—Newhall's logs—coming in the cut, remind me that I've a call to pay over that way pretty soon," said the engineer.

"Great Scott, man! Not while things are like this!" said McLean.

"No. I'm here till the drive is through and behind the booms. No, Mac, but I do want a little vacation in—well—say June—about a month to fish and loaf."

"Then you accept?"

Selden extended his hand. "Yes. Thank you, McLean. Oh, you needn't grin. I'm going over Newhall way all right, but I've already written to Aunt Lib Putter, asking her if I may board there. They can use the money. Got you that time, Mac!"

"Oh, no, ye didn't!" said McLean earnestly. "Ye're canny—to stay just that far awa' from the lassie."

CHAPTER XXVIII.

Round Uncle Clem Putter's cabin lay the light-green meadow grass of early spring. He spoke of it, and of the passing of the winter weather as he sat at breakfast that morning, gazing out of the window.

Aunt Lib, with face flushed from frying a second generous batch of pancakes, took her place at the table and poured herself a cup of coffee. "You didn't ask the blessin' yet, Clem."

Jovially facetious, under the influence of the first batch of cakes and his coffee, Uncle Clem replied that he had asked the blessing while she was frying the second batch, and that, if he hadn't, it would be too late to do any good, anyway.

"Clement Putter!"

Uncle Clem meekly bowed his head and mumbled, after which he uncovered the cakes, and, with some of the dexterity of a practiced spearman, he secured four large, golden-brown specimens. These he transferred intact to his plate with a turn of his wrist—the result of experience. "Go ahead, Libby—light into 'em. You kin now, with a clear conscience. They got the sanction of men and of angels."

"And of you, I suppose?" said Aunt Lib, with a peculiar inflection.

"Uhuh, me. But ain't I a man? I reckon I ain't a angel yet."

"No. That's certain. And sometimes I think you're only a kind of a overgrowed boy, Clem."

"But say, you ain't eatin', Libby?"

"I know it, Clem. I been thinkin' about Sunny. I'm some worried about her. Seems like she's driftin' more and more away from us. She's just as kind and obligin' as ever, and good, but she's different. I'm feared——"

Uncle Clem interrupted her with a gesture of his unemployed fork, and wagged his head sagely. "You needn't to be," he said finally. "Sunny can take care of herself."

Aunt Lib sniffed disdainfully. "If you wasn't a man, Clem Putter, you wouldn't 'a' said that."

"What would I 'a' said if I'd 'a' been a woman? That she couldn't take care of herself?"

"Like as not—if you'd 'a' been the kind of woman you would 'a' made. No, I'm worryin' that Sunny will be too honest and jest natural in her love-makin' with that young Selden. I'm afeared after he's seen her for a spell he'll get kind of tired of her. When Sunny says 'No' she means it. And when she says 'Yes' she means it. She ain't good at pretendin'."

"Whe-e-u-u Jimminy Galluses! Now I didn't know it would hurt any of the wimmenfolks to be honest onct in a while. Specially when they's bein' courted. Some of 'em don't have so much chance afterward. Say, Libby, did you jest pertend you liked me when I came a-courtin' you?"

"If I did pretend about what I thought of you then, I ain't doin' it now," she replied. "Reckon I'd have a hard time pretendin' now."

"Libby, when you talk like that you jest kill my appetite. I can't eat nothin'." And he assumed a hurt expression that in no way deceived her.

"Thanks to goodness there's suthin' can kill your appetite afore it kills you. How many cakes do you think you et?"

"I never was no hand at 'rithmetic, Libby. I'm right sorry I done anything to cross you this mornin'. I seed you wa'n't feelin' jest like skippin' the rope, so I sot out to joke you into feelin' better——"

There were tears in Aunt Lib's eyes when she lifted her head from gazing into her cup. "I know, Clem—but I just can't bear to lose Sunny. Since we lost our baby, Clem, Sunny's been most everything to me—'cept you. But bein' a man you don't——"

"But we ain't lost Sunny!" exclaimed Uncle Clem, pushing back his chair and rising. "Why, Libby, you needn't to take on so. I reckon Sunny's about as happy as she can be. Only t'other day she says to me, she says: 'Uncle Clem, I bet you can't guess who is a-comin' to see you.'"

"'Why, yes, I can,' says I. 'It's the President of the United States, of course!'"

"'Better than that!' she says, laughin'.

"'Well,' says I, 'I don't cal'clate to know any one *better* than the president.'

But she spoke up brisk. 'I didn't know you did know the president at all. But Ward Selden is comin' from St. John's. He wrote me he was comin' to visit you and Aunt Lib.'"

Aunt Lib dried her eyes. Her back stiffened. "Sunny said Ward Selden was comin' to see me and you, did she?"

"Yes'm."

"And she pretended he wasn't comin' to see *her* at all?"

"Yes'm."

"Huh! Sunny's doin' better than I thought for. And you jest sot there——"

"I was standin' up, Libby."

"Goodness, Clem—if you was! And you jest stood there, then, and pretended you didn't know he was comin' to see her. Never said anything about that?"

"Yes'm. No'm."

"Well, Clement, you just go out to that woodpile you sawed last week and split some wood for this here stove. When you git tired of that, you can set down and think about you and Sunny bein' so maple-sugary nice about *pretendin'* to each other. Then you'll understand more about what I meant, when you was hangin' over the gate, moonin' around courtin' me."

Uncle Clem slipped on his cap, and softly opened and closed the kitchen door. He walked gently, as if not wishing to disturb, well, a sleeping cyclone, for instance. He shook his head several times, advanced a step toward the woodpile, stooped and picked up the ax, again shook his head. Finally, placing a length of log upright with great deliberation, he poised the ax and dealt the wood a resounding whack. It split crisply. Again he raised the ax, hesitated, and lowered it.

"I reckon Sunny ought to told Aunt Lib first," he muttered. And he had reckoned correctly.

Suddenly he felt in his pocket. "Sweepin' and dustin' and moppin' clean forgot it!" he exclaimed, drawing a letter from his pocket and rushing into the cabin. He took good Aunt Lib by storm. "I was keepin' it for a surprise for you, Libby! Mrs. Clement Uriah Putter, Newhall, and so forth. It's yourn!" And Uncle Clem rubbed his hands together expectantly.

Aunt Lib, deliberately adjusting her "specs," opened the letter with a hairpin and read it silently.

"You can finish splittin' that wood, Clem."

"By hickey, this ain't Rooshia!" he exclaimed in a tone of hurt bravado. "Ain't you goin' to read it?"

Aunt Lib tilted her head forward and gazed over her spectacles at her husband. "Well," she said slowly, "it follows pretty close on what we was jest talkin' about. That young Ward Selden wants to come here and board the whole of June. Says he'll pay anything we ask within reason. Says he's willin' to sleep in his tent if we ain't got room in the house. Now I suppose you know what he's a-comin' for?"

"Why, to get some of your good cookin'!" said Uncle Clem, overjoyed at the opportunity for launching a compliment.

"Well, at plain cookin'—and some says my cakes is—— Cookin'? Courtin', you mean!"

"Yes'm."

"And when you get that wood split, you can get ready to go to Newhall. Reckon I'll answer this letter right away."

"What you goin' to say, Libby?"

"If Sunny Mateel wants that young man, and he wants her, I ain't a-goin' to stand in the way," she said, with a show of indifference that did not deceive Uncle Clem. And she opened the door invitingly.

Clement Uriah Putter seized the ax with unusual vigor. "Sunny and him! Sunny and him!" he exclaimed. "Good! And Libby and me and me and Libby

aidin' and abettin' the goin's on! Most as good as courtin' all over ag'in!"

CHAPTER XXIX.

Jed Mateel gazed at his daughter wonderingly. Of late he had noted a subtle change in her erstwhile girlish exuberance. She was quite as happy as she had always been, but there was a softening and rounding of speech and action, a gentleness that puzzled him. It pleased him to see that while she had changed in many little ways, she had not once asked him to do so, nor had she evinced a consciousness of her own change. She had trapped and worked with him as usual that spring, and in the evenings she had read and reread her one book, the "Aucassin and Nicolette," seemingly satisfied with its slender limitations. That she had not asked for other books, or that she had not suggested further schooling, had at first rather astonished her father. But he had great faith in her, knowing that she would never suggest anything that they could not afford. He puzzled daily over the fact that she had some plan hidden away from him. That he knew intuitively.

She sat opposite him, reading, and he glanced at her wonderingly. Accustomed as he was to her beauty, he could not help covertly admiring her, utterly unconscious as she then was that there existed any one save the two lovers of that old romance.

"Sunny!" he said gently, and she laid her book aside, gazing with wide, gray eyes out and beyond the distant trees against the evening sky. "Yes, dad?"

"Be you happy?"

"Course!"

"Sure certain?"

"Yes. Why, dad?"

"It jest satisfies me to know that," he said hesitatingly. "I'm gettin' old, and I expect I'm kind of crabbed and sot in my ways. When I get to thinkin' suthin' is *so*, it's moughty hard for me to believe it ain't so. I reckoned mebby you was wantin' suthin'."

"You're just trying to find out—ain't you, dad?"

Mateel smiled. "Like as not."

Sunny nodded. Then pensively: "Ward ain't like us, is he, dad? He's more like Alec McLean and Marion and her ma."

"Uhuh!"

"He's comin' over to board to Aunt Lib Putter's this June."

"So Uncle Clem's been a-tellin' me. Told me eight times so far. I only seen him nine times sence we got back, by count. Aunt Lib was with him onct, so I reckon he dassent say much."

Sunny laughed. "You didn't tell me you knew," she said.

"Nuther did you!" promptly replied her father.

"What you think Ward is comin' to stay so long for?"

"Well, to get fed up on Aunt Lib's cookin'—for one thing. And to git away from the St. John's camps, for another. And lastly, I calc'late to ast you to marry him—if I beant way off the trail." He glanced up at his daughter, expecting her to show some embarrassment. She met his gaze frankly.

"Yes," she said. "I think he is. I know he is."

"And what you goin' to say to that?" queried her father jokingly.

Sunny hesitated. Then she raised her eyes to the sunset over the pines. "I'm goin' to say 'No,' dad. And please don't to ask me about it any more."

Uncle Clem, making a final round of his traps, gathered them up one by one and stalked along his line, the chains jingling as he shifted the weight to his other shoulder. He paused as he came to the foot of a wooded hill, and, dropping the traps, sat down to smoke and rest. He was getting old, and rested frequently.

"Got one up there," he remarked to

himself presently. "Got a No. 3 up there, but it's a mighty long climb. Nothin' in it nohow." He counted his traps, and puffed indolently at his pipe. "Reckon I'll have to climb that hill," he said, counting on his fingers. "Libby knows how many traps I got, and she'll count 'em and miss it."

Slowly he arose and climbed the hill. He stopped on its wooded crest and peered beneath his palm. "Can't see plain—but it looks like—looks like——" He advanced toward the trap, walking like a man in a dream.

"Great grasshoppers and gumboils! If it ain't another silver fox! Jed Mateel ain't the only one that's braggin' of havin' ketched a silver fox this far south. Gum! Reckon they must 'a' been a pair of 'em strayed down from up north. This here'll make me and Libby rich." Then a new idea popped into his head, and he subsided to speechlessness. Springing the jaws of the trap, he drew the stiffened form out gently and carried it down the hill.

When he had come to the clearing round his cabin, he called to Aunt Lib. She hastened to the doorway, startled by his tone.

"What you think now?" he said, and held up the fox.

"What you got?"

"A silver one—sech as Jed Mateel ketched a year ago. Reckon it's the mate."

Aunt Lib examined the fox with becoming reverence. "What you goin' to do with it?" she asked weakly, losing, for the first time in her husband's married experience, her grip on the situation.

Clement Putter puffed out his chest, and his little goatee was stiff with pride and importance. "Do?" he echoed. "Do? Why, they's some folks round here has called us stingy, so I hearn tell. Makin' up stories about me in the store at Newhall. Well, I'm goin' to show 'em. You recollec' worryin' about givin' Sunny suthin' for a weddin' present, eh? Well, here it is!'

"But, Clem, it's a whole lot of money. Five hundred dollars, you say——"

"Now, Libby Putter, you see here!" And for once Uncle Clem Putter rose to the normal dignity of an outraged husband. "Ef Sunny was our own, it wouldn't be too much by a jugful. I'm goin' to do this here thing up brown for onct. We're gettin' old. Yes, by hickey, she gits this here pelt for her weddin' present!"

"But, Clem—they ain't married yet."

"She's jest got to git married now!" said Uncle Clem, beginning to work on the pelt.

CHAPTER XXX

Out in the quiet reaches of the Nennassing, a silvery something flashed in the noon sunlight and disappeared. Slowly the circling ripple spread in faint and fainter diameters, finally smoothing to nothingness in the shore shadows.

June, with her quickening hand, stirred the tender green of the marginal river grasses to more robust height and to more vigorous depth of color. The sturdy cedars fringing the Nennassing's banks seemed to expand in the warmth, each wide fan casting its utmost shade upon the rocks beneath. Far pines, blue-black on the ridges of the distant hills, eased their erstwhile snow-laden branches in murmuring content. Winter, in this land of bird song and sunshine, of limpid brook and dazzling, noon-glazed lake, was as though it had never been.

Little fawns, their dun hides dappled with milky spots, lay hidden in the forest thickets while the mother does grazed nippingly on the fresh, sweet grasses of the spring. Deeper in the forest, the bucks, their antlers velvet-sheathed and tender, strayed in individual solitude, fearful, until their antlers hardened, of each other and the

dense thickets that hid the helpless fawns.

Young loons mocked the echoes of the long, shadowy lagoons with weird crescendo laughter. Every living thing, from the tiniest blade of green to the tallest pine; from the busy, scurrying wood mouse to the great, hulking bull moose, seemed to rejoice in the season's bounty of fertility and warmth. Even the sinuous mink, for the time being, forbore to hunt, and writhed in a feline luxuriousness upon the hot sand of the riverside.

Drowsily the gaunt, blue heron blinked at the bullet-eyed frog that squatted but a yard away in the floating weeds.

From the woods came the faint, fresh, breeze-wafted fragrance of bud and balsam commingled, and Sunny, walking idly down the narrow trail along the river, paused and sniffed joyously. "Seems just like—like *life!*" she murmured, turning to gaze through the vista of shadowy, sun-thatched trees.

Her neat white summer dress, belted at the waist with a wide, dark-blue ribbon, made her appear younger than she was. From the edge of her dress peeped the daintiest and whitest of doeskin moccasins. Shoes, she had told Aunt Lib, she would not wear until compelled to do so.

That she was slightly conscious of the effective picture she made did not detract from her grace of bearing.

Altogether happy as she sauntered down the shady trail that June midday, she sang the little song from "Aucassin and Nicolette," blushing delightfully as she thought of the leafy bower that Nicolette had wrought.

"Leaves of many a branch I wis,
Therewith built a lodge of green,
. . . . . .
Goodlier was never seen,
If my love the lodge should spy,
He will rest a while thereby,
If he love me loyally.
Thus his faith she seemed to try."

And Sunny repeated the verse, sighing a little. "But I've got to!" she assured herself. "Ward will be disappointed, and he'll make motions with his arms and walk up and down——"

At the edge of the clearing round the three pines, she saw him, as she had expected, coming toward her. As he saw her, he waved his hat boyishly and quickened his pace.

"Well, Sunny!" He breathed quickly, and tiny beads of sweat stood out on his bronzed face.

She took his extended hand. "You're looking bigger and stronger than ever, Ward."

"And you!" he said, gazing at her till she flushed beneath his open admiration. "Well, I just can't tell you—but it does my heart good to see you again. Now the day is perfect."

Slowly they moved across the meadow grass toward the three pines, Sunny bareheaded and gazing at the ground as she walked. Selden marched beside her with his head up and shoulders squared, unconsciously proud of her. He made a manly, clean-cut, alert figure.

"How is your work, Ward?" she asked him presently.

"Made a success of the cut," he answered. "Then promised McLean I'd stay with the company. Signed a five-year contract at two thousand a year. Guess they must like me for some reason or other. I'm here to stay."

"You're going to stay in the woods right along, Ward?"

"I believe I am, Sunny. I like it up here. I'm here for five years at least. Of course, I may run in to New York or Boston once or twice a year, or perhaps take a trip to Montreal. By the way, Joe said he was coming home soon. What do you think he's up to now?"

"Gregoire la Croix?"

"That's it. He has gone North after him. Says he won't come back till he

gets him to confess before a magistrate, or whatever the Canucks call 'em."

"But you, Ward? Will Ezra Newhall——"

"No. He's tamed. We understand each other now. He came over to the St. John's camp some time ago. We have settled with him. 'Live and let live' is the way he put it, the old hypocrite!"

"And the 'cut'?"

"Well," laughed Selden, "that is chock-full of blow-downs and cut timber and mud just now. Of course we *can* use it again. I hope we won't have to. We had to show Newhall what we could do, and he came to our plan, like that kind always do when they're whipped, whining and on their knees. But, Sunny——" And he paused and gazed at the smiling face lifted toward his. "Won't you sit down here? We can be in the shade, and chat."

Selden spread his coat for her to sit on. Again she lifted a smiling face toward his. "Now, Ward——"

"I want to talk about you," he said slowly.

"There isn't much to say, then, is there?" and she laughed softly and studied him with affectionate eyes.

"Yes, quite a lot. I just want you to know—although you do know it now—that I only want to spend the rest of my life trying to make you happy, and telling you between times how happy I'll be to have the privilege. Sunny!"

Sunny gazed across the meadow, and Selden could not help seeing the dainty white of her bodice rise and fall tumultuously above her breast, as she breathed in the whole meaning of his words.

"And, Sunny?"

"Yes?"

"Won't you look up—just a minute?"

"I—I dassen't look, Ward. Then I'd want to say what you want me to, and I can't."

"Can't?"

"Not yet, Ward."

Nevertheless she glanced at his troubled face, and her heart grew tumultuous. "I know you care so much, so much, for you must care—like I do. But you don't understand," she said slowly. "But you *will* be glad when you do understand."

"Glad?"

"Yes. When dad and I were at Mr. McLean's camp, I saw how your kind of folks lived and talked, and—and done things. Then I could see how different dad and I was. It made me feel kind of jealous of them folks at first. Then I thought how foolish I was to think that way—so I just laughed and made a plan. I made it that night, when you kissed me, Ward. I knowed you cared really, then. And I cared so much——"

"You *do* care—so much, then?"

"Oh—just all! But——"

"Then what else can matter, Sunny?"

"Everything that makes me different from you, or Marion, or Mrs. McLean. I'm goin' to school—to Montreal—and study, and then——"

"But, Sunny—to wait so long——"

"You can—and I must, Ward. If I can wait, then you will know how much I want you."

He read the real depth of her love in her untroubled eyes. His pulses quieted, and he bent toward her tenderly. "Sunny," he murmured. "Sunny, you're so far above me—my kind—that I can hardly dare to love you." And she was amazed at the adoration in his face. "Oh, Sunny, girl!" he whispered.

She touched his arm. "I waited eighteen—almost nineteen—years for you, Ward. I guess I been waitin' for you ever since I was born. Now you must wait a little time for me. And, Ward, if I didn't know you were big enough and strong enough to wait, I wouldn't ask you to. I don't even know when I'll get money to go to school."

"Why, Sunny! I've got enough and to spare. I've saved since I first went to work."

She laughed in pure happiness and understanding. "I know—I'm just the same as your wife—in my heart—and yours a'ready, Ward. You can't ever love me more after we are really married than you do now," she said, a bit wistfully. "But, just the same, dad and me can't use your money, Ward."

Her lips were tremulous, though she tried to smile. She wished to be firm in her position. Yet youth and the great wave of desire that swept through her warm, free nature, left her trembling in an indecision that she secretly prayed to overcome. She felt now that in Selden's hands lay her decision. One word of longing, one gesture, would draw her to him, despite all planning and all courage.

Yet, womanlike, supreme was her happiness when he stretched forth his arms and took her flushed face between his hands. "I'll wait, Sunny," he said gently. And, smiling, he added; "But not for this."

Uncle Clem Putter, on his way to the Mateels' camp, stopped suddenly as he crossed the meadow of the three pines. He whistled, a low note of astonishment mixed with humor. He grinned, and turned from the trail toward the two figures on the hillside. "Nothin' like bein' prompt and ready," he said. "The Putters allus was," he added imaginatively. Then he called: "Hello-o! Sunny!"

"Goodness!" exclaimed Sunny. And "Thunder!" growled Selden, adding hastily: "You owe me three more, Sunny, for the three days I've been here without seeing you."

"It's jest me, folks!" chirped Uncle Clem. "I was jest comin' over to your place to—to tell you suthin'," he said mysteriously. "Then I seed you a—a-visitin' over here, so I come right along up."

"Of course!" said Selden hospitably.

"It's jest—well, jest a weddin' present, folks!" he blurted, polishing his bald head and glancing about nervously. "Aunt Lib an' me talked about it 'most all night last night. She said mebby I'd better fetch it over now, instid of waitin'."

Hastily Uncle Clem untied the string that bound the queer-looking package he carried. "Ketched it early this spring," he announced. "Silver fox. Never seen one so far south, 'ceptin' the one Jed ketched last year. Silver fox, Sunny. Weddin' present from me and Aunt Libby. Don't say nothin'—not a word! Never *was* so happy in my born days. You ketched *him* in a b'ar trap," he added, pointing to Selden. "I ketched this here in a No. 3. Both of 'em's yourn, I reckon. Don't say nothin'—not a word!"

"Well, Uncle Clem, we thank you for all we're worth!" said Selden, shaking hands with the old man.

"Well, you be worth five hundred dollars more than you was when you come here. But I reckon you was feelin' rich enough even then. Now I got that lump kind of worked out of my windpipe, I mought as well say that we knowed Sunny wanted to get schoolin' afore she gits married. That's why we give you the present previous-like." And Clement Uriah Putter, known as the stingiest man in Lomax County, stood blinking in the sun, his old heart warm with the happiness that giving always brings. He hobbled stiffly down toward the trail.

"Uncle Clem!" called Sunny. "Oh, I want to say thanks, too! You didn't give me a chance to. Where are you going?"

He turned and called, with shrill humor: "Where be I goin'? Well, mebby I'm goin' straight home and kiss Aunt Lib."

Realism

By Peter B. Kyne

Author of "On Irish Hill," "Practical Politics," Etc.

The Excelsior Motion Picture Company was a sick corporation till the tender-hearted office stenographer got hold of a book which she boosted in this fashion: "It's awfully funny in places, and then again it's so sad. I cried my eyes out over it." The producer pounced upon it. Laughter and tears—it was what he had been looking for. The "filming" of that novel is described by Kyne in a fashion that takes you off your feet. Read this and you will understand what "realism" means as applied to the Movies.

(***A Complete Novelette***)

CHAPTER I.

MR. SAM GOTTLOB, president and principal stockholder of the Excelsior Motion Picture Company, had become possessed of a spirit akin to that animating a gambler, who, plunging to his ruin and lacking the moral courage to cash in and leave the game, calls for a new deck in the wild hope that it may change his luck. Mr. Gottlob had just made up his mind to discharge his director.

This decision was the net product of many sleepless nights, and had been reached after the receipt in his morning mail of a most undignified and unbusinesslike communication from Mr. Thomas Heddon, director of the Excelsior Company's Western studio at San Fernando, California. Mr. Gottlob always spoke of the San Fernando plant as the Western studio, thus implying that the company possessed an Eastern or Southern studio, which it did not. The letter which caused Gottlob to bristle and decide upon reprisal was the final missile in a hail of arrows with which outrageous fortune had been pelting him, and ran as follows:

SAN FERNANDO, Cal., January 16, 1914.

MR. SAM GOTTLOB, *President Excelsior Motion Picture Company, 1600 Broadway, New York City.*

DEAR SIR: Your letter of the tenth, in which you complain bitterly of the wretched financial showing of the company, and inquire if I have any explanation for the same, just received.

I have. The Excelsior Motion Picture Company is a sick corporation, and the seat of the disease lies in the home office. Your infant industry will not recover until you cease to inflict me with a professional scenario writer. You are paying your scenario writer fifty dollars a week to write the three motion-picture stories you demand shall be released weekly—rain, shine, or cyclone—and I suppose he does his best. If his scripts were any better he would sell the stories for fifty dollars each to a cheap magazine, and thus increase his income one hundred dollars per week, after which he would leave us to stagger along as best we could without him.

Let us be frank. The stories your scenario editor furnishes me are such old and valued friends I hate to see them work so long past the age for retirement. Take, for instance, that one about the girl who leaves the New England village to visit her aunt at Cactus Center, where she reforms the camp because all the wild and woolly boys fall in love with her and attend her Bible class. I have done my best to inject a little pep into this relic of a barbarous past, by having the heroine

arrive in Cactus Center in the tonneau of a six-cylinder automobile rather than on the hurricane deck of an old Concord coach, as the original author intended, but still the picture doesn't seem to get over.

Only last Monday, when I announced that we would produce the story of the moonshiner's daughter who unwittingly falls in love with the hated revenue officer who is out gunning for her father, the leading man broke down completely and wept like a child. A month ago, when we released that one about the boy who runs away from home and returns, years later, with all kinds of money, to find a "To Let" sign on the old homestead, but not a sign of his broken-hearted old mother, whom he finally discovers scrubbing floors in the poorhouse, I received a Black Hand letter. The punishment for the next offense is death.

Some time ago you wired me to produce low comedy and slapstick stuff. I did, and we scored! I kept it up—and we bored! A custard pie hurled soft-side first in an actor's face delights the little ones, I know, but I'm not Santa Claus. Later you instructed me to put over a sensational story about an Oriental dancer. Miss Ward refused to play the part, and I substituted a girl who went on wearing just about enough clothes to pad a crutch, and when the censors got through with the film all we had left was the title and the leaders An audience will stand for a great deal, but it *will* draw the line at a post-impressionistic film.

In pity's name, hark to this wail of one crying in the wilderness. Get me a real story, and give me time to film it properly. Never mind what it costs if it's real. Get me some human-interest tale that will make the people laugh and weep and laugh again. When they discover that they cannot guess the six-reel story in the first five hundred feet, they will rise up and call you blessed. If you will but give them something that is possible and probable, an adventure of real everyday people, they will forget they are at a motion-picture show, and think they're looking at *life*. Then you can take their money away from them—but not until.

Of course, this kind of stuff comes high, but it pays for itself in increased dividends. Your company is losing money because you are afraid to spend it. There is nothing wrong with the Excelsior Motion Picture Company that a check will not cure. Just make it large enough and give it to a regular writer. If you do not see your way clear to do this, please accept this as my resignation. I'm weary of your whimpering and inability to realize that what made you a fortune five years ago is taking it away from you to-day. Very truly yours,

TH|J. THOMAS HEDDON, Director.

P. S.—Miss Schwartz, whom you sent out to play the lead in "The Barber's Daughter," mutinied to-day, and I fired her. Boss, I beg of you, lay off on the relatives.

"And here," Sam Gottlob soliloquized, as he laid aside this remarkable communication, "we have an actor giving to a business man free advice to spend money, when what we are losing yet makes me sick to the stomach."

For a long time Gottlob had been seeking the causes that underlay the impending ruin of the Excelsior Motion Picture Company. At first he had suspected poor judgment on the part of the script editor, but, notwithstanding the fact that he changed script editors several times, the resultant motion pictures failed to move, so he decided to try a shot in the dark and discharged the director, employing instead another who could write his own scenarios, direct them, and play the lead. This plan had the advantage of effecting a saving of two salaries, and worked very well until the company became involved in suits with numerous authors for violation of copyright on their stories.

Three of these authors belonged to the modern school of literature, which included in its curriculum a course in salesmanship and the art of disguising genius under a short hair cut.

When Sam Gottlob's ambidextrous director stole their stories for film production, these fellows were secretly overjoyed, but refrained from voicing their joy until the films had become passé and were appearing in the five-cent houses; then they entered suit. Gottlob was forced to come into court and bring his books, whereupon the jury found for the authors and awarded them the profits on their respective pictures, in addition to modest exemplary damages. The resultant amputation of the Excelsior bank roll, figuratively

speaking, always caused Mr. Gottlob to bleed every time he thought of it thereafter.

A return to the old staple goods, tried and true, was the immediate result of the disposal of this ambitious director Nevertheless the ruinous business continued, and, after due deliberation, Mr. Gottlob decided that the leak could not possibly be in his scenarios. *His stories and pictures were every whit as good as those of his competitors.* So it occurred to him that what really was needed was a change in the personnel of the leads. He knew there are people who grow weary of gazing at the same face across the breakfast table.

New faces appeared in the leads, therefore, but still the longed-for improvement in the pulling power of the films did not materialize, so Sam Gottlob changed directors again. Also he abandoned the open market for scenarios and decided to manufacture his own, for which reason he installed a new scenario editor, who, having failed as a reporter, seemed to be the ideal person to evolve vehicles for the silent melodrama.

Again hope died abornin'. Sam Gottlob was desperate. He knew that something was wrong with his company, and had been for a long time, but what to do for it was beyond his ken. One fact alone stuck out like the Hapsburg lip. He had a sick corporation on his hands and must keep on trying new medicine until he cured it; and now, upon receipt of Thomas Heddon's letter declaring that the real seat of the disease lay in the New York office, Mr. Gottlob's pride was hurt and he was mad clear through. He replied to Heddon's letter:

NEW YORK, January 21, 1914.

MR. THOMAS HEDDON, *Care Excelsior Motion Picture Company, San Fernando, Cal.*

DEAR SIR: Yours of the sixteenth at hand. I do not agree with you that the present is the time to spend money in expensive scripts. When a business man sees that he is losing money his first move is to retrench. We are paying you too large a salary; therefore your resignation as director is accepted. Steps will be taken to have you relieved by the first of August. Very truly yours,

G|G. SAM GOTTLOB, President.

It was the duty of his stenographer, Miss Gubin, to transpose Mr. Gottlob's somewhat characteristic dictation into good grammatical and commercial English. Quite frequently she rewrote his letters to suit her own ideas, employing therein a vocabulary which had long since convinced her employer that she was a young person of profound erudition. Now, as he glanced over the letter to Thomas Heddon, it occurred to him that Miss Gubin had conveyed the message to Heddon in just fifty per cent less words than he had dictated. As he signed the letter and handed it back to her, he said:

"Miss Gubin, you got it a fine line of language; yet so careful are you with words a feller might think you were paying interest on your education yet," and he chuckled at his little joke. While paying her a deserved compliment, he had artfully conveyed to her the information that he was not exactly a fool himself.

She simpered her appreciation of his finesse. He continued:

"If I have it an education like you got it, Miss Gubin, one of two things would happen. Either I would be President of the United States, or write my own scenarios. When I come to this country, I cannot read or write; what education I have I get by the night school."

"You should read books," Miss Gubin replied sympathetically, sensing the note of wistfulness in his blunt statement. "What education I have was received at night school also, but since graduating I have acquired a large vocabulary and learned to spell because I read so much."

"So!" he said, and arched his brows. "What kind of books?"

"Stories in the magazines, and books from the public library."

"That's so," he replied thoughtfully. "I should take time from business and pinochle and do some reading. It is never too late to teach an old dog new tricks, Miss Gubin."

"I have a book here you should read," she answered sympathetically. "It's just out—'The Battle for Bread,' by Henry Emerson van Twiller. Suppose you take it home and read it to-night. I don't have to return it to the library until next Thursday, and I've just finished reading it. It's a wonderful story, Mr. Gottlob. It's awfully funny in places, and then again it's so sad! I cried my eyes out over it, and so did my sister."

Laughter and tears! Sam Gottlob reached for Thomas Heddon's letter, and read:

Get me some human-interest tale that will make the audience laugh and weep and laugh again——

According to Miss Gubin, here was such a tale, and if Miss Gubin was not a judge of such matters, then who under the canopy was? In that fateful moment the little god Hunch whispered to Sam Gottlob, and he reached forth and relieved Miss Gubin of the letter to Thomas Heddon. The director's plea he had construed merely as a flagrant exhibition of artistic temperament or a particularly feeble attempt at "passing the buck," but at Miss Gubin's fulsome praise of "The Battle for Bread," it occurred to him that no similar remarks had ever found expression from her as daily she skimmed through the dozens of scenarios with which the New York office was deluged. Miss Gubin had voluntarily assumed the task of looking through this litter, returning the obviously impossible and forwarding the mediocre to the scenario editor at the Western studio. It occurred to Sam Gottlob that perhaps there might be some justice in Heddon's wail, after all; hence, until he had investigated, by reading, "The Battle for Bread," perhaps it would be just as well to stay his destroying hand.

"Thank you, Miss Gubin, but I shall buy the book on my way home," he told her. "What would you think of this 'Battle for Bread' in moving pictures?"

Miss Gubin clasped her hands in an attitude of prayer, raised her head, and glanced at the ceiling.

"Heavenly," she murmured. "In the scene where Pioche, the anarchist, leads the starving mob in the attack on the château of the Duc de Maupavaux, where the nobleman and his aristocratic friends are banqueting—oh, Mr. Gottlob, it would be just simply wonderful. And there's a leader you could use for that scene, right out of the book: 'Dives, clothed in purple and fine linen, fares sumptuously, while Lazarus lies hungry at the gate.'"

"We should remember that line," Sam Gottlob warned her, "and use it some time when we get a chance. There is fellers what can write a two-reel comedy around a line with a punch in it like that."

CHAPTER II.

Sam Gottlob retired early that night, for he looked forward to unusual mental labor and he desired to be comfortable. Propped up on three pillows, he lighted a cigar, adjusted his reading lamp, sighed, and opened Mr. Henry Emerson van Twiller's latest and greatest novel, "The Battle for Bread." He looked first at the illustrations, which seemed to predicate action of a violent nature, thus causing the book to make an instant appeal to this man who thought of everything in terms of motion pictures.

Fortunately for Henry Emerson van Twiller, Miss Gubin had recommended

his book to Sam Gottlob, otherwise the latter would never have screwed up his courage to the point of considering seriously the reading of the book from cover to cover, including the advertising matter on the jacket. He had once been a producer of "the legitimate," and whenever a popular novel that seemed to contain material for a play had been presented to him for his judgment, invariably he would read the first five thousand words, skip to page one hundred and fifty, read the five thousand words that followed, and then glance over the last chapter to see how the story ended. If it looked like a good final curtain, he would have the office boy, the stenographer, and the stage carpenter read the book, and if they cheered for the tale and a trained dramatist could be found to build the book into three good acts, Sam Gottlob would gamble on it. He considered office boys, stenographers, electricians, stage carpenters, shipping clerks, et cetera, representative of the average American audience, and set great store by their opinions. He had produced hundreds of their photo plays.

With the reading of the first five thousand words of "The Battle for Bread," however, Sam Gottlob was not aware of a feeling of ennui. For the first time in his life he was reading a story of absorbing interest, and when the clock in the hall chimed midnight he was still reading, and his cigar had been out for three hours. Once or twice he chuckled a little, but presently his pendulous lower lip commenced to tremble, and he blinked. Tears bedimmed his vision, but he wiped them away on the hem of the sheet and read on.

"Ach, Gott!" he murmured sympathetically, for indeed Sam Gottlob was one of the kindliest and most sympathetic of men, and, like the majority of his race, brimful of sentiment outside office hours. "Those poor little children! Starving! Starving!" He sobbed the last "starving," and mentally hurled a curse at the oppressor.

It was a tale inspired by the German invasion of Belgium, only the author, who had never been closer to Belgium than the Battery, laid the scene of his story in a fictitious European principality, in order that he might give his imagination full swing without running the danger of being exposed by carping critics with a taste for historical and geographical detail. It was not a great novel, and, in justice to Mr. van Twiller, it must be admitted that he had not intended it to be such. In the great European war and the desperate plight of unhappy little Belgium, he had seen his opportunity and, promptly pouncing upon it, had turned out in six weeks a passably entertaining novel of a hundred thousand words, for mediocre minds. For Henry Emerson van Twiller belonged to the breadwinning tribe of novelists who scorn the heights of Olympus, and write so-called popular stuff for the money that is in it. The editor of a second-rate magazine that specialized in "one-flop" publication of novels had found himself in a quandary for his next novel, and Mr. van Twiller, called in to save the editorial face, had responded nobly, the story had been published in book form, and, because of that dark, mysterious reason which underlies the majority of best sellers, "The Battle for Bread" was making a runaway sale.

But Sam Gottlob realized nothing of this, for he was not a judge of literature. Indeed, it was his proud boast that he cared not a fig for literature. What he sought was art. As he had once remarked to Tom Heddon, while he and the director were thrashing out the merits of a three-reel script over which they had disagreed:

"Art! What do I care what you think is art? Just so it gets me here"—he beat his abdomen—"that is *art!*"

"I guess you must be right, boss,"

Heddon had replied grimly, "because that's just where it gets me—right in the stomach."

And that is the kind of art that Sam Gottlob found in "The Battle for Bread," only it got him a little higher up this time. Perhaps, after all, his definition comes closer to being the true one than most people will admit. According to the critics of literature, Henry Emerson van Twiller had as much chance of attaining the hall of fame as might a side-show fat lady of winning the first prize in a fox-trotting contest. He did not have that trick of making his commonplace scenes glow with human interest, his diction was crude, and when he came to basting his tale with heart throbs, in his great hurry he had not had the grace to restrain himself, but had spoiled his best effects by reiteration and detail. A hack he might have been, and doubtless was, but Sam Gottlob did not know or care for that. All he realized was that the story had gotten him—right up under the spot where he kept his fountain pen.

What if Van Twiller had pirated his local color from Stoddard's Travels and the Encyclopedia Britannica? The answer was, he made Sam Gottlob weep; then he made him smile, and then he made him weep again, with a final smile that was like the sun after an April shower. For, as he read, Sam's mind harked back to those dark days that had preceded his arrival at the buttonhole and accordion-pleating establishment in Bleecker Street, presided over by the uncle who had paid his passage to America. It brought to him a vision of the oppression, the squalor, the misery and helplessness of his people in Russia, for to him there was hunger in every line of that book, as there had been hunger in every day of Sam Gottlob's famished childhood—as, indeed, there might be hunger in his old age if the Excelsior Motion Picture Company should become insolvent.

Sam Gottlob blew his nose and mopped his red-lidded eyes as he closed the book at dawn. Then he thought of his company and bankruptcy, and, smiling, he waddled to the telephone and dictated to the telegraph company this hurry-up message to Henry Emerson van Twiller in care of his Chicago publishers:

> Have just read your book "The Battle for Bread." Please wire collect your price for photo-play right to same.
>
> EXCELSIOR MOTION PICTURE COMPANY,
> SAM GOTTLOB, President.
> 1600 Broadway.

Having dispatched this message, Mr. Gottlob went back to bed and a much-needed nap. About two o'clock he got down to his office, and there he found the author's reply awaiting him.

It appeared that Henry Emerson van Twiller only wanted ten thousand dollars. Ordinarily he would have swum a bloody river for a thousand, but, as we have previously remarked, he was an author who, seeing his opportunity, always took advantage of it, and a most cursory analysis of Gottlob's telegram had convinced him that in one human heart, at least, his book had scored heavily; so he decided to ask ten times what he expected to receive, in order that later he might recede gracefully to a compromise figure.

When he read that telegram, Sam Gottlob actually screamed. Miss Gubin rushed in, thinking he had received a mortal injury, but he only shook the telegram under her nose.

"There is a robber for you!" he cried. And then he recalled Tom Heddon's letter:

> Never mind what it costs if it's real. . . . Of course, this kind of stuff comes high, but it pays for itself in increased dividends.

"We paid fifteen dollars for 'The Lady from Mars,'" Miss Gubin broke

in upon his reflection, "and it netted fifteen thousand before we retired it." It irked her to hear her favorite author characterized as a robber. Hero worshiper that she was, she would have been pained and hurt had he asked a nickel less, notwithstanding the fact that it was really none of her business. "The Nonpareil people paid Max Neitsch ten thousand for 'The Toilers,' and look at the business it's doing, Mr. Gottlob," she continued. "Why, the people are standing in line at every box office all over the country. And who is Max Neitsch? He never saw the day he could hold a candle to Henry Emerson van Twiller."

Sam Gottlob had not known whether Max Neitsch was an author or a ball player until that moment. And, as we have intimated previously, he had profound respect for Miss Gubin's literary judgment; a respect that had increased a thousand per cent by reason of the fact that she had "called the turn" on "The Battle for Bread." Consequently he took her word for it that Max Neitsch was a mere nobody; hence if the Nonpareil people could clean up a fortune on a single film by a literary tramp—for so Miss Gubin vehemently characterized the gentleman—then he, Sam Gottlob, could afford at this desperate stage of the motion-picture industry to make a heap of what was left of his winnings in happier days, and gamble all on Henry Emerson van Twiller, the brightest star in the literary firmament. Twenty-four hours before, he would not have done this thing; in fact, he had contemplated the summary dismissal of the man who had dared suggest such heresy, but——

Sam Gottlob had read "The Battle for Bread," and to him it was art raised to the *n*th power, for it had gotten him —here! He seized a telegraph blank and scrawled a counter offer:

Will give you seventy-five hundred.

Then he paused. Somewhere, some time, somebody had told him that authors were the worst business men in the world; that no matter how much money they made they were always in desperate need of additional funds, and that in consummating a deal with an author one should employ tactics similar to those of a Texas cowboy chaffering with a greaser for a horse; i. e., make him an offer, and then show him the money—in silver dollars, which always appear to be more value than they actually represent! So Sam Gottlob added this line:

If you accept, deposit formal assignment of photo-play rights with any Chicago bank, wire me, and I will transfer the money by telegraph.

"I bet you that gets the sucker," Sam Gottlob prophesied—and it did. The Cliff Dwellers, haunt of Chicago's literati, rang with his triumphant shouts as he ran for a telegraph blank to wire his acceptance. This is the message he sent clattering out into the night to Sam Gottlob:

Accept, but only on condition I am permitted to be present at production to dramatize story and assist your director. Will deposit formal assignment photo-play rights in escrow Illinois Trust Company to-morrow morning, but only on above condition. These terms absolutely final.

From the foregoing it will be observed that while Mr. van Twiller undoubtedly had written a lot of silly stuff in his day, he was not a fool. As a matter of fact, he had no more intention of wasting further time on "The Battle for Bread" than Sam Gottlob had of permitting it. The latter believed he knew authors from tip to tip, for in the days when he had produced the legitimate, he had fought many pitched battles with them over the necessity for pruning their scripts in the interests of the box office.

Having made his telegraphic bluff, therefore, Van Twiller was careful to

deposit the formal assignment of the photo-play rights in escrow without including these stipulations in it. He smiled when he received Gottlob's answer. It read merely:

Will transfer the funds to-day.

In the meantime, Gottlob wired the trust company to telegraph him a copy of the assignment, and when his suspicions as to Van Twiller's lax business methods were confirmed, he transferred the money immediately.

It will be seen, therefore, that there are tricks in all trades. That night, Henry Emerson van Twiller gave a little dinner party to celebrate the swindle he had perpetrated, and concluded a witty speech in these words:

"Brethren, let us quaff a noggin of nepenthe to the health of my fairy godfather, Mr. Sam Gottlob, of little old New York, where the suckers come from. When he films my 'Battle for Bread,' may the public forgive him his crust!"

The which clearly demonstrating that Mr. van Twiller was one of those rare but delightful authors who have no illusions regarding their work.

That same night Sam Gottlob sent a night letter to Tom Heddon, apprising the latter of the artistic treat in store for him. The message reached Heddon while he was in the midst of a problem which threatened to set his reason tottering on its throne. That day he was to commence filming the story of the attack of the Indians on the emigrant train and the massacre of all hands, with the exception of little Annie, who is taken to the Indian village and adopted by the chief, et cetera.

He had been out all morning in the company automobile, searching in vain for a location for the massacre, where the principal feature in the background would not be a long string of telegraph and telephone poles. Also he wanted a grove where his Indians could wait in ambush, and the only trees he could find were eucalyptus, which, as everybody knows, were imported from Australia some twenty years ago after poor Lo commenced wearing overalls and using slang.

A martyr to his art was Tom Heddon. However, Sam Gottlob's telegram ordering him to clear the decks for action cheered him wonderfully. Forthwith he discharged his emigrants and Indians, motored into Los Angeles, and purchased a copy of the Van Twiller masterpiece. That night, like Sam Gottlob, he read it in bed, and, when the task was done, he fell asleep. Tom Heddon had a horrible nightmare!

He dreamed he saw Sam Gottlob covered with blood!

After breakfast, Tom Heddon went into consultation of the committee of the whole with himself, and decided finally that his art required certain sacrifices, one of which was the prompt severing of his relations with the Excelsior Motion Picture Company. He knew Sam Gottlob was gambling, that he was staking his all on this commonplace book, and that if the picture failed to "get over" Gottlob would hold him responsible—particularly since Sam had paid seven thousand five hundred dollars for the right to produce it. Tom Heddon concluded he could not possibly accept the responsibility, so he sent Gottlob this day letter, and tried to break the news as gently as possible:

Good for you, boss. You're a bully sport, and I take off my hat to you. Read the book last night, and could hardly wait to finish it. It does ample credit to your judgment. I hope you get it over big. Do not feel that I can do full justice to your ideas in producing the picture, however. Would not care to start the production and then fall down. You ought to engage a director especially for this spectacular picture—one who will measure up to the story, and accordingly I tender my resignation, to take effect at your pleasure.

"He's been wanting to get rid of me

gracefully for a long time," Heddon mused, "so I'll give him an opening."

To his great surprise, however, Sam Gottlob wired back:

Absolutely decline to accept your resignation. Your letter of the sixteenth an eye opener, and now that I have followed your advice you want to quit. What is the matter with you, Tom? Consider you the ideal man to put this picture over. Please do not go back on me when I need you most.

SAM.

Yes, he signed it "Sam," and, of course, after that there was nothing else for Heddon to do except conform to his employer's request. Putting the matter squarely up to him on a personal basis like that left him no "out," so he telegraphed back:

All right, Sam. United we stand, divided we fall. TOM.

CHAPTER III.

The chief of police of Los Angeles was reading a long and interesting communication from the chief of police of San Francisco, who, having solved a problem in his city, had been good enough to send the recipe to his southern colleague. Before proceeding to quote the letter in question, however, a brief statement of the conditions that called it forth is necessary.

The winter of 1913-14 had been productive of a puzzle which had not hitherto greatly worried the municipal authorities in the principal cities of California; to wit, the task of providing food, clothing, and work for the unemployed. With San Francisco and San Diego both preparing for their respective expositions in 1915, thousands of floating laborers, both skilled and unskilled, had come to California in the hope of obtaining employment in either of these two cities, only to discover, upon arrival, that there were three men for every job available. On the other hand, numerous strikes and lockouts within the State had deprived many resident workingmen of employment, and these, together with the influx of hobos and ne'er-do-wells who always winter in California, constituted the most serious sociological problem the State had confronted in many years.

Probably sixty-five per cent of the idle and penniless forgathered in San Francisco and adjacent cities, with the other thirty-five per cent distributed over the sunny southland, principally in Los Angeles and vicinity. As the winter advanced, this congestion of idle, semidesperate men provoked the usual crime wave, and the police, unable to cope with the criminals, and harried unmercifully by the press, naturally exercised a stricter surveillance over the lodging-house districts. Suspicious characters were arrested on vagrancy charges until the jails were filled, but the arrests were continued for the moral effect, the men being dismissed with a warning to leave town immediately.

Quite naturally it happened that the police arrested a few demagogues and I. W. W. agitators, who, when released, declined to leave the city and returned to their old haunts in the lodging-house districts, their hearts filled with fierce resentment against law and order.

It became the practice of these fellows to hold impromptu meetings of the unemployed in vacant lots and quiet side streets, where they clamored for relief and demanded employment from the city.

When the city of San Francisco created jobs for some two thousand laborers at a wage of two dollars and fifty cents per day, the malcontents declined and stood out for three dollars, whereupon the public lost patience, and the police commenced breaking up all meetings where inflammatory speeches were being made.

A few small-sized riots developed, and the situation was rapidly assuming grave proportions when the chief of police of San Francisco fathered a partic-

ularly brilliant scheme for relieving the city of its noisy and unwelcome visitors.

His letter to the chief of police of Los Angeles will explain. After dwelling at some length on the various aspects of the conditions among the unemployed in San Francisco, he made the statement that at least two thousand of these belonged to the class which, while ostensibly looking for work, carefully avoid finding it. Here is part of what the San Francisco chief had written:

To get these roughnecks, bums, agitators, trouble makers, hobos, and near-yeggs out of the cities and scatter them is the only solution to our problem. I have been raiding their revolutionary meetings and breaking them up, but it doesn't get me anywhere, and every raid means torn uniforms. My men are beginning to look like ragamuffins, and the thuggery and burglary goes merrily on, with no real relief in sight until this dangerous element leaves town. This is my plan for coaxing it out of town in a body:

I have detailed Officer Tomsky to disguise himself as an anarchist. He looks the part, anyhow. As a structural ironworker out of a job, he has gone to mingle with the Great Unwashed, listen to the speeches of the leaders, and get a line on the arguments that will sway the feelings of the mob. Tomsky is a born orator, and once he gets the right dope he'll make the other fellows look cheap at their own game. While he is getting acquainted I am not raiding the sand-lot meetings, but on Sunday afternoon, when the oratory is at its height, and the government is being knocked the hardest, every speaker will be arrested for speaking in public without a license, disturbing the peace, and vagrancy. They will all be given sixty days before I get through with the rascals.

The arrest of these leaders will be Tomsky's cue to leap into the fray. He will mount the first empty barrel and deliver a masterpiece of invective against the police, rent a headquarters for the unemployed at his own expense, and hire attorneys to defend the martyred leaders. I'll get some of these police-court shysters to do it for nothing, but Tomsky will get the credit for it, and the newspaper boys around headquarters will furnish the right kind of publicity to make Tomsky the hero of the rabble. Within a week he will begin enlisting volunteers for an "army" to march to Washington, there to petition the president in person for adequate legislation by Congress, designed to improve the lot of the downtrodden workingman. Coxey got away with this, and so will Officer Tomsky.

In the meantime the authorities here are arranging with the authorities in every town through which the army must pass at feeding time to furnish one or two meals, and pass the army on to the next town. The right publicity, giving the army a gentle hint of these conditions, will do the trick. They will all follow Tomsky on a jolly camping trip, and when they get well up into the Sacramento Valley, the free grub will cease, and sheriff's posses and police armed with riot guns will disintegrate the army within a week, the men will scatter over the interior of the State, and in small numbers, and without organization, will not constitute a menace to society or a difficult problem for the police to solve.

I commend this plan to your consideration. A clever man with leather lungs and a copper-riveted larynx, together with a couple of hundred dollars from your police emergency fund, will do the trick. If I might presume to offer a suggestion, in the event that you follow this plan, have your man lead the southern army north, with the idea of effecting a junction with Tomsky's army, and proceeding on east with it. You might get the railroad to stand in and furnish a train of flat cars to lift your gang across the Mohave Desert as far as Bakersfield. Once you get them in the San Joaquin Valley you can have them effectually scattered.

When the chief of police of Los Angeles read that letter, he sent immediately for Officer Dennis Dunnigan, "a speed cop" patrolling the road to Venice, and, while waiting for Officer Dunnigan to motor in to headquarters, he wired his San Francisco colleague that the latter's letter came to him like a gentle rain over an arid country.

When Officer Dunnigan reported, the chief looked him over and nodded. Yes, without doubt Officer Dunnigan would do! Physically he was the Adonis of the department. Of Irish parentage, he was famous among his fellows for his wit, intelligence, and personal charm, while of his sterling ability as a policeman the chief had had frequent evidence. He seemed the ideal man for the detail.

"Denny," the chief asked, "can you make a rattling good speech?"

"I never tried, chief," replied Officer Dunnigan modestly. "but I have a sneaking idea I could give a lot of so-called orators a run for their money—provided, of course, I had some knowledge of my subject. It takes years of practice before a man can jump up on two seconds' notice and orate on anything under the sun."

"Read that, Denny," the chief said, and handed over the letter from the San Francisco chief. "Can you do the job?" he continued, when Dunnigan, having read the letter, glanced at him inquiringly.

Officer Dunnigan nodded. "You do your end of it, chief, and I'll do mine or resign from the department," he replied.

"Then go where glory waits you, Denny. And remember, if you get away with this job right, there'll be a billet as detective sergeant waiting for you when you return. I'll send your expense money out to the house and have you ordered to special duty."

Officer Dunnigan saluted, and departed to disguise himself. That night his wife peroxided his black head and mustache, and, with the aid of a solution of henna, Denny Dunnigan became the handsomest auburn male in Los Angeles. The following night, arrayed in the old suit he always wore fishing, he fared forth as Thomas Dorgan, a union teamster out of a job.

Three days later he was standing on a box in Westlake Park, addressing an audience of unemployed men, and pleading, in the voice of a veritable bull of Bashan, for a government "that would not make one law for the rich and another for the poor." Cheers.

When he was arrested and the Black Maria bore him away—to make a confidential report to the chief—a mob of admirers followed the "martyr" to the police station, the hat was passed, and Thomas Dorgan was bailed out; but not until he had been photographed and interviewed and given out a signed statement to the press protesting against the abrogation of his constitutional right to free speech!

Three days later came a telegram from "General" Tomsky, leader of the San Francisco forces, inviting the Los Angeles brethren to meet him at Sacramento and join in the march on Washington. The newspapers played up the story, and Thomas Dorgan risked(?) arrest and six months in the county jail to make another address in Westlake Park and plead with his followers to hearken to the call of their oppressed brethren in the north. What more liable to make a deep and indelible impression on the public than the sublime spectacle of twenty thousand men, ground under the iron heel of capital, marching across the United States to plead for justice at the fount of government? None—according to Thomas Dorgan. It was their solemn duty to follow General Tomsky to Washington, by their presence adding their moral support to the great work of their leaders.

Overnight the newspapers promoted Thomas Dorgan to a generalship, in which capacity he sent a most fraternal telegram to General Tomsky, accepting the latter's invitation. Then he opened his recruiting office, where eight hundred men promptly enlisted under his banner, for the simple reason that they liked "General" Dorgan's line of oratory and had come under the spell of his dominant spirit. Also, they had nothing better to do.

And now, since we can serve no good purpose by proceeding farther with this apparently immaterial diversion to our main story, let us state that the sole excuse for this entire chapter lies in the fact that the studio of the Excelsior Motion Picture Company was located in a field on the western fringe of San

Fernando, and a camping site in a field on the eastern fringe of San Fernando became the objective of the first day's march of General Dorgan's northbound "army."

CHAPTER IV.

When Gottlob arrived in San Fernando, he found that Heddon had made wonderful progress in the preparation of the scenery, costumes, cast, extra people, et cetera. His inability to find a country house which he could use for the château of the Duc de Maupauvaux had forced him to the construction, in an adjacent field, of the false front of a château, for Tom Heddon, most particular of directors, was bound to have his architecture conform to that of the duc's ancient habitation.

A papier-mâché wall surrounded the "grounds" before the château, the huge barred gate and the lodge beside it were already completed, shrubbery had been set in the grounds, and a long avenue of potted orange trees led from the gate to the château entrance.

The large outdoor stage had been lengthened, to accommodate the banquet scene, the carpenters were busy constructing the court inside the château, and nearly everything was in readiness to make the most expensive scene in the picture shortly after Sam Gottlob should arrive. For Tom Heddon realized that Sam was coming West for the sole purpose of guarding the treasury; consequently the director planned to have the worst agony over first and while Sam was in the first flush of his Van Twiller enthusiasm.

The scene where the starving mob, under the leadership of Pioche, was to storm the château of the Duc de Maupauvaux, constituted the only big episode Tom Heddon could find in the script, hence he desired to make the most of it, and to do this he had to make this scene first and spare no expense.

If he delayed it, he feared the expense of filming the remainder of the story would find Sam Gottlob developing an economical streak when they came to the mob scene, in which event it would be like him to "pinch down" on the number of supers at the banquet and make Heddon work with fifty supers in the mob, whereas, to make the picture really effective, he should have not less than three hundred.

The morning after his arrival, Sam Gottlob sat in Heddon's little cubbyhole of an office. Heddon was "doping out" the scenes from "The Battle for Bread," closing his eyes after reading each one and striving to visualize it as the dramatist had outlined it. In a chair by the window, Gottlob was reading a Los Angeles morning paper.

"Well, Tom," he announced presently, "because you have the duck's château all ready yet, we wouldn't have much trouble getting supers for the big mob scene. I see by the paper there is a thousand loafers in Los Angeles going to march to meet two thousand other loafers by Sacramento, and, according to this General Dorgan low life, they camp the first night in San Fernando."

Heddon opened his eyes and stared at Gottlob a little stupidly. The latter repeated his remarks, and Heddon saw the nucleus of the thought in Sam Gottlob's head before Gottlob was aware of it himself. He hastened to express it first and place his employer in good humor by professing a desire to save a dollar wherever a dollar could be saved.

"That gives me a bully idea, Sam," he declared. "The bigger the mob in that scene, the more punch it will add to the picture—and this will be a *real* mob——"

"Realism, my boy, is everything," Sam interrupted ponderously.

"If we use the regular people, we'll have to have three hundred at least, and

they'll cost us three dollars a day each, and——"

"Make the scene in one day," Sam Gottlob warned him.

"I can make it in an hour, if I have luck. But we'll have to pay for a full day, just the same; and then there are the items of luncheon and costumes. But these hobos would arrive dressed for the part as no director could ever hope to dress them, and this, added to the fact that there are a thousand of them, would add a heap to the realism——"

"How would it be to get this General Dorgan to be Pioche?" Gottlob queried eagerly. "Pioche would got to appear in not more than half a dozen scenes before he is killed in the banquet hall by the duck."

"An amateur—a bright amateur—might carry that bit off very well." Heddon laughed. "We'll interview the general when the army arrives in San Fernando."

"I bet you that low-life bum is a beautiful type," Sam answered musingly, and returned to a perusal of his paper, while Heddon sat at his desk, nibbling the rubber on a lead pencil and gazing abstractedly at the floor. Presently he rose, went into the business office, and dictated this letter to General Thomas Dorgan:

GENERAL THOMAS DORGAN, *Commanding Army of the Unemployed, Los Angeles, Cal.*

MY DEAR GENERAL: I understand you are planning a march of your forces to connect with those of General Tomsky at Sacramento. According to this morning's paper you will halt for the first night at San Fernando.

I am about to produce a spectacular motion picture entitled "The Battle for Bread," adapted from the famous novel of that name by Mr. Henry Emerson van Twiller. I will require a thousand men in a mob scene, which can be enacted within half an hour, and the company would be very glad indeed to pay your soldiers fifty cents each for appearing in the scene. It is understood, of course, that you will receive a liberal bonus for your individual efforts in persuading your army to go to work.

Will you please indicate to bearer the nature of your reply to this communication? Cordially and sincerely yours,

TH|J. THOMAS HEDDON, Director.

The chauffeur of the Excelsior Motion Picture Company drove into Los Angeles and delivered that note to General Dorgan at his headquarters. One hour later he returned to the studio with the general, for Officer Dennis Dunnigan was not the man to counsel delay when he saw a bit of honest graft in sight. Opportunity, so the sages inform us, knocks once on every man's door, but it had never knocked on Denny's. Invariably he met it at the front gate.

"Well, what's the dope, gentlemen?" he queried, as, introductions over, he accepted a chair from Tom Heddon and a good cigar from Sam Gottlob. The director explained at considerable length exactly what was wanted, and the general nodded.

"We can do business," he declared briskly. "Now, gentlemen, let us get together and understand each other. In the first place, my name isn't Thomas Dorgan, although it is something just as good. I'm Officer Dennis Dunnigan, No. 327 on the muster rolls of the Los Angeles police department," and forthwith Dennis proceeded to unfold, in strictest confidence, the scheme of the chief to rid Los Angeles of her turbulent visitors. When he had finished, Sam Gottlob glanced at Heddon.

"What a beautiful type for Pioche!" he said. Heddon nodded, and Sam continued: "Dunnigan, believe me, you would be a star the day you quit wearing one. Now, understand, what we want it in this picture is realism——"

"Then, if you do," Officer Dunnigan interrupted, "leave this mob scene to me, because if you motion-picture guys butt in you'll kill the realism. I've been looking at motion pictures for a good

many years now, and I know there's room for a lot of improvement, although you fellows never seem to get wise to it. Take fights, for instance. One actor pokes the other, and the audience can see he doesn't mean it. They just claw around and wrastle and pull and never get anywhere. Then, again, take the mob scene. I've fought my way through a few mobs in my day, and I tell you a mob doesn't shout like it was giving a college yell, and wave its arms like it was working by signals. No, gentlemen. A mob growls and surges around and stares and struggles with itself, until it begins to move—and then you can see murder in every man's face. That's a real mob—and I take it you want a real mob for this picture."

Gottlob licked his lips and stared, fascinated, at Dennis Dunnigan. "I would give you a hundred dollars to furnish that kind of a mob," he declared.

"Very well, then. You just fix it for me to lead them——"

"You are Pioche, general," Sam yelled joyfully. "You are the sucker what leads the starving mob on the duck's château. Tom, here, is the duck, and he shoots you dead from a horse pistol."

"I'll furnish between eight and nine hundred men—a real mob—and they'll make a real attack on the château and rough-house the highbrows in the banquet hall the way a mob ought to rough-house highbrows," he declared, "so consider the mob scene settled. Now, for these extra people in the banquet scene. They won't do, gentlemen. We've got to have people that will act real, if we're going to get this thing over right. You can't have one gang *feeling* the scene and the other gang just *looking* it, you know. Why, the audience would get hep in a second."

"One hundred more if you would put realism into the banquet scene, general," Sam Gottlob prompted.

"I'll make you a flat rate for the job," the general replied, "after I've explained my proposition. Now, as I understand it, this banquet scene is high society—ladies in low necks and gents in swallowtail coats." Heddon nodded. "Well," Dennis continued, "you slip a fifty-dollar bill to the society editor of any one of the morning papers and get her to call up a lot of society people in Pasadena and Los Angeles, and ask them to appear in a motion picture—the big banquet scene from Henry Emerson van Twiller's great novel, 'The Battle for Bread.' There's going to be a big society dansant at the San Antonio Hotel ballroom next Saturday night, and, after dancing until three o'clock Sunday morning, these people would think it great sport to sit around till daylight and then motor out to San Fernando, where you'll have a caterer serve them a bully breakfast on the open-air stage. While they're eating, you film them. That's simple enough, ain't it?"

"General," Tom Heddon said, "I should like to shake hands with you. You are a genius."

"But," Sam Gottlob warned him, "we don't work on Sundays."

"Don't butt in, boss," growled Heddon savagely. "The first thing you know you'll ditch the general's train of thought and the wreck will cost you all kinds of money. We'll work Sunday morning, general, because you're going to start north with your army next Saturday morning, arriving in San Fernando that night and pitching camp. And you're going to have something happen to your grub wagon, aren't you?"

Officer Dunnigan turned to Sam Gottlob. "Mr. Gottlob," he declared, "if you ever fire this director, it's the same as petitioning for involuntary bankruptcy. He gets me almost before I get myself. Sure, Mr. Heddon, something happens to the commissary. The grub wagon fails to arrive in San Fernando, and when my army rolls out

Sunday morning it's nix on the breakfast. That'll make 'em all fighting mad, and when one of my scouts comes in and says—well, never mind what he'll say. I'll say it myself, and it will do the business."

"'Dives, clothed in purple and fine linen, fares sumptuously, while Lazarus lies hungry at the gate," Sam Gottlob quoted eagerly.

Officer Dunnigan produced his little book and the stub of a lead pencil. "Let me have that again, Mr. Gottlob," he requested. "A line like that in my speech will make 'em roar till you'd think it was feeding time over at the Nonpareil company's animal farm."

While Dennis Dunnigan made note of this semibiblical quotation, Heddon whispered to Gottlob: "He's going to incite his army to fury and lead it in an attack on the aristocrats. The breakfast is to be the gage of victory."

Sam's eyes actually popped with the enormity of this conception. "Then it would be a real battle for bread," he whispered hoarsely.

"Well, you might as well be a sport and throw in a plate of hash and a cup of Java while you're at it," Dennis Dunnigan interrupted dreamily. "I've got to promise my army some breakfast, and when the scrap is over and they discover it's only motion pictures, it's going to require a square meal to square me."

"We'll do it, general," Tom Heddon promised. "After that, you're a bigger hero than ever, and it gives you a chance to jolly them back into good humor. You can sit at one end of the table, and the chief of police at the other. We'll have some set speeches and pull more publicity for the picture than any picture ever had before. The chief will respond to a toast based on the old Chinese proverb: 'No workee, no eatee.' All the trade papers will carry the story, the newspapers will eat it up, and the whole country will be on tiptoe waiting to see 'The Battle for Bread.'"

Sam Gottlob was overcome at the glorious prospect. Tears came to his eyes at the contemplation of such brilliance, such unswerving loyalty, such monumental ingenuity. However, he was a business man, and from force of habit he always searched for the dark side of any proposition.

"How about these society fellers," Sam queried anxiously. "Might we be sued if somebody gets hurt?"

"Nobody will get anything worse than a black eye or a bloody nose," Officer Dunnigan assured him. "I'll provide against fatalities."

"But the duck shoots you," Sam protested, "and when the shooting begins it would be a wise feller could tell when it stops."

"Leave that worry to the police, Mr. Gottlob, and let us get on with the matter in hand. Now, we've provided for a real mob and a real society scene and a real rough-house. What comes next?"

"The dragoons. They come charging up to the château on horseback——"

"How do you dress a dragoon, Mr. Heddon?"

"A military uniform, with epaulets on the shoulders, black-corded frogs across the breast of the tunic, a cap or a busby, and a pair of riding boots with a man inside of all that, makes a dragoon," the director explained. "Then you fasten a saber and a pistol on him, and, with a carbine sticking up out of the gun scabbard on his saddle——"

"All right, we've got the dragoons," Dennis interrupted. "How many do you want? Will fifty be enough?"

Would fifty dragoons be enough? Sam Gottlob actually blinked at the innocence of the man. A low, sucking noise burst from his parted lips, he mopped the perspiration from his forehead notwithstanding the predaylight chill of that February morning, and wondered if he was awake or dreaming.

He had hoped that this Aladdin of the motion pictures, having produced a mob of at least eight hundred men and banquet guests to the number of fifty or sixty, sans expense for wages and costumes, might go further and produce the dragoons, although he had hesitated to suggest it. Something told him Dennis Dunnigan was too good to be true. Also he might be temperamental, and if Sam joggled his elbow he might sulk and refuse to go on.

"All right, then," Dennis continued calmly. "We'll fix the dragoons up, all right. The chief, commanding a detail of fifty mounted cops, all with riot guns sticking up out of the gun boots on the saddles, is going to escort my army until it's clear of the city limits. I'll just fix it with the chief to come on to San Fernando, camp overnight, and pull this dragoon stunt in the morning. All you fellows have to furnish are the belts, sabers, pistols, epaulets, and frogs—yes, and you might send a couple of leading ladies down to the police camp to sew these dewdads on the cops' coats and rip the letters L. A. P. off the coat collars and saddle blankets. I tell you, gentlemen, the chief is mighty proud of the way I'm pulling off this General Dorgan stuff, and if I ask him as a favor to appear in the picture, I think he'll perform. Besides, he'll be tickled to death for a chance to see himself charging at the head of the troop. If I were you, Mr. Heddon, I'd have him measured for a swell dragoon officer's uniform. And you needn't worry about not having realism in the charge of the dragoons. None of those mounted cops love this army of mine, and the way they'll wallop 'em with the flats of the sabers will be real enough for anybody. Besides, these dragoons can ride, while if you had regular motion-picture dragoons, every other man would be showing daylight between him and the saddle. I tell you, this whole thing is going to be real."

"Words fail me, Dennis," Tom Heddon declared. "I can only say 'Thank you.'"

"If I would have your imagination, general," Sam Gottlob declared, and extended his hand, "I would control the pictures of the world. And now, if you would tell me the charges for all this, we would make a payment on account, balance on completion of contract."

Tom Heddon beamed upon his employer. "It took you a long time to get started, Sam," he declared, "but you're certainly a hard-pulling old horse once you bulge into the collar."

"I've got a five-hundred-dollar mortgage on a bungalow in Hollywood," Officer Dunnigan suggested timidly, "and I guess I'm going to save you a couple of thousand dollars, ain't I? Would five hundred be too much?"

Would wonders never cease? Sam Gottlob produced a bale of currency and peeled off five hundred dollars. "Go pay that mortgage, Irisher," he said happily, "and if the film turns out good I would mention your name in the advertising."

The overjoyed Dennis thanked him, and shortly thereafter returned to Los Angeles, there to interview the chief of police and complete his daring plan to the most minute detail. The same night he telephoned Heddon that the dragoons were assured, and the following morning Heddon and Gottlob motored into town, Heddon to rent the necessary props for the dragoons, and Sam Gottlob to hatch his base conspiracy with a stout, middle-aged spinster who, in addition to writing the society page for a morning paper, also syndicated daily a column entitled "Advice to the Lovelorn."

The three days that followed were busy ones for Tom Heddon. Realizing that Dennis Dunnigan's plans would preclude any rehearsal, Heddon never-

theless was not worried. If Dennis could produce the realism he guaranteed, rehearsals would be superfluous, for, after all, rehearsals are merely indulged in for the purpose of obtaining an effect of realism.

Neither did the knowledge that he must forego make-up on the features of Dunnigan's army and the dragoons worry him, for neither would it be working under artificial light. The society people could, of course; readily be induced to make up for the banquet scene on the huge roofless stage, although even here make-up was not absolutely necessary. And lastly Heddon had overcome the difficulty of filming each scene in the episode consecutively and without moving from the location.

On Friday the bavarde to whom Sam Gottlob had intrusted the society round-up telephoned that she had never earned fifty dollars easier in all her life. She had merely telephoned an invitation to an ambitious social climber, and the latter had thereupon completed the contract for her. Fifty ladies and their escorts, in evening dress, would be on hand at San Fernando at half past nine on Sunday morning, all eager to appear in the picture.

Naturally they regarded Sam Gottlob's invitation as something not to be despised, for it savored of a distinct adventure and formed a welcome break in the monotony of existence. As Dennis Dunnigan had remarked to Tom Heddon:

"I've pinched most of these people at one time or another for speeding, but they don't care. You'd think folks with nothing to do wouldn't be in such a hurry to do it, but that's society for you. They'll jump at any proposition that's new and helps them kill time. Besides, Mr. Heddon, you can take my word for it that if there's one thing, not a mirror, that a woman would rather see herself in, that thing is a motion picture."

Tom Heddon recalled this prediction now; also another from the same source to wit: that the entrance of General Dorgan's army would frighten these unsuspecting social canaries to the verge of hysterics. Consequently the thoughtful Heddon arranged to have a doctor and a trained nurse in attendance outside the banquet hall.

By Saturday afternoon, all the sets were in place, and a comfortable camp had been established at a farmhouse a mile south of town and a few hundred yards off the country road. Here the mounted police were to spend the night, unknown to the army of the unemployed. A huge auto truck, bearing a caterer, his assistants, and the Sunday-morning breakfast for both Dives and Lazarus, as Mr. Gottlob would have expressed it, came out from Los Angeles, and a scout appeared and selected a camping site for General Dorgan's brigade of potential anarchists, which straggled in, cheering, about dark.

CHAPTER V.

It still lacked half an hour to dawn when Officer Dennis Dunnigan met with Sam Gottlob and Tom Heddon in the latter's office for a final consultation.

"Everything is O. K. in my department," Dennis reported. "Every single move is timed, and every piece of business provided for. I've taken half a dozen wise guys into my confidence—I had to—and they'll herd the gang after me and handle that battering-ram. Have you provided the battering-ram?"

"You'll find a piece of four-by-four sixteen-foot pine forming the top of a hitching rack near the château entrance. It isn't nailed down tight. Tear it off and proceed to batter in the door. The door is going to be braced from the inside, so your men in the know will have to do some pounding."

"Now what do I do myself?" asked Dennis.

"You follow the hobo I'll send to you with the news that the aristocrats are breakfasting. He'll lead you over the route you are to travel to the château. Up the orange-tree avenue you come with your battering-ram, smash in the front door, and pour into the court, across the court, and through another door into the banquet hall. You must be sure to get in first, and when fifteen or twenty men have followed you, pause, face your men, and hold up your hand in an imperious gesture—this way—and say: 'One moment, men, before we clean this bunch of highbrows. I want to tell 'em why we're doing it. You will then face me—I'm playing the part of the Duc de Maupauvaux, and I'm at the head of the table—and make a speech."

"What kind of a speech?" Denny inquired anxiously.

"The speech of an anarchist, of course—all about capital and labor and the starving babes—you know the old bunk to pull."

"I ought to, Mr. Heddon. I haven't been doing anything else for the past two weeks. Leave it to me, and I'll deliver the goods. How long a speech do I make?"

"About fifty feet. Your cue to stop comes when I pull a pistol and shoot you——"

"I'll have a look at your gun, Mr. Heddon," Dennis interrupted, and declined to proceed further until he had examined the weapon Tom Heddon purposed using, and made certain it was loaded with blank cartridges.

"When I fire, you pitch forward, dead, Dennis," Heddon continued. "That will jar your gang for a couple of seconds. They'll just stand and gape. Then you half rise and wave to your men to come on and avenge you. Be sure you tell them to avenge your death."

"Tom," said Officer Dunnigan, for the first time calling Heddon by his first name, "blamed if I ain't almost afraid to do that. Remember, I've got eight hundred crazy tramps outside trying to get in."

"They shall not get in," Heddon retorted. "I shall have posted behind black portières at each side of the entrance two men armed with powerful atomizers loaded with spirits of ammonia, and they will deluge the entrance with a fine spray that will not show in the film, on account of the tobacco smoke and the general riot. Ammonia, I might state for your information, Dennis Dunnigan, is the only thing that will make a pit bull let go his hold, once he has fastened on. Don't worry about ammonia spray not stopping the rush."

"How long do I lay dead?" Dennis wanted to know.

"When the dragoons clear the room, the Marchioness de Mountford—that's Miss Ward, our leading lady—will go over to you, kneel beside you, and bathe your temples with cologne——"

"All right, Tom; just so she don't get hold of the wrong bottle and bathe me with ammonia."

"After Miss Ward has mopped your brow for about twenty feet of film, two dragoons come in and carry you out of the picture. Then you explain it all to the army, and march back to your camping site, where our caterer and his men will have breakfast waiting, with the compliments of the Excelsior Motion Picture Company."

"I get you, Tom."

"Here are your instructions in detail—in case you forget me. Rehearse your part mentally, Dennis, and remember that you and Miss Ward and a couple of supers and myself are the only actors on in this scene. We're the only ones that know the show isn't real."

"If anything slips, and those dragoons fail to show up, we'll know it *is* real," Dennis retorted grimly.

"And remember," Sam Gottlob warned him craftily, "in this scene you are the star."

Dennis Dunnigan grinned at the compliment, and returned to take command of his army which shortly would begin to heave and surge under its dirty red comfortables and gray blankets, and consider the eternal problem of breakfast.

CHAPTER VI.

Before proceeding northward at the head of his army, Dennis Dunnigan had thoughtfully provided himself with the one thing that lent to his tatterdemalion rabble a semblance of military organization—a bugler late of the United States infantry, but now, to his great comfort, dishonorably discharged. It was the duty of this individual to sound reveille each morning, officers' call whenever a conference of Dennis and his staff impended, and assembly whenever the beloved general desired to exhort his ragged soldiery. At eight o'clock that Sunday morning the general roused his bugler, with instructions to sound reveille, and five minutes later to follow it with "the assembly."

The army promptly rolled out as the bugler sounded off. No sooner had the men completed the trivial task of rolling up their bedding than assembly call was heard, and a moment later their peerless leader was seen to emerge from his tent headquarters and mount a barrel in front thereof. Realizing that he was about to make an announcement, and vaguely suspecting it might have to do with breakfast, the entire absence of any preparations for which had not escaped its notice, the army crowded around and waited for the general to unbosom himself of his proclamation.

"Men," he said, "I am sorry to report that the wagons containing the food supplies that were to last us as far as Ventura, and which should have arrived in camp late last night, were treacherously waylaid by the enemies of labor, some five miles down the road, early last evening. All five wagons, with their contents, were burned, which dastardly outrage places you in the position of having to do without breakfast——"

He paused to listen to the sullen murmur that went up from the army. It was rapidly swelling to a rumble, when the doughty general held up his hand.

"——which places you in the position of having to do without breakfast until about ten o'clock—a. m.," he finished.

He smiled upon them, and a laugh went up from the crowd. One might safely leave to General Thomas Dorgan the task of handling competently any situation that might arise!

"I did not tell you this last night, men," the crafty Dunnigan went on, "for fear that news of the outrage might incite certain headstrong individuals among you to acts of reprisal against a society which we know, from bitter experience, will take no steps to grant us justice or protection. In addition to this reason, I had another. Anticipating as I did just such an act of vandalism on the part of the enemies of labor, I had arranged that the five wagons which were halted and burned should contain but a very modest portion of our food supplies. Instead, the bulk of our rations left Los Angeles early this morning, thus outwitting our enemies. I do not anticipate that these wagons will be attacked en route, and if you will have patience, breakfast will be ready before you have had opportunity to get desperately hungry. Now that we know what we may expect from the hired vandals of the Merchants' and Manufacturers' Association, we shall take care, in the future, to have our provision wagons accompany us on the march, regardless of the dust. I am sorry this has happened, but we are all human and bound

to err some time. This may check, but it will not defeat, that grand movement of the Hosts of Labor——"

But that was sufficient. A mighty cheer startled the peaceful residents of San Fernando. Dennis Dunnigan was snatched from his barrel and carried around the lot on the shoulders of his loyal adherents, while Sam Gottlob, seated in his automobile and watching from afar, returned to the studio, cheered and comforted by this ocular demonstration of D. Dunnigan's power over his ragged cohorts.

When nine-thirty o'clock passed without any signs of the approaching commissary wagons, however, Dennis Dunnigan's practiced eye noted signs of restlessness on the part of his peckish constituents. In order to allay this he left word that he would go uptown and telephone in an endeavor to get track of the wagons. He returned at five minutes of ten to announce that breakfast would be served not later than ten-thirty, and that he had already detailed a number of men to gather firewood and locate water for the coffee.

The army was once more dispersing when one of its members was seen approaching across the lot. As he drew nearer it was observed that his face was smeared with blood and a purplish patch was visible under his right eye.

"Where's the general?" this person cried in anguished tones. "I've got to see him right away!"

A thrill of excitement ran through the army. The men closest to him gathered around the gory-faced man. Tom Heddon had slain a spring chicken and smeared the blood on the spy's face himself. Filled with forebodings of another attack on the precious grub wagons, they eagerly sought information as to the cause of his damaged condition.

"I can't tell you now, boys," he half screamed, half sobbed. "I've got to report to the general first."

"What's the trouble here?" the general's crisp voice demanded. "Casey, what have you been doing? Fighting with some citizen of this town?"

"No, I ain't been fightin' with nobody. They been fightin' with me," Casey wailed, "an' if I hadn't 'a' run they'd 'a' killed me. I'm over on the other side o' town, moseyin' around a motion-picture studio where they've been doin' some buildin'. I'm scoutin' for some firewood, when about twenty automobiles comes out from Los Angeles, all loaded with a lot o' swells an' their molls. So I don't say nothin', but just lay around, an' bimeby I get next to what's bein' pulled off. This bunch o' capitalists is the board of directors an' all the sub-committees o' the Merchants' an' Manufacturers' Assocition, come out to rubber at the Army o' the Unemployed. An' they sent a caterer out last night to have breakfast ready for 'em this morning, an' now they're eatin' it on a big open-air motion-picture stage inside that big white thing that looks like a fake house front, over there in the field across town. After breakfast they're goin' to watch the army break camp, and as soon as we're on the road they're goin' to come whoppin' along in their automobiles an' stir the dust up on us. One fresh Johnny had a whole sack o' cayenne pepper, an' he said he was goin' to scatter it behind his car——"

A growl, half horror, half rage, went up from the army. The general raised his arm for silence, and the man went on with his story:

"When I heard that, general, I spoke up. I says: 'Yes, you will, you big stiff! Just because you're rotten with money you think you can walk over us guys that ain't got any,' an' then I cussed 'em out good an' proper."

" 'Hello,' says the feller that's plannin' to make us sneeze to death with

the cayenne pepper, 'here's one o' the ragamuffins,' an' he comes over an' makes a pass at me. I lay him cold for his pains, but there's a dozen of 'em on top o' me before I know it, an' I have to run. So I come back to report to you what's goin' on, general, an' if there ain't enough of us to make that gang lay off from harassin' us——"

"Silence!" thundered the general. "I'm the one to decide what shall be done in this matter, and I think"—turning to the crowd—"you all know me well enough by this time to have no fear that I will assume a weak or vacillating attitude in this crisis."

At this juncture somebody kicked the barrel over toward the general, and he mounted it and commenced to harangue the crowd.

"Never mind that motion-picture fellow," he yelled, referring to Tom Heddon's camera man, who had approached in the automobile. "He's an honest workingman and has his living to earn the same as the rest of us, so let him take all the pictures he wants. We have no quarrel with him, so pay attention to me."

And then he proceeded, employing all the forceful and vituperative stock phrases of the demagogue, to denounce this tagging after the army by those whom he had declared had "fattened on the blood of the lowly toiler." He painted them a word picture of this soulless leisure class, lolling in comfort in its five-thousand-dollar touring cars, gazing through lorgnette and monocle upon the proletariat, sneering superciliously upon this, the organized effort of the downtrodden to gain justice by marching in a body to the national capital.

It is probable that no race on earth possesses in greater measure than the Irish the ability to arouse human resentment by an appeal to class prejudice, and Officer Dennis Dunnigan had been equipped by nature to perform well his allotted task of playing upon the passions of the mob. Winding up a magnificent peroration, wherein he pictured to his excitable auditors the spectacle of "Dives, clothed in purple and fine linen, faring sumptuously, while Lazarus lay hungry at the gate," he shouted hoarsely:

"Have you men had breakfast?"

A chorus of cries in the negative.

"Do you want breakfast?"

A chorus of cries in the affirmative.

"Then if that be true, my brothers," shouted Dennis Dunnigan, "follow me. If these plutocrats have journeyed far to heap contumely upon the Hosts of Labor, let us be kindly and meet them at least halfway. Let us not stand upon convention, but call upon them as they sit at breakfast, drive them out of their banquet hall, and possess ourselves of their breakfast."

A deep, ominous roar at this statement demonstrated all too clearly the willingness of the army to do whatever their leader requested or suggested.

"Remember, men," the general continued, "that under no provocation must the women of this party meet with any injury at your hands. The men—these monsters banded together by the interests of capital, are the real culprits. Do not attempt to chastise them personally. When we come upon them at breakfast we shall seize them bodily, with as little injury to them in the presence of their women as possible, and escort them outside, where each man will be stripped to the waist and flogged! Do you hear me—*flogged*! And I'll do the flogging myself. Promise me now, men. No more rough stuff than is absolutely necessary. We mustn't kill or seriously injure anybody."

"We promise," they shrieked, and at the word the general leaped from the barrel.

"This way," a low voice spoke at his ear, and away they went.

As they swarmed into the château grounds, the door of the château opened, a man and two women stepped out, looked, shrieked, and ran back, closing the door behind them.

"There they are," shouted one of the supers with whom Tom Heddon had "salted" the general's army. "We'll have to bust in the door," and he ran toward a hitching rack outside the main gate. Others aided him in tearing off the heavy top timber, and the mob swept on up the orange-tree avenue.

The wild and terrifying cries of the mob, as the château door crashed inward under a bombardment of about forty seconds' duration, brought up standing every man and woman who had accepted of Sam Gottlob's hospitality. Surely this could not be a part of the program, for the breakfast had scarcely begun and the camera men had not appeared as yet.

Sam Gottlob, in immaculate evening dress, had received them graciously, and, seated well toward the head of the table, close to the Duc de Maupauvaux, had been partaking of the feast with the greatest gusto, cracking jokes left and right. When that first wild yell sounded from out front, all eyes immediately turned toward him. It was observed that Mr. Gottlob was disturbed; the look of anxiety that flashed across his face was too real for a motion picture. He was seen to lean toward Tom Heddon, playing the part of the Duc de Maupauvaux, and whisper excitedly. The director rose and addressed the guests:

"Pray do not get excited, ladies and gentlemen," he said. "I am at a loss to understand——"

The first crash of the battering-ram on the door drowned the specious fib he was about to unloose.

"It's only a mob of union camera men, protesting against Sunday work," Heddon shouted. "I feared some such outburst as this. We'll have the fire hose played on them."

The door fell with a crash, the sound of hurrying footsteps, cries, and oaths was plainly audible. An instant later the door leading to the stage was burst open and Officer Dennis Dunnigan in blue overalls and undershirt, bareheaded and looking like an avenging red god, leaped into view. A dozen men followed him.

For a moment he stood regarding the banqueters, a sneering scowl on his handsome features; then, following instructions, he turned and waved back his men with "an imperious gesture."

"Before we trim this bunch o' cheap Los Angeles highbrows," he thundered, "I'm goin' to tell 'em why they're due to be cleaned." He turned to the hereinbefore-mentioned highbrows, who were exhibiting every evidence of trepidation and alarm. "D'ye know who I am?" he snarled. "Well, I'll tell you. I'm General Thomas Dorgan, commanding the Army of the Unemployed. You guys have come out here in your limousines for a Sunday-morning breakfast, just so you can motor past us later on and throw your dirty dust in the faces of the men you hate. I know all about your plans. You're going to wait until we're on the march to-day, and then you plan to scorch by and scatter fine cayenne pepper behind you. Then when my men kick up the dust and get the benefit of your little joke, you'll laugh, won't you? But I promise you that laugh will be out the sides of your infernal mouths. The dignity of labor must be maintained. The toiling, half-starved thousands whom civilization has condemned to penury and despair, that you may ride in automobiles——"

The Duc de Maupauvaux sprang to his feet, and drew a pistol from the last place a gentleman should carry one—the hip pocket of his dress suit.

"You dirty ruffian!" he yelled. "I'll

teach you and your good-for-nothing crew to mind your own business," and with the words he fired. Dennis staggered, clutched wildly at the cloth on the table nearest him as he fell, and dragged eight dollars' worth of "silver," crockery, and ham and eggs to the floor with him. A dozen women shrieked.

"Put the women behind you and prepare to defend yourselves from these yeggs," the duc shouted. "They must be crazy to attack us like this."

The mob in the entrance stared stupidly at the tragedy that had just been enacted, and for the space of perhaps ten seconds it made no move. Then Dennis Dunnigan raised himself weakly on his elbow and waved them on.

"'Leader—— "Boys, avenge my death,"'" was the line that leaped before Sam Gottlob's eyes—and then the riot started.

Sam Gottlob knew that a camera, concealed ten feet behind him, had been quietly grinding away. As the mob swept in and over the stage among the tables, he glanced toward the door and saw that the atomizers loaded with ammonia had been brought into action and that the first forward rush of the mob had been halted. A dozen men were jammed in the doorway, those inside struggling to back up, and those just outside pressing eagerly forward.

Sam's male guests had taken Tom Heddon's advice. Some of the women had risen and retreated toward the rear of the stage as the mob entered, while others were lined up alongside the walls, behind their men, who met the first rush of the army with straight rights and lefts, cursing inwardly the while because there were no coffee cups, sugar bowls, et cetera, to follow. What crockery the prudent Heddon had seen fit to permit on the table, however, was quickly brought into action; then the unwashed swashbucklers closed in on their natural enemy and the fight developed into a series of clinches and wrestling matches, in which, however, short-arm jabs and kidney blows were freely indulged in. There was realism sufficient to suit the tastes of the most exacting.

Sam Gottlob had hoped that the dragoons would arrive before the enemy would be enabled to fight his way to the head of the host's table. In this he was disappointed, however. A large, swarthy Mexican, observing Sam's lack of stature and exceeding girth, selected Mr. Gottlob for his particular prey, and fought his way through the struggling mass straight to the president of the Excelsior Motion Picture Company.

Sam was aware of this individual's intentions some time prior to the latter's arrival within striking distance. Tom Heddon was also.

"Meet him, Sam!" the director ordered. "Here comes one after me, but I'll have to bluff him off with the gun. That big Mexican is too heavy for you to tackle so close to the camera, Sam. He'll force you back and into the camera; perhaps in your struggles you'll back into the portières and upset it. Go to him, Sam, and give the camera plenty of room to shoot. It's a case of fight him in the open, and keep him away from the camera."

For an instant Sam hesitated, but the thought that the picture might be spoiled if he disobeyed his director's orders promptly overcame his natural repugnance to a pitched battle. "I'll clinch him, Tom," he replied, and charged. The Mexican swung at him as he came, but Sam ducked under the blow, and planted left and right in the man's face. A second later, however, the Mexican's fist landed with considerable force on the very apex of Sam Gottlob's nose, and—Sam forgot he was playing a part in a motion picture.

My reader—gentle or otherwise—have you ever received on the end of your nose a punch that was really meant? If you have you will sympa-

thize with Sam Gottlob; also you will understand without further explanation exactly how furiously angry that punch made him. There was the lust of murder in his soul on the instant.

"You rotten sneaker!" he shouted, and kicked his antagonist in the abdomen. "I'll learn you somethings!" And he bored in, swinging wildly with both arms. Blows rained on his face, but he did not heed them. He seemed to be fighting in a fog, out of which loomed the dark, evil countenance of the Mexican; apparently from a great distance he heard Tom Heddon shout:

"Get Gottlob, you fool! Get him and that Mexican! They'll kill each other. Gad, what a peach of a battle!"

Sam Gottlob gathered himself for a superhuman effort, for his breath was fast failing him. He leaped into the air, and swung his right fist at the face that leered at him out of the fog. Then the fog closed in and blotted out the face, and Sam lost all interest in "The Battle for Bread."

However, let us return to the scene in the court and in the grounds outside the château entrance.

When the shot rang out and the onward rush ceased for a moment, those outside shouted hoarsely, demanding to know what had happened. A voice replied that General Dorgan had been killed, and the word was passed quickly down the line.

The fury of the mob at receipt of that news was indescribable. Those in the court made a concerted rush up the three low steps to the stage entrance; those in the entrance came backing down to escape the horrible ammonia spray that settled in the stubble on their unwashed faces, blinding and choking them with its fumes; both factions met and struggled like fiends with each other, those in front shouting for air and those in the rear cursing the leaders for cowards. And while they shouted, one Kansas City Charley, who under orders had remained aloof, raised a piercing shout of "Police! The mounted cops! Beat it, fellers! Here they come!"

How the mounted police, transformed for the occasion into dragoons, charged up the street and across the fields straight to the château entrance is something one cannot fully appreciate until one has seen the film. A gate in the papier-mâché garden wall was suddenly flung open, and, driven by the dragoons, who belabored shoulders and backs with the flats of their sabers, the "Hosts of Labor" poured pell-mell out of the grounds of the Duc de Maupauvaux.

The "Battle for Bread" was over.

CHAPTER VII.

Peace hath its victories no less than war.

True to Dennis Dunnigan's promise, by half past ten, at which hour the disintegrated army returned to its camp site, the caterers provided by Sam Gottlob had set up their long table, laden with eight hundred breakfasts.

Dennis Dunnigan, convoyed by the dragoons, returned to his headquarters and ordered his bugler to sound assembly, which, being done, Dennis again mounted his barrel and made oration to such good effect that before he had spoken five minutes he had his mercurial army laughing at the joke(?) he had played upon it.

He introduced the chief of police, who disclaimed any personal animus behind the flats of the sabers and earned a cheer for himself by calling for three cheers for Dennis Dunnigan.

Next Dennis introduced Sam Gottlob, whose features considerable Red Cross work had made halfway presentable, and, on behalf of the Excelsior Motion Picture Company, Mr. Gottlob invited "his friends" to breakfast.

The caterer would distribute sanitary

drinking cups, wooden spoons, and paper picnic plates, and if the army would form in line and pass by the rations, the caterer would fill each man's cup and plate. It was Mr. Gottlob's earnest wish that they should all enjoy the breakfasts they had so amply earned.

Then he called forward every man wounded in the fray, no matter how slightly, and presented each with a five-dollar bill, which crowning act of sportsmanship eradicated all feeling of rancor and made the genial Sam brother to them all. And finally, when breakfast was done, and the army marched away, it was singing lustily: "For He's a Jolly Good Fellow," and Dennis Dunnigan marched at the head of his command.

In the meantime Tom Heddon was having his troubles with Los Angeles society ladies and gentlemen. The men could see the joke and appreciate it, but owing to that lack of humor so noticeable in the female of the species Heddon was finding the going very heavy indeed. The climber, who, for her own social aggrandizement, had undertaken to supply free supers in costume to Sam Gottlob, was weeping copiously and threatening the company with suit, until Tom Heddon received one more evidence of the resourcefulness of Officer Dennis Dunnigan. Dennis, having seen his army scoffing a long-delayed breakfast, had returned to view the scenes of his brief histrionic triumph and discovered Tom Heddon about to be overwhelmed.

"Forget it, madam," he said to the irate dowager. "You all gave your names to Mr. Heddon when you arrived, didn't you? He told you he was going to write a story for the papers, all about you high-society folks appearing in this picture, didn't he? And of course that's what you wanted, wasn't it? Well, now listen to me, lady. Nix on this talk of suits for damages until you've seen the film. If it's rotten, go ahead and sue; but if it's as good as it ought to be you'd be lobsters to let this story leak out. Why, all your friends will be complimenting you on your acting when you weren't acting at all, but just naturally scared stiff, and you ladies and gentlemen just can't afford to have this story leak out anyhow. You'd be joshed into an early grave. Jumping Jupiter! What wouldn't the newspapers give for this story? Why, they'd pay five dollars each for your names, and Heddon and I have to work for a living, you know. We could be tempted to sell out. You'd rather have the papers write nice things about your acting than have them kid you to death, wouldn't you?"

That aspect of the case hadn't occurred to the lady, but that Denny had landed a telling blow was at once apparent. Tom Heddon saw his opportunity, murmured some shameless apologies, and told her he would be very glad to have her and all her friends the only persons present, with the exception of the members of the company, when the picture should have its first private exhibition. Thereupon Tom Heddon was permitted to march out with the honors of war, leaving the dowager and her guests to discuss their interrupted breakfast.

CHAPTER VIII.

When "The Battle for Bread" was first released in a Los Angeles cinema theater, Sam Gottlob dropped in one night to see himself in action for the twentieth time. Immediately in front of him two young men sat, and at the conclusion of the fourth reel, which depicted the mob scene and Sam Gottlob's now famous battle with the Mexican, he observed that these two young men immediately got up and went out, so he followed at their heels to eavesdrop on their conversation anent the picture.

In the lobby they paused to light their cigars, and one of them remarked:

"Well, Bill, what do you think of it?"

"It is, without doubt, the worst story in the world, but beautifully produced," his companion replied. "That man Heddon would be the greatest director in the business if his people would only furnish him a vehicle worthy of his art. And that new man, Dunnigan—the fellow that played the part of Pioche—I wonder where they picked him up. He's going to be a big man if they give him half a chance."

"I promised you the greatest mob scene ever produced anywhere," his friend reminded him. "Did it come up to your expectations?"

The other man nodded. "I'm going to see it again to-night and tell my friends to see it also," he replied. "It's marvelous. I forgot I was looking at a motion picture. To me it was real. I expected to see wholesale murder done."

"The Excelsior people will clean up a fortune on this one picture," the other man declared.

"Naturally. But I'll lay you ten to one they'll never know why the film is scoring such a marked success. They're advertising it heavily, but if they had any sense they'd save their money and rest content with the word-of-mouth advertising. You induced me to come and see it, and I dare say you have induced others and will continue so to do. I, in turn, shall tell my friends about it. It isn't often one sees a six-reel picture saved by one man, and I maintain that the little fat Hebrew comedian that fights the Mexican is the whole show. Some people may think that was acting, but they've got to show me. That was a grudge fight, and they must have beaten each other to a pulp. It just isn't possible for two men to take a double knock-out. Each started his haymaker and landed it simultaneously."

"Then," the friend replied, "the moral of the picture is: 'Anybody with red blood in his veins will pay ten cents to see a real fight, eh?'"

"You've said it. And at that I think the scrap was an accident. I've got to see the picture again to make certain. I didn't see the start of the private battle. Everybody was going to it, and the first thing I knew that little Hebrew turned loose like a wild Irishman——"

They wandered out of the lobby and left Sam Gottlob staring stupidly after them. For the truth always hurts, and at last Sam Gottlob realized that all he knew about the motion-picture industry could be put in Dennis Dunnigan's eye without seriously impairing the latter's eyesight. He was the beneficiary of what Tom Heddon had declared was "a divine accident," only when Heddon told him this he had refused to believe it. Now, however, from the lips of the public he had received the verdict, and he knew it to be an equitable one.

"I guess I would beat it while the going is good," he soliloquized. "Hereafter Tom should draw five hundred a week and pick his own scenarios," and he started out of the lobby just as Dennis Dunnigan and his wife came in. Sam Gottlob hailed the retired general, and was introduced to Mrs. Dunnigan. Seeking to turn a pretty compliment, he said to her:

"Mrs. Dunnigan, if I would got your husband's brains I would be king of the movies."

"You can always hire brains, you know, Mr. Gottlob," she retorted meaningly.

"Then, if I would be you, Dennis, I would see Tom Heddon about a job," Gottlob flashed back—and Dennis assimilated the hint.

Mrs. Dunnigan put him up to asking two hundred dollars a week, but Tom Heddon induced him to compromise for a hundred a week and liberal mention in the advertising. After all, it is a far

cry from a hundred and a quarter a month as Officer Dunnigan, speed cop, to a hundred a week as "the romantic actor, Dennis Dunnigan, as Pioche, the starved son of the People." In severing his connection with the Los Angeles police department, the crafty Dennis did exactly what might be expected of him. He took leave of absence for one year, and if he fails as an actor he can always return and be a detective sergeant.

As for Sam Gottlob, he returned to New York, happy in the knowledge that he had succeeded in curing his sick corporation by dosing it with realism. However, since he is a business man, pure and simple, he has concluded to leave the department of realism to Tom Heddon and Dennis Dunnigan hereafter. He has lost confidence in his own judgment.

He is perfectly bewildered, and is always citing the case of old man Bennett, who, after going broke with the finest three-ring circus in the world, cleaned up a fortune with a little old two-car show that didn't even sport an elephant, and thereafter claimed that nobody knows the show business.

All Sam knows about the motion-picture business now is that the Excelsior Motion Picture Company has resumed the payment of dividends since Tom Heddon was given carte blanche in the matter of scenarios.

As Sam Gottlob frequently remarks, this knowledge is, after all, ample compensation for a nose with a permanent list to starboard.

THE WALL STREET DETECTIVE

THE great Wall Street banks guard in their archives voluminous files of secret information regarding persons well known in the Street, who would be surprised, many of them, if they knew how their past histories are accessible to the moneyed powers of the district.

Every new arrival in the banking world is at once investigated as to his antecedents, and if he is found ever to have violated the strict code of his profession, he is secretly opposed and eventually driven from the Street.

One of the most vicious battles in the unwritten history of Wall Street was fought between the head of a private information bureau and the members of a banking group who invaded the district some years ago and acquired a chain of banks.

The predatory financiers with bad records discovered that their pedigrees were being investigated by this bureau, and they were furious. Fortune favored them. One of the banks that came under their control contained in its vaults promissory notes from the detective, on which he had borrowed money from the bank, giving his history files as security. The financiers pressed the notes for payment, with the result that the man's files were taken from him, with their records that represented years of work.

It was poor consolation to the ruined Wall Street detective that a year later his chief enemy, having been found guilty of crooked banking, was sent to a federal prison chiefly on the evidence that he had unearthed.

His Last Leg

By Bozeman Bulger

Author of "Pants Paramount," "The Mascot's Notch," Etc.

Yanked out of the box three times in a single month it looked as if the critics were right when they metaphorically declared he hadn't a leg to stand on. Literally Big Al had only one serviceable leg, for the other had given him trouble for weeks and was in a bad way. But that one serviceable leg was still worth money to the team.

THE hitters had partially knocked "Big" Al Cullen out of the league before the public woke up, and then the fans set about completing the job with their lungs. An avaricious owner, chiming in with the general anvil chorus, had just about brought the situation to a head. "Con" Miller, manager of the two-time champion Grays, was sorely beset.

Miller was of that variety of managers known to ball players as a *regular* guy. To him the gradual decline of a pitcher, after giving nine years of his athletic life to make fans happy and to make magnates money was a tragedy—one that he had seen enacted year after year as the worn-outs dropped back into the discard.

Three times in a single month Miller had seen Big Al knocked out of the box; had watched him closely to see if the defect could not be remedied. In fact, Miller had kept the big pitcher on the mound longer than good judgment would justify. But this was not through a forlorn hope of victory. It was a part of his plan to ascertain the cause. He knew that Al would never tell, would not even complain. It was a familiar saying among the Grays that, in all his nine years, Big Al had not registered enough talk to make a single phonograph record.

In a way, the players regarded the big fellow's silence as an asset, and they loved him for it. It offered untold opportunities for jokes which Big Al always shouldered with a sheepish grin and without a murmur. On that club any man felt at liberty to say what he pleased to Al in good-natured raillery, knowing that he could get away with it, but an outsider, attempting to exercise the same privilege, would have had twenty-four husky athletes to lick at one and the same time.

These things ran through the mind of Con Miller as, with a lump in his throat and little moisture in his eyeglasses, he watched his one-time famous pitcher remove his glove for the fourth time and walk from the box under fire—riddled.

The big fellow's massive shoulders swayed awkwardly, due to a favored leg, as he made his way to the bench. His head was down. In Al's ears was ringing the uproar for the man who had relieved him.

Al's left leg—his pivot leg in pitching—ached badly. Sitting down, he

looked at it ruefully. It had been the cause of the gradual decline for several weeks. The manager glanced at the big fellow inquiringly, though he knew from long association that no excuse would be offered.

Big Al knew very well that his leg was in a bad way, but there were just three reasons why he would tell nobody on the club, and, to his way of thinking, they were sufficient.

First—it would necessitate too much conversation.

Second—he might be accused by his teammates, for the first time, of offering an alibi.

Third—and this the strongest of all—the big fellow feared that a show of temporary physical weakness might recall to some one that his first name was Algernon. It was true, nevertheless, that fond but misguided parents had hung around the neck of this boy the name of Algernon P. Cullen. And that was his fighting point. Even as he thought of it now his fists doubled up unconsciously, and he glanced from the corner of his eye down the row of healthy, boyish faces on the bench. Though it never went on record outside the family Bible the "P" stood for Percival. Knowing Al, as we did, mention of that to this day brings an involuntary flinch.

Big Al sat there in his lonesome corner of the bench rubbing and kneading the weakened leg and thinking. Was it right to the club, he asked himself, to keep this information from the manager? In his mental argument he got far enough to persuade himself that it might be possible to give in on the first two reasons, but when it came to the third—that involving the name of Algernon—no! Right there the mental wheels ceased revolving.

Plainly did Big Al recall how years before he had silently struggled for a place on the Little Potatoes Hard to Peel, his boyhood team, and how he had been forced to lick Jack Benton three times for calling him Algernon, or "Algie," right in the midst of an argument over a decision at first base; how he had made a home run with the bases full, helping the Potatoes to win a regular league mask and mitt from the rival Hornets; how the boys, in consideration thereof, had pared the "gernon" off his unhappy name, leaving it plain "Al." Being under age his father had signed his first baseball contract, and for years he had tried to have that "Algernon" erased from the books.

No, Al decided now, he would stick to his silence. He had pitched for the Grays nine years, and they ought to know whether or not he was game. If they discovered the condition of his leg they would have to find it out themselves. His mind was made up. He would have no alibi.

As to the rumors that he had heard about Owner Turnbull being after his scalp, because he had refused a cut in salary, Big Al didn't care. All he wanted was to be right with the players and the manager. Still, the big pitcher felt that something should be done, so, to ease his conscience, he went to his own doctor that night for an examination. He got little satisfaction. The family physician evidently knew little about the ailments of ball players.

"It would be hard for me to say right now," said the doctor, in answer to Al's inquiring look, and shook his head. "My advice would be for you to give that leg a long rest. None of the bones are misplaced or fractured."

The doctor should have known that a ball player like Al would do nothing of the sort. To ask for a rest would be the same thing as offering an alibi. The big fellow went back to his accustomed seat on the bench, and for the next three days said nothing.

A slap on the back from Manager Miller finally yanked Cullen out of one of his moody reveries.

"What's all this fuss about?" Miller demanded. But Big Al saw the twinkle in his eye, and looked up with a dry grin.

"If you don't cut out all this noise," the manager went on good-naturedly, "they'll be putting you off the grounds. What are you doing?"

"Thinking," Al answered.

"You'd better be careful about pulling any new stuff like that on *this* club. It's against the union rules. Think you can pitch to-day?"

"Can try," Al declared. "Last time, though——"

"Oh, that's liable to happen to anybody," Miller interrupted, knowing that Cullen referred to having been knocked out. "You just got a bad streak of the game, my boy."

"Wasn't luck," Al corrected. "It was——"

"Your leg?" broke in Miller. "I know." And as Al looked up in surprise, he added: "It began bothering you in the third inning."

To the big fellow there came a feeling of relief. His manager knew.

"I'm mighty anxious to have you work to-day," Miller went on.

"Ain't there no other pitchers—good pitchers?"

"Maybe, but if you get in there and pitch a good ball game it means a lot to me—and to you—right now." Something in the manager's voice impressed the big pitcher unusually.

"I don't want to ask any questions, boss," he said, "but what you just pulled sounds kinder funny."

"Oh, it's that Turnbull," Miller explained quickly. "But don't worry about that. He's still sore about your not accepting that cut in salary." Big Al began rubbing his leg again.

"I'm not afraid of his pulling anything," Miller explained, "but I don't like a guy like that to be questioning my judgment. If you can get in there and pitch good ball we'll show him up."

"All right, Con," said the big fellow, "but it ain't because I'm scared of him —that Turnbull. My last leg for you."

For two innings Cullen showed his old control, Miller watching him closely from the side lines. Notwithstanding Al's efforts to hide it, the occasional flinches of pain in the third inning did not escape the lynx-eyed manager. In the fourth he began to wabble and lose control. Al would have been beaten in that inning but for the fact that in the last half he went to bat, and, with a long wallop, scored two runs. Sliding into second he fell in a heap, and that gave Miller a good chance to take him out.

Eventually the Grays lost the game, and there was a rather acrimonious interview as Owner Turnbull came down from the stand and walked across the field with the manager. Long since he had been barred from the clubhouse.

"That Cullen has got to go," said Turnbull. "And that's all there is to it!"

"I don't know about that," said Miller. "He pitched pretty good ball until he made that wallop and had to be taken out."

"Yes, I know," agreed Turnbull, "but you know he couldn't have gone much farther. The fact that he got out lucky only makes it easier to get rid of him in a good trade."

"Let me tell you something, Mr. Turnbull," and Miller stopped on the grass. "You hired me to run this ball club, and I've won two pennants for you. I'm not going to trade this fellow until I feel that he can be of no more service to us. I think I know my business."

"I recognize your authority, all right," Turnbull hedged as he thought of another pennant and the extra receipts from a world's series, "but I've just been talking to Higgins, of the Reds, and there's a great chance to make a trade before it's too late."

"I'll do the trading if there's any trading to be done," said Miller curtly.

"Well, I don't think much of him as a pitcher."

"Whether you do or not I can tell you one thing that you didn't know, perhaps. That fellow is a good all-round player, and I can use him on lots of occasions as a fill-in, even if he isn't strong enough to go the full route.

"Well, you'll have to show me that he's worth seven thousand dollars before I'm satisfied."

Turnbull turned and walked away. Con Miller had on his hands the most harmful influence against a good baseball club—a meddlesome owner. The species was not new to him. At the same time Miller recognized the right of club owners to discuss with him affairs concerning the team. They were putting up the money, and as Miller was drawing a princely salary, he realized with regret that such men as Turnbull had to be tolerated.

Miller made his way to the clubhouse plainly annoyed. The thing uppermost in his worry, however, was not the meddling of Turnbull, but the physical condition of Big Al. It was up to the manager to make good his statements about the big pitcher, and it was impossible to do so without Cullen in good shape. In the clubhouse he found Al on the rubbing table. The trainer was applying hot and cold towels to the bad leg.

"Well, Al"—and Miller gave him a ball player's slap—"you showed me some stuff in there to-day. If you hadn't been hurt sliding you would have copped that one."

"You know that slide didn't hurt, Con," said the usually silent Al, and then made what the ball players would have called a speech for him. "I'm on," he added, with a nod. "You saw me wabbling up there in the box, and you used that slide for a good excuse to take me out. But don't kid yourself, Con."

"Did your leg bother you much?" asked Miller.

"Just like you had stuck a knife blade in it."

That night the club physician had a good look at Cullen's leg, and was under instructions not to report to anybody but Manager Miller. Two days later the leg was put under an X ray.

Owner Turnbull, in the meantime, determined not to be licked by a manager, had taken his views on the weakness of Big Al to the board of directors. He had said nothing more to Miller, but still smarted under the last words of the leader of the Grays.

When the Reds came to town, the Grays had to get ready for a tough fight, and the affairs of Big Al were temporarily shelved. It was a four-game series for the lead, and the strongest pitchers had been slated for the job. There was much nervousness among the Grays, especially the left-handed hitters, because they knew that Jack Benton, the Reds' star southpaw, would be used against them in the opening game.

Benton was one of the most effective left-handers in the business, and, when facing him, "Little Josh" Evans, the lead-off man for the Grays, usually felt like sticking his bat in his hip pocket and calling it a day. From the way the first battle started he might as well have done so.

One by one Benton mowed down his opponents until he had them three to one in the seventh inning. All was gloom on the Gray bench when there suddenly came a flash of hope. A couple of Miller's men managed to reach first on fumbles in that round, and things began to buzz. There was a scurry for big bats.

"It's no use, though," Captain Hennessey remarked to Miller. "Little Josh is up there next, and Benton'll make

him toss that bat of his over the grand stand."

Apparently there was no chance of a substitute, for Josh, as the pinch hitter, already had gone in for Bobby Welsh, the Gray pitcher.

"Get in there, Josh," Miller snapped at his lead-off man, "and don't quit! Wait him out!"

Josh got two balls, and then Benton slipped over a strike.

"He's gone, I guess," said Miller to Captain Hennessey, as he walked back toward the bench from the coaching lines. Just then another strike was called on Josh, and Miller refused to look. As he turned his back to the field his eyes fell on Big Al Cullen in unusual agitation—for him. The big fellow was nervously crossing and uncrossing his legs, and switching a tobacco quid from the inside of one cheek to the other, legs and chew working in unison.

"Why the excitement?" Miller asked of Big Al. Then the bench got a real shock.

"I can hit that guy," declared Al, without looking up.

"You think you can, eh?" asked Miller, with an amused smile.

"*Think* I can?" repeated the big fellow. "I *know* I can!"

This was Cullen's first positive statement on the bench in nine years. Even the recruits sat up and took notice. In mock agitation three of the old fellows fell right over on their faces, pretending to be knocked out.

"Stick with him, Al!" shouted Captain Hennessey, turning from his selection of a bat to laugh. Hennessey was to follow the fast-dying Evans.

A ball was called on Little Josh, and he looked to the bench for instructions—whether to wait it out or hit.

"So you can hit Benton, eh?" Miller again asked of Big Al.

"Uhuh!" Al nodded and switched his chew, legs crossing at the same time.

"I'll just call that hunch," said Miller. "Get up there with a bat and show me!"

"Wait a minute, umps!" the manager called to the official behind the plate. He beckoned the surprised Evans to the bench. Big Al looked curiously at his manager, but, without another word, picked up a big bat and started for the plate under a handicap. He had to take the strikes and balls already called on Evans.

"Cullen batting in place of Evans!" the umpire announced, and those sitting near Owner Turnbull's box, back of the bench, declare he curled up like a rattler ready to strike. Even the fans gasped at this experiment in so important a game.

Cullen knocked the dirt from his shoes with the end of the bat, spat on his hands, and, getting in position, tapped the rubber. Benton shot a fast one squarely over the middle—or rather, one that started over the middle. It never got over. Big Al, with a "healthy" from his shoe tops, caught the ball on the nose, and, with his immense weight behind it, slammed a liner against the left-field fence for two bases, scoring both runners.

As the big fellow went lumbering toward second, favoring his bad leg, the bench of the Grays looked as if a cyclone had struck it. Caps went into the air, bats were tossed around carelessly, and the players, hugging each other, rolled over and over on the grass. The miracle, as they figured it, had happened.

"No, I guess that baby didn't pickle that one!" screamed Hennessey, the captain, slapping Manager Miller on the back. "Who ever told you he could hit like that?"

"Played his hunch, that's all," laughed Miller, and, with irony, added: "I wonder what would have happened if he had got that one solid?"

The two runs had tied the score, and a minute later Big Al came home on a

long hit by Hennessey. The Grays were in the lead, and held it.

"Just for that," Manager Miller said to Cullen, as the big fellow came to bench, not the least perturbed, "you can go in and pitch the remaining two innings."

"I'll try, boss," the big fellow replied.

"Say, Al," Hennessey demanded, "how'd you know you could hit Benton?"

"Always knew it," Al answered. "Licked him once when we played on the Little Potatoes Hard to Peel. Got something on him."

"I guess there ain't no doubt about that," Hennessey agreed, and from that day Jack Benton never appeared on the field of the Grays without being reminded of the Potatoes. Yes, and strangely enough, Cullen could always hit him.

For two innings Big Al pitched beautifully, and carried the Grays through. His last leg had given him another lease on life.

"Are there any other pitchers you know you can hit?" Manager Miller inquired of the big fellow in the clubhouse that night.

"Couldn't say offhand," Cullen answered. "Expect there are."

"Well, any time you think there are, put me on. I'll string along with you. If you'll meet me to-morrow morning, I'll stake you to a new straw hat."

"It don't feel any too good," said Al, when the manager looked inquiringly at his leg. "Don't know whether it was the pitchin' or the runnin'."

"Don't bother about it. I'll fix things so you can take a long rest." But he didn't.

Two days later, at the urgent solicitation of Turnbull, who had been unusually quiet since Big Al had made the pinch wallop, Cullen was put in to pitch against one of the second-division teams —a club that had not beaten him in five seasons. In the box with Turnbull was one of the owners of the Reds. They were there to talk trade. In fact, Turnbull, figuring that Cullen would make a good showing against the weak club, had brought the other magnate along so as to pave the way for a profitable deal. He was more than ordinarily keen to get rid of Cullen now. A few days thereafter Manager Miller knew why. His orders that nobody see the X-ray pictures of Cullen's leg had not been obeyed. Moreover, a celebrated expert had informed Turnbull that the bone in the big fellow's leg was tubercular, and would never get well. But of all this Cullen knew nothing. Having heard nothing of the trade talk, he thought they were trying to make it easy for him against what he called a "dub" club. And that was just the way Turnbull wanted him to feel.

In a way, some baseball magnates are like horse traders—looking for the best of it. Turnbull wanted to get Big Al on some other team before the real nature of his trouble was discovered. As a pitcher he knew that Big Al was gone. At least, he thought he knew it.

Cullen was in bad shape that day, and the tailenders knocked him out of the box in the third inning. The only thing that relieved his complete downfall was a long two-bagger, and that did not figure in the score.

For the first time since the big fellow had made his pinch wallop against the Reds, Turnbull resumed his custom of joining Manager Miller on the field, and walking with him to the clubhouse.

"Miller," the owner launched out, "there's no use in stalling any longer, you've got to let that Cullen go."

"I have, eh?"

"Yes. You're letting your sympathy run away with you. Now listen: That lacing he got to-day kinder queered it, but I think I can still make a good trade. Jim Stewart, of the Reds, is willing to let us have Liebold—that youngster from the coast."

"What's the matter with him?" Miller asked.

"Nothing. I think he's a pretty good pitcher."

"I wouldn't let him pitch up an alley for me."

"Well," and Turnbull straightened up, "make any trade you please, but you've got to get rid of him."

"Now let me tell you something, Mr. Turnbull," Miller retorted. "I'll let the big fellow go when I think it to the interest of the club, and not before. You know I'm still running this club, and I think I'm running it into a pennant."

"I appreciate that, but——"

"There is no but about it!" the manager interrupted. "You saw him make that pinch wallop the other day?"

"Anybody's liable to make a lucky punch like that."

"I'd rather have a lucky ball club than a good one."

"The board of directors is inclined to be with me in this affair," Turnbull advised Miller. "They know what's the matter with his leg."

"They do, eh? Well, now that they know, what *is* the matter?"

"He's got tuberculosis of the bone, and you know it as well as I do. Don't you think it a little unbusinesslike to insist on keeping a man in that condition?"

"No, I don't. That one good leg of his is worth more to the Grays than both legs and both arms of that Liebold."

"All right," said Turnbull, "as long as you want to make an issue of it, I'll put the matter up to the board of directors, and let them decide."

Two days later Big Al again failed in the box, and Manager Miller received a note, asking him to appear before the directors on a matter of "vital importance to the club."

"It's about Big Al, I reckon," he said to Captain Hennessey. "But they'll have a swell time putting anything over on me. Did you see the big fellow hit that drive on the nose to-day?"

"I should say I did," agreed Larry. "One foot either way, and it would have gone for a home run. The guy that caught that one had horseshoes hanging all over him."

Big Al Cullen knew nothing of these renewed efforts to get him off the club. Having put his faith in Con Miller, he was satisfied. Al was never inquisitive or imaginative. He felt keenly his failure in the last two games, but remembered with comfort Miller's inquiry about the names of the pitchers he knew he could hit.

Con Miller was on time at the meeting of the board of directors. In fact, he had to wait for the tardy magnates, and, to kill the time, discussed the baseball situation with unusual freedom in the outer office.

The Reds, the strongest opposition to the Grays, had lost three in a row out West, making it possible for Miller to cinch the pennant by winning three or four more games. This accounted largely for his buoyant spirits.

When the board finally assembled, Turnbull, who usually acted as chairman, took a seat on the side of the long table, on account of his undisguised activities in the matter of Cullen. A Mr. Judson occupied the chair.

"Mr. Miller," began the chairman, "we have called you for the purpose of discussing the case of Pitcher Cullen."

"I had called the turn on that," Miller replied, with a smile. "I didn't suppose you were after information concerning our chances of winning the pennant."

"No, that seems to be practically settled," said Mr. Judson. "I think the board will join me in congratulating you."

"That's what makes it strange to me," said Miller, "that you should be so worked up about this boy Cullen. If I can run a team well enough to win three

pennants, it looks to me as if I ought to know how to handle one man."

"That isn't the question," said Turnbull, coaching the chairman. "We must look upon Cullen as a piece of baseball property."

"Yes," added Mr. Judson, "and if a piece of our property has depreciated in value, we fail to see any reason for not disposing of it in a way advantageous to the financial interests of the club."

"If you trade that fellow," asked Miller, "don't you know that it will knock him out of his share of the world's series, in case we win the flag?"

"That is true," admitted Chairman Judson, drumming on the table with his finger tips, as he looked inquiringly at the others. "But——"

"And," interrupted Miller, "while I know Al's a piece of property, and I can understand you calling him 'it,' you should also remember that he is human; that he has been making money for this club for nine years."

"It is true that he is slipping as a pitcher, isn't it?" asked a member of the board.

"It is," admitted Miller. "But even if a pitcher does slip, there are other things that he can do to earn his salary."

"Do you think his leg will ever be in shape for him to pitch good ball again?" asked Turnbull.

Miller's face hardened. "Candidly, gentlemen, I don't believe his leg will ever recover enough for him to be a star pitcher again. But at that," the manager declared, with a snap of his square jaws, "I'm going to keep him."

"That's enough, isn't it?" Turnbull asked of the assemblage. "That carries out my contention. Read him the resolution."

"Mr. Miller," began the chairman, "while I am personally inclined to sympathize with you as well as Cullen, it is my duty to inform you that the board has passed a resolution ordering you to make a trade—one with the Reds has been suggested—in which you get rid of this player."

"And you passed that before you had talked with me?" Miller asked. "In reply to it I have made a resolution with myself that there is nothing doing. Oh, I know that you gentlemen have the power to fire me as well as the big fellow, and, if you want to, you can go as far as you like!"

"Oh, we didn't want to go that far," the chairman declared hastily, as he thought of a possible world's series, and the big prize money. "It looks to me as if we could reach some compromise. The secretary already has been instructed to write out the release of Cullen, provided a trade goes through."

"Compromise?" and Miller's brow knitted. "You are paying Cullen seven thousand dollars a year, I believe?"

"Yes, and we do not believe he is worth it to the club."

"I'll tell you what I'll do," said Miller. "As long as you want a compromise, I've got one: I'll make you admit that Cullen has earned his salary before the season is over."

"But," hedged the chairman, "the resolution calls for his immediate release."

"I'm on to that," Miller replied; "and that's going to figure in my compromise. Now listen: If the big fellow goes now, I go with him. If you will withhold his release until after the world's series, and give this boy a chance to get some of the prize money, I'll stick. Now, if at the end of the season, you do not think he has earned his salary, I'll make that good out of my pocket."

Turnbull was on his feet for a protest.

"Wait a minute," said Miller. "there is one provision!"

"And that?" asked Mr. Judson.

"And that is that you give nothing out to the newspapers, and that you

never let Big Al know that his release has been written."

"That seems fair enough," agreed two or three directors, before the trouble maker could speak. The motion was put and carried, and the secretary was instructed to change the date of release, and not to forward it to Cullen until after the season had closed.

"Gentlemen," said Miller, in conclusion, "I'm going through with this agreement, but I suppose you realize how it will make me feel to be daily associated with a big-hearted fellow like Cullen, trying to give him encouragement, and knowing that the best he can expect at the end of the season is butchery."

"That's part of the game," said Turnbull.

"Yes, and a part of it that ought to be dead and buried with the days of slavery," Miller shot back.

"Just one favor before you adjourn," the manager asked: "Will you permit me to look at the books of this club—the stock subscriptions?"

"I see no reason why we shouldn't," Mr. Judson replied, and the other directors nodded.

Before going to the grounds that afternoon, Con Miller spent two hours going over the list of stockholders and their holdings, and went away, carrying in his hip pocket a mass of figures.

The Grays won the pennant, all right, and during the last few weeks of the season, Miller heard no more of the efforts to oust Big Al. Apparently it had been forgotten. But Miller had not forgotten. By numerous experiments, after the pennant had become a certainty, he discovered that Big Al, with his enormous strength and lack of nerves, could hit almost any curve ever tossed by a left-hander. Long since the big fellow had stopped pitching, and the doctors agreed that his bad leg had shown improvement. A long winter rest, and a steel brace to hold the bone in a certain position, they believed, would effect a permanent cure. But that could not be attempted now.

The Sea Gulls had won the pennant in the opposing league, and were a dangerous competitor in a short series on account of their wonderful pitching staff. One man in particular, "Lefty" O'Malley, who had earned the sobriquet of "Iron Man," was feared. O'Malley, on several occasions, had pitched both games of a double-header, and had often worked in four or five games a week. There seemed no end to his endurance.

"Al," Manager Miller said to Cullen, his silent twirler, one afternoon, as they were getting ready for the big series, "I want you to take a trip down the road, and see this fellow O'Malley work."

"I've seen him," the big fellow replied, switching his tobacco quid.

"You've seen him?" asked Miller, in surprise. "You never played in that league."

"I licked him once for calling me Alg—for calling me a name I didn't like."

"What's he got?" asked Miller.

"Everything," Al replied calmly. "A fast ball that makes that one of Jack Benton's look like a slow one. Good curve, too."

"Think we could beat him?"

"Don't know," answered Al, already having exceeded his limit in conversation. "We'd have to have a little luck."

Cullen was gone two days, and Manager Miller, now on the verge of the big event, anxiously awaited his return. When Cullen did get back, he had been in the clubhouse two hours before his presence was noted.

"Hey, Al," Miller shouted, as he spied him across the room. "Why don't you come in here and report?"

The big fellow arose slowly, the manager plainly annoyed at his lack of interest.

"Well, what have you got to say?" Miller asked, taking Cullen in his office and closing the door.

"Nothing much," Cullen replied. "Didn't mind the trip."

"What did you find out about this O'Malley?"

"Just what I told you. He's got everything."

"Then you don't think we'll be able to hit him?"

"Don't know. Believe *I* could."

"Ain't there some way we can get him worried—get his goat?"

"Don't know of any," and Big Al arose as if wearied of so much talk.

The other players were called in, and Miller told them what Big Al had reported.

"Fine guy you picked out for a scout—a gumshoe man," laughed Larry Hennessey.

"You've got to depend on yourselves, fellows," Miller declared. "That's all I can get out of it."

To the surprise of the Grays it was not O'Malley that opened against them in the big series. The job was given to an utter youngster, a pitcher of whom they had never heard, and he beat them cleanly. Fortunately they won the next game, and the interest grew so keen that neither of the parks was large enough to hold the crowd. The players were jubilant.

As in all world's series the big end of the receipts for the first four games went to the players, to be divided on a basis of sixty and forty per cent, according to who won. This rule was made to prevent the players from jockeying the series along, and making it go the full seven games, if they should become mercenary. They had no interest in the financial end, after the first four games, therefore, except to get the winner's percentage. For all games, after four had been played, the money went to the club owners.

At the end of the four games between the Grays and the Sea Gulls, the score was even up. The same situation prevailed at the end of the sixth, and the seventh was to decide it. Money was rolling into the treasury of the magnates.

It was to win this game that the Sea Gulls had laid their plans well. By working in young pitchers for two games they had saved O'Malley, the Iron Man, for the final punch. The Grays had to depend on Wilson, an old-timer, who was gradually dropping back into the ranks of the has-beens, but who had a wonderful brain, and could now pitch better with that than most pitchers could with their arms.

At every game the board of directors of the Grays had occupied boxes immediately behind the home bunch. While carried away with the wonderful fight put up by Miller, two or three of them had taken occasion to josh the manager with references to Big Al Cullen.

"Why don't you put Cullen in today?" one of them said to Miller, as he leaned over the roof of the dugout. The laugh that followed touched the Gray manager to the quick.

"Maybe I will," he said, with a scowl. "And that's no joke, either."

It was a beautiful struggle—that seventh game—and when it was ended the baseball public had had its one great sensation.

O'Malley was in excellent form, and by careful use of his fast ball and his southpaw curve, had worked the Gray batters with uncanny intelligence. It was a dead heat in the ninth inning, neither team having scored.

Into the tenth, eleventh, twelfth the battle raged. In the stands heart disease had become epidemic.

The veteran, Wilson, had held his own against the wonderful O'Malley, but in the thirteenth he palpably weakened. His big, loop curve refused to work right, and Riley, a Sea Gull infielder, got a base on balls. Hennessey,

at second, stumbled while going for a short bounder from the next batter, and a wonderful slide beat his delayed throw to the shortstop, covering the bag. Both of the Sea Gulls were safe. A well-placed sacrifice advanced the two men to second and third.

During the wild excitement that followed, a long fly went sailing to center, and Riley scored with the first run of the game. Thousands of spectators began leaving the park.

The Grays still had the last half in which to even things up, but the batters were the catcher, a fair hitter; the pitcher, and the lead-off man. It looked hopeless.

Maxwell, the Gray catcher, caught a fast one on the nose, and rolled a slow grounder to short. In his haste the infielder made a wide throw to first, pulling the baseman off the sack. He was safe. The spectators who had crowded toward the exits hurried back to their seats.

"Now we've got him!" Con Miller shouted to his men, and the others took up the cry. Suddenly Miller turned to consult with Hennessey. "If that Wilson"—the next batter—"could only put him down—can he bunt at all against a left-hander?"

"He don't want to put it down," the voice came as from a sepulcher. Big Al Cullen, for the first time during the series, had spoken from his corner of the bench.

"What the h—what's that, Al?" asked the manager.

"He don't want to lay it down," I said. "He ought to hit it."

"Nobody's been able to hit him yet," replied Miller.

"They ain't tried right. I can——"

"You can what?" snapped Miller. "You can what?" demanded the players.

"I can hit him." Al switched his tobacco quid with utmost unconcern, and spat in the dust. "I got somethin' on him."

"You can—why in the devil didn't you say so before?" demanded Miller.

"No use to say anything before."

"Well, get a bat and get up there!" ordered the manager. "I'm going to risk this series on you."

Rushing to the plate Miller called Wilson, the regular pitcher, about to bat, back to the bench.

"Cullen batting in place of Wilson!" the announcer shouted through a megaphone. Spectators back of the Grays' bench thought that Turnbull was going to crawl right over the roof of the dugout.

"And he's put him in for spite," said one of the directors, who had "kidded" Miller.

There was a look of recognition between Big Al and O'Malley as the big fellow walked to the plate. But it was not a friendly one.

"Hey, Alg——" O'Malley started with a taunt, and then shot a fast one right over the middle, intending to get Al's goat and slip one by. But the rest of the words did not get out of his lips.

Big Al flushed, and his eyes glittered at the "Alg——." With an angry swing he lunged at the ball. The crack that followed was lost in the crowd. The big pitcher had hooked the ball on the seam, and with his tremendous strength behind it had sent a drive whistling against the right-field fence. It bounded away for two bases, enabling Maxwell to score with ease. Big Al's lumbering gait carried him over the bag, at second, and he was thrown out before he could get back. Just the same, the score counted and the game was tied up.

It remained a tie. Playing out his hunch, Manager Miller had allowed Cullen to pitch the two remaining innings, the game being called at the end of the fifteenth on account of darkness.

"Wonderful! Wonderful!" cried Chairman Judson, clambering to the field to congratulate Miller. "If we could have won that one——"

"Won it?" interrupted Miller, now flushed with his luck. "That would have been sweet to me, but do you know what it means to you that we did not win it?"

Judson stammered something about Big Al, and then looked at the manager inquiringly.

"It means," went on Miller, "that we've got to play an extra game to settle the tie—and your end of the receipts will be more than forty thousand dollars! And the players don't get a cent of it!"

Miller, seeing a bunch of excited fans rushing toward him, started away. Suddenly he turned.

"Now, Mr. Judson," he said, with a touch of sarcasm, "go back and ask that Turnbull if he thinks Big Al has earned his season's salary."

Whether the Grays won that tie game has nothing to do with this story. Big Al Cullen reached the old home town a hero. In the crowd at the station was his father. In the old gentleman's hand was a letter which he proudly handed to his son.

"Probably a check, son," the father suggested.

Al held the envelope up to the light. He knew it was not a check. The address was: "Algernon P. Cullen." In the upper left-hand corner was the business address of the Grays. As he looked at the address again the "Algernon" grew bigger. Al's fist doubled as in the days of the old Potatoes Hard to Peel. Some clerk had dug up the old book—had bared a life's secret.

His home-coming spoiled, Al, to the amazement of the onlookers, tore the unopened letter into bits, took his father by the arm, and went home. That night there came a telegram from Con Miller:

Pay no attention to letter from office, whether release or otherwise. Players formed syndicate with series money and bought out Turnbull. You are in.

To this day Al does not know much of the duplicity of baseball, as a business, and it may be all for the best. Con Miller often shows the big pitcher's telegraphic answer to his message. It says:

Letter wasn't for me, nohow. It was to Algernon P. Cullen. My name is Al. What do you mean, release?

Monty Price's Nightingale

By Zane Grey

Author of "The Heritage of the Desert," "The Rubber Hunter," Etc.

How a cowboy was recalled from the grossness of life by a forest fire. A gripping and awful picture of the fire fiend at work

ROUND the camp fires they cursed him in hearty cowboy fashion, and laid upon him the ban of their ill will. They said that Monty Price had no friend—that no foreman or rancher ever trusted him—that he never spent a dollar—that he would not keep a job—that there must be something crooked about a fellow who bunked and worked alone, who quit every few months to ride away, no one knew where, and who returned to the ranges, haggard and thin and shaky, hunting for another place.

He had been drunk somewhere, and the wonder of it was that no one in the Tonto Forest Ranges had ever seen him drink a drop. Red Lake and Gallatin and Bellville knew him, but no more of him than the ranges. He went farther afield, they said, and hinted darker things than a fling at faro or a fondness for red liquor.

But there was no rancher, no cowboy from one end of the vast range country to another who did not admit Monty Price's preëminence in those peculiar attributes of his calling. He was a magnificent rider; he had an iron and cruel hand with a horse, yet he never killed or crippled his mount; he possessed the Indian's instinct for direction; he never failed on the trail of lost stock; he could ride an outlaw and brand a wild steer and shoe a vicious mustang as bragging cowboys swore they could; and supreme test of all he would endure, without complaint, long toilsome hours in the piercing wind and freezing sleet and blistering sun.

"I'll tell you what," said old Abe Somers, "I've ranched from the Little Big Horn to the Pecos, an' I've seen a sight of cow-punchers in my day. But Monty Price's got 'em all skinned. It shore is too bad he's onreliable—packin' off the way he does, jest when he's the boy most needed. Some mystery about Monty."

It was an old story in the Tonto—how once when Monty returned from one of his strange absences and rode in to Cass Stringer's.

Cass was the biggest rancher in those parts, and, as it happened, at the time was without a foreman and in urgent need of men. "Monty, I'll give you a job—make you foreman—double any wages you ever got—if you'll promise to stick through summer and the fall round-up." Monty made the promise, and he ran Cass' outfit as it had never been run before; and then, with the very day of the round-up at hand, he broke his word and rode away.

That hurt Monty in the Tonto country. He never got another foreman job, but it seemed he could always find some outfit that would employ him. And strangely he was always at one and the same time unwelcome and welcome. His record made him unpopular. But, on the other hand, while he was with an outfit, he made for efficiency and

speed. The extra duty, the hard task, the problem with stock or tools or harness—these always fell to Monty. His most famous trick was to offer to take a comrade's night shift.

So it often happened that while the cowboys lolled round their camp fire, Monty Price, after a hard day's riding, would stand out the night guard, in rain and snow. But he always made a bargain. He sold his service. And the boys were wont to say that he put his services high. Still they would never have grumbled at that if Monty had ever spent a dollar. He saved his money. He never bought any fancy boots or spurs or bridles or scarfs or chaps; and his cheap jeans and saddles were the jest of his companions.

Nevertheless, in spite of Monty's shortcomings, he rode in the Tonto on and off for five years before he made an enemy.

There was a cowboy named Bart Muncie who had risen to be a foreman, and who eventually went to ranching on a small scale. He acquired a range up in the forest country where grassy valleys and parks lay between the wooded hills, and here in a wild spot among the pines he built a cabin for his wife and baby. It came about that Monty went to work for Muncie, and rode for him for six months. Then, in a dry season, with Muncie short of help and with long drives to make, Monty quit in his inexplicable way and left the rancher in dire need. Muncie lost a good deal of stock that fall, and he always blamed Monty for it.

Some weeks later it chanced that Muncie was in Bellville the very day Monty returned from his latest mysterious absence. And the two met in a crowded store.

Monty appeared vastly different from the lean-jawed, keen-eyed, hard-riding cowboy of a month back. He was haggard and thin and shaky and spiritless and somber.

"See here, Monty Price," said Muncie, with stinging scorn, "I reckon you'll spare me a minute of your precious time."

"I reckon so," replied Monty.

Muncie used up more than the allotted minute in calling Monty every bad name known to the range.

"An' the worst of all you are is thet you're a liar!" concluded the rancher passionately. "I relied on you an' you failed me. You lost me a herd of stock. Put me back a year! An' for what? God only knows what! We ain't got you figgered here—not thet way. But after this trick you turned me, we all know you're not square. An' I go on record callin' you as you deserve. You're no good. You've got a streak of yellow, an' you sneak off now an' then to indulge it. An' most of all you're a liar! Now, if it ain't all so—flash your gun!"

But Monty Price did not draw.

The scorn and abuse of the cowboys might never have been, for all the effect it had on Monty. He did not see it or feel it. He found employment with a rancher named Wentworth, and went at his work in the old, inimitable manner, that was at once the admiration and despair of his fellows. He rolled out of his blankets in the gray dawn, and he was the last to roll in at night. In a week all traces of his weakened condition had vanished, and he grew strong and dark and hard, once more like iron. And then again he was up to his old tricks, more intense than ever, eager and gruff at bargaining his time, obsessed by the one idea—to make money.

To Monty the long, hot, dusty, blasting days of summer were as moments. Time flew for him. The odd jobs; the rough trails; the rides without water

or food; the long stands in the cold rain; the electric storms when the lightning played around and cracked in his horse's mane, and the uneasy herd bawled and milled—all these things that were the everlasting torment of his comrades were as nothing to Monty. He endured the smart of rope-burned wrist, the bruise and chafe and ache of limb—all the knocks and hurts of this strenuous work, and he endured them as if they were not.

And when the first pay day came and Monty tucked away a little roll of greenbacks inside his vest, and kept adding to it as one by one his comrades paid him for some bargained service—then in Monty Price's heart began the low and insistent and sweetly alluring call of the thing that had ruined him. Thereafter sleeping or waking, he lived in a dream, with that music in his heart, and the hours were fleeting.

On the mountain trails, in the noonday heat of the dusty ranges, in the dark, sultry nights with their thunderous atmosphere he was always listening to that song of his nightingale. To his comrades he seemed a silent, morose, greedy cowboy, a demon for work, with no desire for friendship, no thought of home or kin, no love of a woman or a horse or anything, except money. To Monty himself, his whole inner life grew rosier and mellower and richer as day by day his nightingale sang sweeter and louder. Every time he felt that little bundle inside his vest a warm and delicious thrill went over him. On the long rides he pressed it with his hand a hundred times to feel if it were there, to feel the substance that made possible the fulfillment of his dream. Like a slave he toiled to add to that precious treasure.

Deep planted in his soul was a passion that drove him, consumed him. It enormously magnified the importance of his little wage, of his bargaining with his fellows, of his jealous saving. It was the very life and fire of his blood—the bent of his mind—the secret of his endurance and his dream. And when he was away from the chuck wagon and the camp fire, out on the windy range or up in the pine-sloped forest, alone and free, then he was strangely happy, thoughtlessly happy, living in his dream, planning and waiting, always listening to the song of his nightingale.

And that song was a song of secret revel—far away—where he gave up to this wind of flame that burned within him—where a passionate and irresistible strain in his blood found its outlet—where wanton red lips whispered, and wanton eyes, wine dark and seductive, lured him, and wanton arms twined around him.

II.

The rains failed to come that summer. The gramma grass bleached on the open ranges and turned yellow up in the parks. But there was plenty of grass and water to last out the fall. It was fire the ranchers feared.

Up on the forest ridges snow was always due in November. But the dryest fall ever known in the Tonto passed into winter without rain or snow. On the open prairie the white grass waved in the wind, so dry it crinkled; and the forest ridges were tinder boxes waiting for a spark. The ranchers had all their men riding up the parks and draws and slopes after the cattle that kept working farther and farther up. The stock that strayed was wild and hard to hold. There were far too few cowboys. And it was predicted, unless luck changed the weather, that there would be serious losses.

One morning above the low, gray-stoned, and black-fringed mountain range rose clouds of thick, creamy smoke. There was fire on the other side of the mountain. But unless the

wind changed and drew fire in over the pass there was no danger on that score. The wind was right; it seldom changed at that season, though sometimes it blew a gale. Still the ranchers grew more anxious. The smoke clouds rolled up and spread and hid the top of the mountain, and then lifted slow, majestic columns of white and yellow toward the sky.

On the day that Wentworth, along with other alarmed ranchers, sent men up to fight the fire in the pass, Monty Price quit his job and rode away. He did not tell anybody. He just took his little pack and his horse, and in the confusion of the hour he rode away. For days he felt that his call might come at any moment, and finally it had come. It did not occur to him that he was quitting Wentworth at a most critical time; and it would not have made any difference to him if it had occurred to him.

He rode away with bells in his heart. He felt like a boy at the prospect of a wonderful adventure. He felt like a man who had toiled and slaved, whose ambition had been supreme, and who had reached the pinnacle where his longing would be gratified. His freedom stirred in him the ecstatic emotion of the shipwrecked mariner who from a lonely height beheld a sail. He was strained, tense, overwrought. For six months he had been chained to toil he hated. And now he was free. He was going. He was on the way. The keen wind seemed like wine. For once he saw the blue of the sky, the beauty of the bold peaks in the distance. And he pulled in his horse upon the ridge of a high foothill, where the trail forked, and looked across the ranges, away toward the south that called him.

Monty Price was still a young man. Of light but powerful build, rangy and wiry, darkly bronzed, with eyes like coals of fire, he appeared a handsome cowboy. His face was hard, set, stern, like that of all men of his kind, and there was nothing in it to suggest his failing or that he deserved the brand that Muncie had put upon him. He seemed good to look at. There was something of the open, free ranges in his look and his action.

The smell of burning pine turned Monty round to face the north. There was valley below him, then open slopes, and patches of pine, rising gently to billow darkly with the timbered mass of the mountain. A pall of smoke curled away from the crest, borne on a strong wind. The level line of smoke broke sharply at the pass and turned toward him, running down into the saddle between the bluffs. The fire in the pass was gaining. He thought grimly that all the men in the Tonto country could not check it.

"Sure she's goin' to burn over," he muttered. "An' if that wind changes—whoopee!"

His road led to the right away from the higher ground and the timber. To his left the other road wound down the ridge to the valley below and stretched on through straggling pines and clumps of cedar toward the slopes and the forests. Monty had ridden that road a thousand times. For it led to Muncie's range. And as Monty's keen eye swept on over the parks and the thin wedges of pine to the black mass to timber beyond he saw something that made him draw up with a start. Clearly defined against the blue-black swelling slope was a white-and-yellow cloud of smoke. It was moving. At thirty miles distance, that it could be seen to move at all, was proof of the great speed with which it was traveling.

"She's caught!" he ejaculated. "'Way down on this side. An' she'll burn over. Nothin' can save the range!"

He watched, and those keen, practiced eyes made out the changing, swell-

ing columns of smoke, the widening path, the creeping dim red.

"Reckon that'll surprise Wentworth's outfit," soliloquized Monty thoughtfully. "It doesn't surprise me none. An' Muncie, too. His cabin's up there in the valley."

It struck Monty suddenly that the wind blew hard in his face. It was sweeping straight down the valley toward him. It was bringing that fire. Swift on the wind!

"One of them sudden changes of wind!" he said. "Veered right around! An' Muncie's range will go. An' his cabin!"

Straightway Monty grew darkly thoughtful. He had remembered seeing Muncie with Wentworth's men on the way to the pass. In fact, Muncie was the leader of this fire-fighting brigade.

"Sure he's fetched down his wife an' the baby," he muttered. "I didn't see them. But sure he must have."

Monty's sharp gaze sought the road for tracks. No fresh track showed! Muncie must have taken his family over the short-cut trail. Certainly he must have! Monty remembered Muncie's wife and child. The woman had hated him. But little Del with her dancing golden curls and her blue eyes—she had always had a ready smile for him. It came to Monty then suddenly, strangely, that little Del would have loved him if he had let her. Where was she now? Safe at Wentworth's, without a doubt. But then she might not be. Muncie had certainly no fears of fire in the direction of home, not with the wind in the north and no prospect of change. It was quite possible—it was probable that the rancher had left his family at home that morning.

Monty experienced a singular shock. It had occurred to him to ride down to Muncie's cabin and see if the woman and child had been left. And whether or not he found them there the matter of getting back was a long chance. That wind was strong—that fire was sweeping down. How murky, red, sinister the slow-moving cloud!

"I ain't got a lot of time to decide," he said. His face turned pale and beads of sweat came out upon his brow.

That sweet little golden-haired Del, with her blue eyes and her wistful smile! Monty saw her as if she had been there. Then like lightning flashed back the thought that he was on his way to his revel. And the fires of hell burst in his veins. And more deadly sweet than any siren music rang the song of his nightingale in his heart. Neither honor nor manliness had ever stood between him and his fatal passion. Nothing, he thought, no claim of man or child or God, could stop him. No situation had ever before arisen with the power to make him even think of resisting. A million times sweeter sang his nightingale, imperiously, wonderfully. He was in a swift, golden dream, with the thick fragrance of wine, and the dark, mocking, luring eyes on him. All this that was more than life to him—to give it up—to risk it—to put it off an hour! He felt the wrenching pang of something deep hidden in his soul, beating its way up, torturing him. But it was strange and mighty. In that terrible moment it decided for him; and the smile of a child was stronger than the unquenchable and blasting fire of his heart.

III.

Monty untied his saddle pack and threw it aside; and then with tight-shut jaw he rode down the steep descent to the level valley. His horse was big and strong and fast. He was fresh, too, and in superb condition. Once down on the hard-packed road he broke into a run, and it took an iron arm to hold him from extending himself. Monty calculated on saving the horse for the run back. He had no doubt that

would be a race with fire. And he had been in forest fires more than once.

The big bay settled into a steady, easy-running gait. The valley floor sloped up quite perceptibly, and the road was many times cut and crossed by a dry wash. Soon Monty reached the bleached and scraggy cedars—and the scant thickets of scrub oak—and then the straggling pines. They were dwarfed and gnarled, and many were dead. As he advanced, however, these trees grew thicker and larger. Then he rode out of the pines into a park, where the white grass and the gray sage waved in the wind.

A dry, odorous scent of burning wood came on the breeze. He could still see part of the smoke cloud that had alarmed him, but, presently, when he had crossed into the pines again it passed from his sight. The ascent of the valley merged into level and the slopes widened out and the road crossed park after park, all girdled by pines. Then he entered the forest proper. It was dark and shady. The great pines stood far apart, with only dead limbs low down, and high above, the green, lacy foliage massed together. There was no underbrush. Here and there a fallen monarch lay with great slabs of bark splitting off. The ground was a thick brown mat of pine needles, as dry as powder.

The dry, strong smell of pine was almost sickening. It rushed at Monty—filling his nostrils. And in the treetops there was a steady, even roar of wind. Monty had a thought of how that beautiful brown and green forest, with its stately pines and sunny glades, would be changed in less than an hour.

There seemed to be a blue haze veiling the aisles of the forest, and Monty kept imagining it was smoke. And he imagined the roar in the pines grew louder. It was his impatience and anxiety that made the ride seem so long. But he was immensely relieved when he reached Muncie's corral. It was full of horses, and they were snorting, stamping, heads up, facing the direction of the wind. That wind seemed stronger, more of a warm, pine-laden blast, which smelled of fire and smoke. It appeared to be full of fine dust or ashes. Monty dismounted and had a look at his horse. He was wet and hot, just right for a grueling race. Monty meant to let down the bars of the corral gate, so that Muncie's horses could escape, but he was deterred by the thought that he might need another mount. Then he hurried on to Muncie's cabin.

This was a structure of logs and clapboards, standing in a little clearing, with the great pines towering all around. Presently Monty saw the child, little Del, playing in the yard with a dog. He called. The child heard, and being frightened ran into the cabin. The dog came barking toward Monty. He was a big, savage animal, a trained watchdog. But he recognized Monty.

Hurrying forward Monty went to the open door and called Mrs. Muncie. There was no immediate response. He called again. And while he stood there waiting, listening, above the roar of the wind he heard a low, dull, thundering sound, like a waterfall in a flooded river. It sent the blood rushing back to his heart, leaving him cold. He had not a single instant to lose.

"Mrs. Muncie," he called louder. "Come out! Bring the child! It's Monty Price. There's forest fire! Hurry!"

Still he did not get an answer. Then he called little Del, with like result. He reflected that the mother often drove to town, leaving the child in care of the watchdog. Besides, usually Muncie or one of his men was near at hand. But now there did not seem to be anybody here. And that dull, continuous sound shook Monty's nerve. He yelled into the open door. Then he stepped in. There was no one in the big room

—or the kitchen. He grew hurried now. The child was hiding. Finally he found her in the clothespress, and he pulled her out. She was frightened. She did not recognize him.

"Del, is your mother home?" he asked.

The child shook her head.

With that Monty picked her up, along with a heavy shawl he saw, and, hurrying out, he ran down to the corral. The horses were badly frightened now. Monty set little Del down, threw the shawl into a watering trough, and then he let down the bars of the gate. The horses pounded out in a cloud of dust. Monty's horse was frightened, too, and almost broke away. There was now a growing roar on the wind. It seemed right upon him. Yet he could not see any fire or smoke. The dog came to him, whining and sniffing.

With swift hands Monty soaked the shawl thoroughly in the water, and then wrapping it round little Del and holding her tight, he mounted. The horse plunged and broke and plunged again—then leaped out straight and fast down the road. And Monty's ears seemed pierced and filled by a terrible, thundering roar.

For an instant the awful and unknown sound froze him, stiffened him in his saddle, robbed him of strength. It was the feel of the child that counteracted this and then roused the daredevil in him. The years of his range life had engendered wildness and violence, which now were to have expression in a way new to him.

He had to race with fire. He had to beat the wind of flame to the open parks. Ten miles of dry forest, like powder! Though he had never seen it he knew fire backed by heavy wind could rage through dry pine faster than a horse could run. He would fail in the one good deed of his life. And flashing into his mind came the shame and calumny that before had never affected him. It was not for such as he to have the happiness of saving a child. He had accepted a fatal chance; he had forfeited that which made life significant to attempt the impossible. Fate had given him a bitter part to play. But he swore a grim and ghastly oath that he would beat this game. The intense and abnormal passion of the man, damned for years, never controlled, burst within him—and suddenly, terribly, he awoke to a wild joy in this race with fire. He had no love of life—no fear of death. All that he wanted to do—the last thing he wanted to do was to save this child. And to do that he would have burned there in the forest and for a million years in the dark beyond.

So it was with wild joy and rage that Monty Price welcomed this race. He goaded the horse. Then he looked back.

Through the aisles of the forest he saw a strange, streaky, murky something, moving, alive, shifting up and down, never an instant the same. It must have been the wind, the heat before the fire. He seemed to see through it, but there was nothing beyond, only opaque, dim, mustering clouds. Hot puffs shot into his face. His eyes smarted and stung. His ears hurt, and were being stopped up. The deafening roar was the roar of avalanches, of maelstroms, of rushing seas, of the wreck and ruin and end of the world. It grew to be so great a roar that he no longer heard. There was only silence. His horse stretched low on a dead run; the tips of the pines were bending in the wind; and wildfire was blowing through the forest, but there was no sound.

Ahead of him, down the road, low under the spreading trees, floated swiftly some kind of a medium, like a transparent veil. It was neither smoke nor air. It carried faint pin points of light, sparks, that resembled atoms of

dust floating in sunlight. It was a wave of heat propelled before the storm of fire. Monty did not feel pain, but he seemed to be drying up, parching. All was so strange and unreal—the swift flight between the pines, now growing ghostly in the dimming light—the sense of rushing, overpowering force—and yet absolute silence. But that light burden against his breast—the child—was not unreal.

He fought the desire to look back, but he could not resist it. Some horrible fascination compelled him to look. All behind had changed. A hot wind, like a blast from a furnace, blew light, stinging particles into his face. The fire was racing in the treetops, while below all was yet clear. A lashing, leaping, streaming flame engulfed the canopy of pines. It seemed white, seething, inconceivably swift, with a thousand flashing tongues. It traveled ahead of smoke. It was so thin he could see the branches through it, and the dirty, fiery clouds behind. It swept onward a sublime and an appalling spectacle. Monty could not think of what it looked like. It was fire, liberated, freed from the bowels of the earth, tremendous, devouring. This, then, was the meaning of fire. This, then, was the burning of the world.

He must have been insane, he thought, not to be overcome in spirit. But he was not. He felt loss of something, some kind of sensation he ought to have had. But he rode that race keener and better than any race he had ever before ridden. He had but to keep his saddle—to dodge the snags of the trees—to guide the maddened horse. No horse ever in the world had run so magnificent a race. He was outracing wind and fire. But he was running in terror. For miles he held that long, swift, tremendous stride without a break. He was running to his death whether he distanced the fire or not. For nothing could stop him now except a bursting heart. Already he was blind, Monty thought.

And then, it appeared to Monty, although his steed kept fleeting on faster and faster, that the wind of flame was gaining. The air was too thick to breathe. It seemed ponderous—not from above, but from behind. It had irresistible weight. It pushed Monty and his horse onward in their flight—straws on the crest of a cyclone.

Again he looked back and again the spectacle was different. There was a white and golden fury of flame above, beautiful and blinding; and below, farther back, a hellishly dark and glowing fire, black-streaked, with tumbling puffs and streams of yellow smoke. The aisles between the burning pines were smoky, murky caverns, moving, coalescing, weird, and mutable. Monty saw fire shoot from the treetops down the trunks, as if they were trains of powder; and he saw fire shoot up the trunks. They went off like huge rockets. And along the ground leaped the little flames, like oncoming waves in the surf. He gazed till his eyes burned and blurred, till all merged into a wide, pursuing storm too awful for the gaze of man.

Ahead there was light through the forest. He made out a white, open space of grass. A park! And the horse, like a demon, hurtled onward, with his smoothness of action gone, beginning to break.

A wave of wind, blasting in its heat, like a blanket of fire, rolled over Monty. He saw the lashing tongues of flame above him in the pines. The storm had caught him. It forged ahead. He was riding under a canopy of fire. Burning pine cones, like torches, dropped all around him, upon him. A terrible blank sense of weight, of agony, of suffocation—of the air turning to fire! He was drooping, withering when he flashed from the pines out into an open park. The horse broke and plunged and

went down, reeking, white, in convulsions, killed on his feet. There was fire in his mane. Monty fell with him, and lay in the grass, the child in his arms. There was smoke streaming above him, and his ears seemed to wake to a terrible, receding roar. It lessened, passed away, leaving behind a crackling, snapping, ripping sound. The wind of flame had gone on. Monty lay there partially recovering. The air was clearer. Still he was dazed.

Fire in the grass—fire at his legs roused him. He experienced a stinging pain. It revived him. He got up. The park was burning over. It was enveloped in a pall of smoke. But he could see. Drawing back a fold of the wet shawl, he looked at the child. She appeared unharmed. Then he set off running away from the edge of the forest. It was a big park, miles wide. Near the middle there was bare ground. He recognized the place, got his bearings, and made for the point where a deep ravine headed out of this park.

Beyond the bare circle there was more fire, burning sage and grass. His feet were blistered through his boots, and then it seemed he walked on red-hot coals. His clothes caught fire, and he beat it out with bare hands. Agony of thirst tortured him, and the beating, throbbing, excruciating pain of burns. He lost his way, but he kept on. And all about him was a chaos of smoke. Unendurable heat drove him back when he wandered near the edge of the pines.

Then he stumbled into the rocky ravine. Smoke and blaze above him—the rocks hot—the air suffocating—it was all unendurable. But he kept on. He knew that his strength failed as the conditions bettered. He plunged down, always saving the child when he fell. His sight grew red. Then it grew dark. All was black, or else night had come. He was losing all pain, all sense when he stumbled into water. That saved him. He stayed there. A long time passed till it was light again. His eyes had a thick film over them. Sometimes he could not see at all. But when he could, he kept on walking, on and on. He knew when he got out of the ravine. He knew where he ought to be. But the smoky gloom obscured everything. He traveled the way he thought he ought to go, and went on and on, endlessly. He did not suffer any more. The weight of the child bore him down. He rested, went on, rested again, went on again till all sense, except a dim sight, failed him. Through that, as in a dream, he saw moving figures, men looming up in the gray fog, hurrying to him.

Far south of the Tonto Range, under the purple shadows of the Peloncillos, there lived a big-hearted rancher with whom Monty Price found a home. He did little odd jobs about the ranch that by courtesy might have been called work. He would never ride a horse again. Monty's legs were warped, his feet hobbled. He did not have free use of his hands. And seldom or never in the presence of any one did he remove his sombrero. For there was not a hair on his head. His face was dark, almost black, with terrible scars. A burned-out, hobble-footed wreck of a cowboy! But, strangely, there were those at the ranch who learned to love him. They knew his story.

Dogbeetle

BEING AN INCIDENT IN THE CAREER OF "THE AMATEUR PROFESSIONAL"

By L. J. Beeston

"THE Dogbeetle thrashes Tim the Tiger in three rounds easy," said Goldsack unconcernedly, and he tossed me the paper containing a description of the boxing contest at the National Sporting Club.

I flung a semi-interested glance over the account. These combats between professional bruisers for a pot of money never did absorb me. The article was couched in those flippant terms peculiar to prize-ring vernacular. One read that Dogbeetle "got home on Tim's knowledge box"; that he received a "tap on his snuffbox which elicited the carmine"; that "a bump appeared over Tim's left peeper"; that he came on "with a hard right on his opponent's wig block"; and finally went down "under a good one on his listener." And so on, and so on.

"Ty Dogbeetle, of Ohio, is a good man," commented Goldsack, finishing his breakfast coffee and reaching for his pouch. "I saw him three years ago, matched with a huge negro, over a saloon in one of those narrow streets back of the Union Terminal, Dayton. There and then I pricked him on the chart as a star which would climb into the upper firmament—as he has. He scintillates—a first-magnitude orb."

"You fought him in your professional days?"

"No, Noddy. And since those days are now pages closed, I never shall meet the Dogbeetle." He lighted his pipe slowly—Nigel Goldsack, the best man of his fists I ever knew in or out of Winchester College. "Thank Heaven they are closed," he added. "I can never regard—hello! Come in!"

There appeared on the threshold a dapper little man in cutaway and silk hat. I knew him instantly—Superintendent Frostways, of the Criminal Investigation Department, New Scotland Yard. Goldsack almost leaped at him in welcome.

"Bravo, superintendent!" he cried. "If this is just a social call, well; but if it's a business one——"

"It is," said the visitor, seating himself.

"A hundred times better! Shall I ring for coffee? No? Here are cigarettes, matches. Consider us transformed into statues of concentrated attention."

"Thank you; you are very good," answered Frostways urbanely, wiping his gold eyeglasses. "I need not remind you, my dear sir, that on one or two occasions my department has benefited by your profound abilities in boxing science. Those occasions were of a singular nature, as they were almost bound to be. I did not believe that another could arise. Nevertheless, it has, and I can assure you that it does not lack extraordinary features. First, you have heard of Prince Paul of Ilissa, the crown prince of that tiny European kingdom?"

"Ah, ah!" murmured Goldsack, behind a cloud of smoke.

"He is in London; has been in London some days. As a private gentleman. This information you will please regard as strictly confidential. He is

not likely to be recognized by the man in the street because this is the prince's first visit to this country. He is young, amazingly handsome, athletic, the idol of Ilissa. With him is his bosom friend, the Count of Franks, whose identity also lies submerged under a humble name. This Count of Franks is a dashing young officer of artillery, who, I may remark, is devoted to the charming daughter of a wealthy American gentleman staying at the Carlton. The lady's name is Helen Caslake. Unluckily for the count, his royal intimate will not countenance the match.

"And now listen most attentively to an astonishing statement. We of Scotland Yard know that Prince Paul is here, and we are keeping a guarding eye upon him surreptitiously. Why is he here, and secretly? I will not invite a guess, for a thousand hazarded answers could not approach the truth. Prince Paul is here to match himself against Ty Dogbeetle!"

I shouted: "What! Come, you must not expect us to credit that, superintendent."

The police officer treated me to a blood-freezing glance.

"Why not, Noddy?" asked Goldsack cheerily. "Prince Paul of Ilissa has the name of a first-rate sportsman. That he is an expert with the gloves is no dark secret. A thousand yarns are current of his devil-may-care exploits, and quite six of them may be true."

"I am speaking the truth now," continued our visitor, with grave emphasis. "As you observed, Mr. Goldsack, Prince Paul was ever a lover of a good punch. It is with him an obsession, a hobby. All who have had the honor of being invited to stand up against his royal fists have speedily assumed a less dignified posture. As this suggested diplomacy rather than inferiority, the prince —so it is whispered—sought adventures in boxing, incognito. Passing from success to success, thrilled by these big contests which fill the newspapers, he had a passion for spreading his wings to a larger flight. The name of the Dogbeetle is on all our lips. He thought of him.

"Yes, he did. I know he did. It is an absolute fact which I could prove to you if I had time that he has tried more than once to fix up a meeting with the American. The weight of opposition, the necessity of encountering Dogbeetle as a private, utterly unknown man—which meant a small purse— baffled his grotesque ambition. Finally he followed this pugilist to England. Working through channels which I need not trace now, and which meant the expenditure of large sums, he has actually obtained his heart's desire. He is to meet and fight Ty Dogbeetle tomorrow night. The American, of course, has not any idea of the rank of his adversary. I gather that he believes he is to meet a rich amateur desirous of backing his conceit by a dozen rounds, and who is ready to pay for the privilege."

"The place?"

"Is obscure. The Assembly Rooms, Lime Street, Mile End Road. Holds a thousand, and every ticket sold privately."

"This is perfectly glorious!" exclaimed Goldsack, striding up and down in his dressing robe. "Absolutely great! And you impart this information in order that I may not be absent. Frostways, I am your debtor until death."

"You are mistaken. I am here to beg for your help."

"What do you mean?" rapped out Goldsack, keenly disappointed.

"This contest must never take place. We of the Yard are quite resolved upon that. Quite."

"Oh, you spoilsports! How are you going to stop it, pray?"

"Many ways have been devised. Unfortunately, open interference does not

commend itself. We must work below surface. It is suggested that on the night in question, some hours before the contest, there should be a certain forcible interference—altogether unofficial—which would effectually put off this encounter. Do you follow me?"

Goldsack stared hard. At last he said: "You propose that I run up against Prince Paul and put him out of action? Capital, capital! I see. If he fights, he must fight a gentleman. I will treat him gently—or, rather, let us hope he will treat me gently. Yes, it is a brilliant idea, superintendent."

"Granted, only it happens to be the wrong one. One of the contestants must be met and put out of action, certainly; but Prince Paul must be let alone."

Goldsack's face flamed. "You want me to tackle the Dogbeetle?"

"We should be infinitely obliged if you would."

"Then you'll be infinitely disobliged! Cut that idea out. I don't meet pros —now; and the circumstances of the case smack strongly of the unpleasant. That is all I've got to say."

And Goldsack flung himself in his divan chair, in a nice little red-hot passion.

Frostways said gloomily: "I am sorry you take it like that."

"I do take it like that."

I said maliciously: "We have a busy morning, Goldsack."

"Because, if you refuse," continued the superintendent dejectedly, "his highness, Prince Paul, will probably meet his death to-morrow night."

Goldsack sat up. "Eh, what's that?" he demanded.

"Will probably be killed. You haven't heard me out. There is more in this matter than floats on the surface. Our watchful eye on the prince's safety has shown us something infinitely more serious than this scheme. You are aware that the kingdom of Ilissa is a volcanic state politically. Its rulers are suddenly put out into the dark. Well, these incognito adventures of Prince Paul have a peril which balances their charm. His life, which is generally menaced, is now particularly threatened. In plain words, the pugilist known as Dogbeetle has been heavily bribed to—to——"

The superintendent stopped, and Goldsack whistled his concern. "I understand," said he. "The Dogbeetle could put any amateur to sleep eternally. There are four punches that could do it, and two could scarcely be termed fouls. On the other hand, he has a reputation for clean fighting, superintendent."

"He has accepted the bribe, which is immense."

"Impossible!"

"He has accepted it."

"He knows the rank of his adversary?"

"I cannot think that."

"You class him in the category of murderers?"

"He will not be given the opportunity."

"You can prove your statement?"

"Oh, absolutely. But it is a long story, involving an account of considerable detective work. You can take it from me that Dogbeetle will fight to kill."

"Yet you ask me to meet him?"

"More. I want you to meet him as Prince Paul; that is, as the man whom he must knock right out of life."

"I am very much indebted to you!"

"Oh, we do not imagine that Nigel Goldsack can be beaten by the Dogbeetle."

Goldsack laughed, well pleased by the compliment. He answered: "But why must I fight him as Prince Paul?"

"Because you decline to meet him otherwise."

"And why should I oblige you now?"

"Because you will fight for your life."

"That tempts me?"

"Ah, you must answer that question yourself."

Goldsack put down his pipe, and his right palm smote the superintendent's. "Right!" he exulted. "It does tempt me. I would have agreed on no other condition. For my life! There is the real thrill in this. It should be the fight of my existence. Noddy, what say you?"

"That if you take my advice you will have nothing to do with it," I responded with fervent earnestness.

"And I *will* take your advice—next time. I will meet the Dogbeetle and will do my best to put him out of action. When?"

"The contest is arranged for ten o'clock to-morrow night. You must meet him—say, at five or six."

"Where?"

The question seemed to present difficulties, but they had been considered. Dogbeetle, during his training, was staying at a small and unpretentious inn called the "Three Jolly Lobsters," about fifteen miles in the country, holding himself aloof from all publicity.

"He will motor from there straight to the ring at nine to-morrow night," informed Frostways. "We suggest that you meet him at the inn or the vicinity some hours before, introducing yourself, of course, as Mr. Paul Pelham, which is the name assumed by the prince. Understand, Dogbeetle has certainly never set eyes on his challenger. The affair has been arranged without a meeting of the principals. Just how you will force matters, just how you will assume the aggressive, is a policy I must leave to your judgment. I fling out a bare hint that you explain your visit on the eve of the contest by a suggestion that you have not been fairly treated, that you have come to tear up the contract, and so on to the real rough business."

"One must not be too crude about it," said Goldsack thoughtfully. "At any rate, I will not let him slip through my fingers. Noddy, you shall come down with me to see fair play."

Well, they discussed the matter at length, and finally Superintendent Frostways, after emptying himself of a burden of thanks, took his leave. Goldsack returned from closing the door, his face radiant.

"A tough proposition, Noddy," he chuckled. "And an extraordinary situation, you will admit. Thank Heaven I am just now on the top of my form. You had best take charge of my tobacco pouch until to-morrow is over. I do like this idea. In a long and varied experience I have never met its like. The Dogbeetle will try to knock me right out into the dark, will he? I ask nothing better."

"And what if he succeeds?" I demanded savagely. "One can never be absolutely sure. Frostways had no right to ask such a thing of you. You make yourself too cheap."

"Pause. You forget that the life of a royal prince is at stake."

"There are other means of saving it."

"Name them."

Before I could answer there came a second knock at the door. Goldsack glanced at a lady's visiting card, and his eyebrows tried to mount to the top of his forehead. As the name "Helen Caslake" trembled on his lips the lady herself followed the servant into the room.

"Forgive me," she implored, with a pretty holding out of a slender, gloved hand. "You are Mr. Nigel Goldsack, are you not? I really do not know what you will think of this unconventional intrusion. I—I——" The stammered words failed her; she was confused and as pretty as a rose blown about in the wind.

"You have charmed us with a visit; that is sufficient," assured Goldsack, placing a chair.

She faltered. "My name is not quite unknown to you?"

"I have heard of Mr. Caslake—from the States," temporized Goldsack.

"I am his daughter," she smiled, as if a trifle relieved by such a shadow of introduction. "Of course I have heard of Mr. Nigel Goldsack, the great amateur boxer. If you will give me your advice—your assistance—at least, not to me, but to another; to one who —who——" She stopped again, breathless, clasping and relaxing her fingers, a prey to a most mysterious and most delightful agitation.

"Take your time, I beg," said Goldsack softly. "Any confidence of yours will, I need not say, be regarded as sacred by me and my friend."

"Oh, it is such a strange, such an unheard-of confidence!"

"Permit the hazard of a guess, Miss Caslake. You have in mind the name of a certain illustrious and very high-placed gentleman?"

"Why—yes," she answered, in a soft surprise.

"We will say the name begins with 'P.' This gentleman honors with a close friendship another whom we will call the—the Count of F——. Am I running straight?"

"Go on," she replied, her beautiful eyes a study in astonishment.

"This Count of F—— very much adores a charming lady. Unfortunately, his powerful master sets his face against that suit. Let us leave that, for a moment. Now this master—really, why we are indulging in titles, we might as well call him a prince, shall we not? Well, the prince is on the point of embarking on a most unusual adventure, a truly remarkable exploit, an episode which some might classify as vulgar, plebeian, utterly below his dignity. My meaning has eluded you?"

"No, no; indeed, it has not! But how could you know——"

"Ah, no questions! You have come for my assistance. Is it needed in regard to this illusory Count of F——, or this phantasmal Prince P——?"

"I want to know if you think the prince will succeed."

"He will fail."

"Ah, that is your opinion?"

"It is my conviction."

"Possibly you overlook his real talent?"

"My forecast disappoints you. May I ask why?"

"Yes, and I will tell you," she said, trying hard to brighten. "It is likely enough that our count has as poor a hope of his friend's success as you have; but he is loyal, and has wagered the sum of five thousand dollars that the prince will win through. Hearing of this evidence of faith, Prince P—— touched and affected by it, responds in the same spirit by a promise that should victory be given him he will crown it by withdrawing his opposition to the other's suit." A flood of color glowed in the pretty cheeks of our visitor.

"That is very charming," said Goldsack, but he spoke without a smile. "Our prince takes this adventure very seriously, then."

She faltered: "He has set his heart upon it. And you believe he indulges only a vain hope?"

"Pardon me; but did you come merely to hear my opinion?"

"Not—not altogether. I entertained an idea that perhaps you might have contrived to help, to counsel him, even, on the eve of his venture."

"I?"

"Who else? Are you not Mr. Nigel Goldsack?"

"My dear Miss Caslake, I am most sensible of your compliment; I am deeply honored by your confidence; I am indeed touched by your request; but —you come too late."

"Ah, you can do nothing?"

"Believe me, nothing at all."

She rose. "Thank you," she said,

a shadow of coldness in her tone of disappointment. "I knew it was foolish of me to approach you with an impossible request; but this matter affects me very deeply, and—and I tried to do my best."

She said good-by. A faint perfume of verbena lingered in the room, and the memory of her charming presence.

Goldsack began to swear. "Curse Frostways!" he growled. "I would have helped right enough if he hadn't interfered. I'd have gone openly to this plucky Prince Paul and have given him one or two wrinkles which would have stood him in good stead. I know the Dogbeetle—his feint at the body and home under the jaw. As it is, there will be no fight, and our Count of Franks says good-by to his happiness."

II.

The next afternoon found Goldsack and I in a taxicab spinning along through Bayswater, Shepherd's Bush, Uxbridge, bound westerly out of London for the still retreat of Dogbeetle's headquarters.

My companion, nervous, as he always was on the dawn of one of his fighting adventures, withdrew into a silence which I knew better than to penetrate. I admit that the episode presented to me few points of attraction. I was really sorry for the beautiful Helen Caslake, and this projected scheme of meeting Ty Dogbeetle out of a roped inclosure and forcing a premature combat seemed to my intelligence to be a crude scheme, and dangerous. The fellow had been paid to practically murder his man by a wicked punch delivered "accidentally on purpose." True, Goldsack would be prepared for the craftily concealed "foul," but was he a match for so formidable an adversary? I believed he was, but the affair repelled me, nevertheless.

Engine trouble delayed our journey, and we arrived at its end three-quarters of an hour behind arranged time. Darkness had shut out the brief winter day. A bitter, driving sleet raked the insignificant length of the village street, and our panting, yellow taxi attracted no attention. The signboard of the Three Jolly Lobsters creaked over a lintel which bore the inscription: "Licensed to sell beer and tobacco." A warm red light filtered through a parlor window. We lifted the door latch and stepped into a little bar with plank seats and a sawdust floor. A man was standing by a beech-log fire, and he turned round to look at us.

"Landlord about?" questioned Goldsack pleasantly.

"Gone with the rest," was the cryptic reply. "He did not expect custom just now." The speaker used perfect English, with an imperfect accent, and he regarded us in a searching, curious fashion.

"I take it that Mr. Tyrus Dogbeetle is still in the house?" asked Goldsack, giving that gentleman his full appellative, which sounded odd.

I thought the other tried to repress a start. He stared harder than ever, transferred his gaze to the fire, let half a minute go by, and answered:

"Certainly he is. I will convey a message if you like."

"Thank you," said Goldsack affably. "You might tell him that Mr. Paul Pelham wishes for a few minutes' conversation."

This time the other started quite violently; for a moment or two he hesitated. "With pleasure, I will," he replied, and passed through a door on the right which admitted to a staircase.

"Come, Noddy, our cold journey was not in vain presumably," said Goldsack, warming his hands by the blaze on the stone hearth.

"How the deuce are you going to set about it?" I asked, horribly uncomfortable.

"I? Oh, I shall accuse him flatly of

dirty business; I shall ask him what the devil he means by it. There will be a rush which you will be privileged to see me stop in my very best manner. It will be all over inside a quarter of an hour. How glum you look, Noddy! One does not save the life of a real crown prince every day in the year."

At that moment our informant reappeared. "Please to walk upstairs," he begged politely, and we followed him.

I confess that my heart had a sensation of dropping from its place.

A piano commenced to tinkle as we entered the upstairs room, which was lighted by a couple of guttering candles in the sconces of the instrument, and by the glow from a fire, before which a man was seated, his back to us, his long legs stretched out to the blaze. A small table covered with red baize, on which was a vase of artificial roses, was in the middle of the room.

"There is the gentleman you want—at the piano," said our guide.

He was in no hurry to turn round, for he continued to play, and it must be allowed that he was not without a touch. He made the exhausted wires of the piano respond valiantly to the call of one of Strauss' Viennese waltzes.

The man at the fire did not stir.

He who had admitted us closed the door, himself in the room. I heard a click; he had turned the key and dropped it into his pocket.

The pianist pushed back his stool, and faced us. The Dogbeetle was rather a small man, with deeply furrowed cheeks, brooding, dark eyes, an immense head, arms long as a gorilla's, and enormous hands with black hair down to the knuckles. The turning of the key had given me one electric shock, and the appearance suddenly confronting us sent a second thrill the length of my spine.

I whispered to Goldsack: "Door's locked!" and I kept my eyes fixed upon his calm face. All at once the room had become tense with some nameless, horrible excitement.

"Ah, Mr. *Paul Pelham,*" said the pianist, bearing heavily upon the name. "There are many Strausses, are there not? Oscars and Josefs and Richards and the devil knows how many more; but for the real waltz measure, the true lilt of it, one cannot improve upon the great Johann?"

"An irreproachable criticism," answered Goldsack imperturbably. His eye flashed round to mine, and from thence to the window. This lightning glance said: "Jump!" I translated it all right, but I hesitated. In the first place, a twenty-foot drop does not create enthusiasm; in the second, I dared not leave him.

"An unexpected visit which does me the highest possible honor," continued the other, with a profound bow. "I am at a loss——"

The sentence is among the unfinished things. The man who had admitted us had been edging behind Goldsack, and he abruptly launched himself to an attack with a thin, high cry like the mew of a panther cub. I had been watching him, however, and I checked the leap by a right-hand swing which cracked like a whip's lash upon his jaw.

"Great, Noddy! Stick to it, boy!" The shout was Goldsack's, and the thrill of it sent the fighting fever in a wave to my brain. He sprang back as the two other men rushed upon him from either side. Unluckily, the table stopped him, and threw him off his balance. He sank to one knee, and as the nearer of his opponents fairly tumbled over him he caught him by the thighs, lifted him as he himself rose, and hurled him with all his force upon the other. They both smashed up against a wall, bringing down a window curtain. Goldsack dashed in upon them, and in the same moment my own particular adversary, whom I had mo-

mentarily forgotten, gripped me by the ankles and brought me down with a thud which knocked out my senses in a great blaze of flame.

An eternity which was about thirty seconds of time passed. I awoke with the palest realization of what had happened, of what was occurring. A leg of the fallen table had cut into my left brow, and the warm blood trickled into my eye. A most terrific hubbub surged in the room. I became conscious of Goldsack leaping here and there—a miracle of footwork. One man staggered back, tossing up his arms in a gesture of agony, features convulsed by a round swing upon his short ribs.

I believed I muttered, three-parts silly: "Now, Goldie! Knock him over the ropes!"

Then Goldsack was hugged by those long, shaggy arms of the Strauss interpreter, and, under that tremendous grip, the breath forced from his exhausted lungs. In vain he jabbed furiously at his opponent's sides. Heaven knew how the red, angry blotches must have risen over the kidneys, but the fellow held on, good and true. I saw Goldsack's face turn white—gray; his lips part, his head droop backward. Still game, he directed his attack anew, pounding the other's ears, and the punishment must have told, for the fellow panted:

"Quick, you fools! Two inches—under the ribs! For God's sake, quick!"

And then I saw number three slink in, and the red fire glow glimmered on the knife in his hand.

It was certainly time for me to wake up. Now or never! I got upon my feet, lurched in, drove home once—twice, with such force as I could muster. I fear very much that I struck a trifle too low for the fair game. The man with the knife reeled back with a sound like a death sob upon his white lips, and he crashed over upon the keyboard of the open piano, sending up a jarring clash of discord like a burst of a bizarre laughter.

I leaped for his knife, which had flown from his nerveless grip. I reached it half a second before the fellow whose short ribs had been damaged recovered sufficiently to make a plunge for it. He thrust at me with his shoulder, and tumbled me over on my back. Down came his knees on my chest, his fingers groping for my windpipe. I let him have the horn handle of the knife full in the hollow under his left temple, and his senseless body sagged down upon me like a sack of coals. I pushed it aside just in time to see Goldsack's assailant relax his terrible hug. He gave back, sick with punishment, clawing wildly, as if he perceived some support in the empty air, his face a study in physical agony.

Goldsack swept him aside and caught up a chair. Three rending blows shivered the lock of the door.

"Softly, softly! No hurry, old fellow!" urged Goldsack as I prepared to take the flight at one leap.

There was no one downstairs; the place seemed quite deserted. Our chauffeur, who had taken refuge from the sleet, jumped from his cab to start his engine, caught sight of us, and promptly fell against one of the wheels.

"Home!" ordered Goldsack tersely.

We climbed in. The taxi commenced to move.

"Just under the fifteen minutes, Noddy," said my companion. "As good as my word."

His exasperating coolness touched my raw nerves. I expostulated. "It's a mercy we are not both murdered."

"Oh, I do not think they would have ventured that length."

"If that scoundrel, Dogbeetle, isn't under arrest before——"

"Great heavens, Noddy! You surely do not imagine that the Dogbeetle was there?"

I gasped weakly: "Not there?"

"Dear me, no! I told you that I have seen that fine fighter, and he certainly was not among that charming company. Where is he? On his way to town to meet our dashing prince. That is my assumption, at any rate. I take it that Frostways was wrong in believing that Dogbeetle had stooped to foul play, had been tampered with. I thought so at the time, you will recall. Then the fact of the inn being deserted suggests that the inmates are accompanying him part of the way. No doubt he was extremely popular there, and they are giving him a good send-off."

"But those three rascals?" I demanded, amazed.

"Unquestionably they are the agents mentioned by Frostways, the secret agents who attempted to corrupt the Dogbeetle. What more natural than that they should settle at his headquarters? You observed their foreign appearance, their un-English accent. A trio of unscrupulous villains."

"Wait! There is a big hole right through your reasoning. They must have known that you were not their prey, that you were not the Prince of Ilissa!"

"That is probable, though not among the absolute certainties. In which case, shall I tell you for whom they did take us, Noddy? For a couple of police officers come to rout them out of their nest. There you have it. And since they were in no mood for arrest or detention they promptly fell upon us. I do not imagine they meant to do us up; they intended to secure our persons and to make good an escape."

"So all our labor was in vain!" I complainingly insisted.

"By no means. If you grumble at a brilliant little affair like that—in which you showed a mettle which I confess surprised me—you will grumble at anything. And now for the sequel. Home, we will repair damages, and then run on to see—I greatly fear—the Count of Franks lose his love."

We made our return in good time, and our chauffeur departed, his sense of mystery drowned in a handsome tip. I dressed my wound, which was cold and stiff, and Goldsack did his best to remove or lessen his many evidences of the battle. A change of clothes and a hasty dinner worked wonders. Then we set out for the Assembly Rooms, Lime Street, Mile End Road.

The fight had not been advertised, and there were no signs of excitement. As we left our cab we saw a very handsome gray automobile stationary immediately outside the building, which was in a shabby, mean street. A face appeared at the window of the car as we passed. It was the face of Miss Helen Caslake, pale and very serious. We raised our hats—a salutation acknowledged by the chilliest of bows.

"She is waiting for the result," said Goldsack as we went up the steps. "Too nervous to be a spectator, or not caring for that sort of pastime—more credit to her."

We pushed open an outer door, which led us into a vestibule. Goldsack was in the act of producing a card, which doubtless would have obtained for us some sort of position inside, when there came to our ears a distant sound like an enormous sea breaking upon a shore. Higher and higher rose that truly frantic uproar which emanated from a dense crowd boiling with a delirious excitement.

"Heavens! What has happened?" shouted Goldsack, rushing forward.

Almost in the same instant a door was hurled open in our faces, well-nigh knocking us down, and there flew out a man whose eyes were fairly dancing in their sockets. He was a reporter, and Goldsack knew him well.

"Your news, Hemingways?" he demanded.

"Great! Amazing! Might not happen again in a thousand times! Do you know this man Pelham? He's hot—hot! Only had one possible chance against Dogbeetle, and he took it, by Jove! Went in at the start like a flash of oiled lightning. Got home on the 'mark,' and uppercut to the jaw. Dogbeetle went down like a dead man, and—was counted out—out!"

Our informant vanished, making a bee line for his paper, doubtless. That hoarse roaring like a sea went on, increased.

Goldsack was making for the exit. I followed, thrilled to my finger ends, though I had seen nothing of the fight. The gray automobile still waited. The frenzied howling in the hall had reached the occupant. She had lowered the near window, and was partly looking out, more pale than before. Goldsack moved swiftly to her.

"I have the great happiness to inform you, Miss Caslake," said he quietly, "that our Count of F—— wins his wager."

A stream of warm blood surged over her face. Her lips parted as if to utter some expression of overwhelming relief, of sweetest joy. But she controlled herself, lowered her head slightly, and answered, in a voice cold as the polar snows:

"Thank you—for nothing."

A flood of the voluble audience was beginning to emerge, and we edged off.

"Nothing isn't much, Noddy," sighed Goldsack ruefully. "Here ends our story—with more kicks than ha'pence."

I grunted agreement. And yet it did not end there. Superintendent Frostways must have whispered all the facts later on to the parties directly concerned. Must have, because we were received with marked honors at that wonderful wedding of the Count of Franks and his bride well beloved.

Other stories of "The Amateur Professional" appeared in issues of the POPULAR dated December 7 and 23, 1914, and January 7, 1915.

WHEN THE PAY ENVELOPE ARRIVED

AS a rule, salaries range low in Wall Street jobs. The bank clerk and the broker's clerk earn small stipends. Many a well-to-do New York father gladly pays to get his son a position in the financial district, in order that the boy may learn "business habits."

One of the historic brokerage firms of the Street, that of Washington E. Connor, once employed a clerk who worked for ten years before his pay envelope arrived. But when pay day eventually did come it broke the record.

The old man wanted his son to learn the secrets of the money market, in order that, in after years, he would be qualified to manage the family fortune and attend to its investments. He told his broker: "I don't want you to pay him a dollar. I'll pay his wages myself."

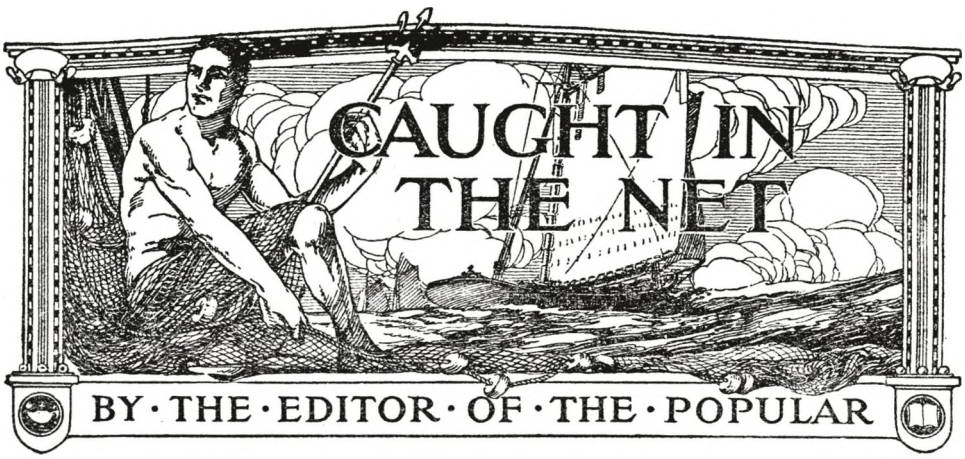
Some years passed, and the father asked his son: "Well, George, what salary do you think I ought to pay you for your work?"

"I'll leave it to you," was the son's reply.

When the father died, the son learned that he had been earning a salary of five hundred thousand dollars a year, for the old man left him five million dollars to cover the ten years of his apprenticeship.

However, the young broker's clerk could afford to wait ten years for his pay envelope.

He was George J. Gould, who ever since that time has managed the Gould estate.



WAR AND WOMEN

THE war has been a revelation of womanhood. It took a society woman of title, with a flair for outdoor sports, and sent her to the front eager for adventure. Day after day she rolled in a motor along roads that had been thoroughly shelled, where now and again shells still fell and exploded. She had no tremors, only the desire to be where action was lively, and wounded men could be rescued. When the French doctor was too nervous to help, she brought the splint of wood for the broken leg, and held the leg while the cool little English doctor bound it on the board. She drove a car full of wounded seven miles back over a muddy road, where no lights were allowed on car or road. She was a member of the Hector Munro Ambulance Corps in Belgium. There were three other women in the corps with a like courage and resourcefulness. And at the battle front at Furnes there were twenty such women, nurses and helpers.

To see one of these cool, friendly creatures, American and English, shove their motor car into shell fire, make their rescue of helpless crippled men, and steam back to safety, is to watch a resourceful and disciplined being. They may be, they are, "ministering angels," but there is nothing meek in their demeanor. They have stepped to a vantage from which nothing in man's contemptuous philosophy will ever dislodge them. They have always existed to astonish those who knew them best, and have turned life into a surprise party from Eden to the era of forcible feeding. But assuredly it would make the dogmatists on the essentially feminine nature, like Kipling, rub their eyes, to watch modern women at work under fire. Literally, these women haven't the slightest fear of being killed. Give them a job under bombardment, and they unfold the stretcher, place the pillow, and tuck in the blanket, without a quiver of apprehension. That, too, when some of the men are scampering for cover, and ducking chance pellets from the woolly white cloud that breaks overhead, the women will eat their luncheon with relish within three hundred feet of a French battery in full blaze. Is there a test left to the pride of man that the modern woman does not take lightly and skillfully? Gone are the Victorian nerves and the eighteenth-century faintings. All the old false delicacies have been swamped.

She has been held back like a hound from the hunting, till we really believed we had a harmless household pet, who loved security. We had forgotten the pioneer women who struck across frontiers with a hardihood that matched that of their mates. And now the modern woman emerges from her protected home, and pushes forward, careless and curious.

THE DARK CONTINENT'S SECRET

IN the heart of the Libyan Desert, in a city from which no white traveler returns, lives a man whom any of the warring kings of Europe would give a great deal to have speech with. His name is Senussi Ahmed el Shareef. He is the ruler of the Senussiyeh. The Senussiyeh is the greatest secret society in the world. It is composed of Moslem fanatics. There are ten million men in this oath-bound brotherhood, and their gentle purpose is to exterminate the "dogs of unbelievers."

It is idle for the sultan or the Sheik ul Islam to declare a holy war. They might proclaim Jehads—which is Arabic for killing Christians—until they were out of breath, and few would hearken. But let the grim and silent chief of the Senussiyeh, in his stronghold in his desert capital, only whisper the word, and there would be a rising of Mohammedan millions throughout Asia and Africa that would make the whirlwind of Attila—who called himself "the Scourge of God"—seem like a harmless zephyr.

Neither the Senussiyeh or their ruler are air-drawn figures of fear. They are very real. Scores of Christian missionaries whose fields of effort are in various quarters of the Islamic world have the tale whispered in their ears again and again, and they know it is true. They know, as well as they can without having seen, that Senussi Ahmed el Shareef dwells in the city of Jof, that he is the head of the Senussiyeh, and that there will be no holy war until the Senussiyeh is fully prepared—and that that time has not yet come.

The Libyan Desert is more than twice the area of the State of Texas. It lies due west of northern Egypt. The Tropic of Cancer and the twenty-fifth parallel of latitude cross almost in its center. Unless one knows the ways of the desert—and the safest are known only to the Senussiyeh—to venture into it is certain death. To reach the city of Jof—for the white man—is but death delayed. Yet the whispered reports from this far-south desert city are that there the Senussi drills his men; there, with the infinite patience of the East, he builds up his stores of supplies and ammunition against "The Day of Days." They say that in this vast stronghold, walled by thousands of miles of shifting sands, there are great factories that are turning out the most improved mowing machines for the making of widows and orphans, and that they are under the direction of skilled mechanics whom the Senussi Ahmed el Shareef has had trained in the best technical schools of Europe. The city of Jof also is the center of the most efficient spy system on earth. To their silent lord of life and death come his secret agents from every corner of the Mohammedan world. To him also are brought the sinews of war—two and one-half per cent per annum from the income of every one of the brotherhood's ten millions.

When will come this "Day of Days," when the invisible empire of the Moslems will make its supreme effort? No one knows—except the grim ruler

in the heart of the Libyan Desert. Perhaps he is waiting for the nations of Europe to exhaust themselves with their titanic struggles, for the East is patient. But the preparations that the Senussiyeh are making—and they are surely being made on a gigantic scale—cannot be without menace to every European in the Islamic world.

SAFEGUARDING NATIONAL BANKS

MANAGED carefully and conservatively, a national bank is as safe an institution as ever has been devised for the handling of the public's money. Around it the government has thrown a multitude of protections.

Despite all the safeguards, one of the banks suspends now and then. In 1914 there were 28 such suspensions out of a total of 7,473 banks. This is a marvelously good record, considering that 1914 witnessed the greatest financial strain in the world's history.

Almost invariably when a national bank fails it is owing to an abuse of the banking regulations. The comptroller of the currency says these abuses include excessive loans, overdrafts, loose accounting, excessive borrowing by the banks, investment of the bank's funds in securities not authorized by law, charging of usurious rates of interest; unlawful loans on real estate; loans to a bank's officer or others through "dummies," lending money directly or indirectly upon the bank's own stock, transaction of a brokerage or commission business by the bank's executive officers, the commissions thus collected being sometimes appropriated personally by the officers; false statements made by bank officers, such as including as cash or cash items memoranda of moneys due which do not represent actual cash; and, last, but not least, failure to charge off bad debts or other losses.

There will be few of these evasions if Congress changes the law in accordance with the desires of the treasury department.

Certain acts now classed as mere infractions of regulations it is proposed to make punishable by fine and imprisonment, and for minor offenses power is asked for the comptroller of the currency to impose a fine on the person responsible as well as upon the bank, to make the guilt and the cost personal as well as corporate.

With such stern rule, the comptroller believes the national bank that fails will be as rare as the dodo.

NOW

WE have cut ourselves free from the lovely, lugubrious, overshadowing past. We are building fresh structure on a new soil. We possess no beauty of the old days like that fragrance and quiet of trim gardens and cathedral lawns. We cannot winnow such delicacy of tint and softness of turf.

But the past can teach us only up to our own limit of saturation. Beyond that it will flood us and wash us away. Memorials must relate themselves to our own creative effort. The loveliest pier that climbs to its roof of laced stone is only of service as it lends a hint for to-morrow's work. The highest tide that ever

hurried up the beach is memorable for the driftwood that it has left for our using this day. Time can level every Gothic chancel of England into ruins, and there is no loss, if the building genius is alive. The revolt of saddened, suppressed womanhood will be a more worthy heritage for this present century of hope than the shell of the Established Church, entrancing as that is with its medieval architecture.

We are far too busy to master crafts of other times and other races. We, too, are raising our dreams in durable structure. We have a beauty of the new which England lacks. Victoria Station is an excellent, sound, workmanlike barrack, but it does not touch the imagination of the thousands who trudge through its gray chill. No man of song will ever camp down in front of it and salute the rising moon over its portals. Our Pennsylvania Terminal has seasons when its beauty is so stanch and gay that it lifts the heart of even the soiled traveler. We have taken the madness of industry, with its grime and roar, and made it yield up a massive and yet light-winged proportion which has rarely been seen in the world since the twelfth, the Building Century. The splendid, snorting engines of our railroads—"fierce-throated beauties"—are at a far remove from the undersized, misshapen, creeping things, lacking creative design, which chug through Britain.

The present age may contain as far-carrying a surge as the Renaissance. We face twenty, thirty, perhaps fifty years of promise, an age of faith and revolution. How this burst of power shall be directed rests with those who are young in the young movement. If one generation of youth will carry its undefeated force through the span of years at the pace of its flying start, we shall release a force and beauty into time, surpassing former things.

WALL STREET AND THE MINISTRY

WALL STREET is not associated in the public mind with churchmen, yet clergymen have played a conspicuous part in its development. Edward Sweet, founder of Edward Sweet & Co., the house which has handled the business of three generations of the Vanderbilts, Goelets, and Gerrys, and through which Harriman and most of the Standard Oil people operated, was a Congregational minister at Ipswich, Massachusetts, before coming to New York, and continued as a lay preacher after becoming a member of the Stock Exchange.

The Reverend Doctor Hoyt, who was president of the Gold Board, was a prominent preacher in Kentucky before he became a broker.

Greatest of all the clergymen of Wall Street, however, was the Reverend Doctor Laws. He not only was a great preacher and a mighty man in finance, but a mechanical genius. It was he who invented the ticker, the shrine at which Wall Street worships. Like the Reverend Doctor Hoyt, he was president of the Gold Board. It was through him the Gold & Stock Telegraph Co. was established and the quotation service that every big city now knows so well came into existence. When he tired of Wall Street he sold his invention to the Western Union Telegraph Company, went back to his native State, Missouri, and was made president of the Missouri State University at Columbia.

The Pearl Fishers

By H. De Vere Stacpoole

Author of "The Blue Lagoon," "The Floor of the Sea," Etc.

SYNOPSIS OF PRECEDING CHAPTERS

Alone in a little boat in mid-Pacific, that's how Floyd, second mate to the lost ship, *Cormorant,* found himself. A hopeless prospect. But Fortune was kindly and sent him to an out-of-the-way coral island where the last thing to be expected happened—Floyd finds companions, a bearded man calling himself Schumer, and a Kanaka girl answering to the name Isbel. They had also suffered shipwreck, and their schooner lies battered on the beach. Becoming acquainted, Floyd discovers Schumer to be a singular and enigmatic character, and Isbel proves as baffling, neither of them apparently existing for the other. Floyd's little boat enables the two men to explore the lagoon and another section of the reef. Acres of oysters are sighted at the bottom of the lagoon. Schumer becomes excited over the possibility of pearls. Plans are made for diving after the precious hoard. Both men make a try at the job, and after a week of awful labor they find enough pearls to warrant highest hopes of ocean treasure. If they could but secure the necessary labor. To have all that wealth virtually in their hands yet without proper means of grasping it, was maddening. A tropical storm of terrific power breaks upon their futile dreaming, but while it seems to strive to destroy them it really blows to their coral island a schooner of large size. Glasses are brought into use and they watch the vessel as it lumbers toward them. Schumer and Floyd put off to her and climbing aboard, find the schooner, *Southern Cross,* in the hands of a wild crew of Kanakas and Solomon Islanders, who aver that white officers and sailors all died of fish poisoning. Schumer takes charge. He senses foul play to the white crew, tries a leader, finds him guilty and hangs him. Thereafter, Schumer puts the black men to work diving for pearls. Results are beyond expectations. Needing more capital to persue the work, Schumer leaves in the *Southern Cross* for Australia, to interview the owners of the salvaged ship. Floyd is left to manage the pearl fishers. Sru, an ugly Solomon Islander, foments a mutiny. Isbel warns Floyd. Together, these two, are compelled to entrench themselves in the shack against the vicious mob.

(A Four-part Novel—Part III.)

CHAPTER XXI.

BEFORE THE ATTACK.

THAT night he made her sleep in the house, while he took his place outside. He arranged to call her when half the night was over, so that she might keep watch while he slept, and as he sat with his back to the house wall, and a loaded rifle by his side, he tried to forecast the possibility of an attack and the upshot, should it occur.

The fact that Sru had seen the cache weighed with him as much as the occurrence of that evening. The two facts combined made the position very, very threatening. The labor men had no arms and ammunition, but they were thirty in number; they had no boat, but they had the raft, and though the reef was almost impassable, Isbel had got along it that night of her flight, and what she had done, these fellows could doubtless accomplish also.

He could see the sparks of the camp fires away across the lagoon, but though the wind was blowing from over there, it brought no sound on it. Usually one could catch stray snatches of song from across the water, or the fellows shouting as they speared fish in the rock pools by torchlight.

To-night the silence seemed ominous, and the light of the camp fires like threatening eyes. Now and again would

This story began in the POPULAR dated April 7th, which may still be ordered at news stands.

come the splash of a fish, and now and again the wind breezing up for a moment would set the foliage moving in the grove, the breadfruit leaves clapping like great green hands, and the palm fronds rustling and cheeping.

The surf on the outer reef was low of sound to-night, yet, occasionally, over to the west, where the full trend of the swell was meeting the coral, it would speak louder and become angry like the sound of a train at full speed.

Even the stars had taken on the aspect of attention; they seemed watching and waiting to see something that would surely occur.

Floyd had to get up and pace the sands to break the spell. Then, after a while, he sat down again. The fires over at the fishing camp had died out, the wind had fallen to the merest breath, and the surf on the western reef no longer snarled.

Danger seemed to have drawn away from the island, leaving behind her the profoundest peace. Floyd, whose eyes were longing to close despite all his efforts to keep awake, felt a touch on his shoulder. It was Isbel come to relieve guard. When he came out next morning, the sun was up, and Isbel had lit the fire and was preparing breakfast.

They sat down to the meal together, and, when it was over, Floyd declared his intention of going, as usual, to the fishery.

"We must keep the work going, at all costs," said he. "If I did not, they would think I was afraid, and then they would be sure to attack us. Besides, there may be nothing to fear. Sru is the only one I care about, the others are pretty harmless, with no one to lead them, and Sru may be knocked out. He looked pretty dead when I left him."

Isbel shook her head.

"One blow would not kill Sru," said she. "Too strong. If you go, I go with you."

"You," said Floyd. "And suppose—suppose they attack us?"

"Suppose you go alone and get killed," said Isbel, "what become of me here alone? No, I go if you go. I can shoot. I stay in the boat to keep it safe, whiles you go to the fishing. If they come to take the boat, I kill them. If they strike at you, I kill them. You don't know me. I know myself. I have no fear at all."

"I believe you," said he. "Yes, we will go together; you are worth half a dozen men—— Isbel, why did you run away from me that time?"

Isbel looked down.

"I went to find my own people," said she at last. "I was afraid."

"Afraid of me?"

"I don't know," said Isbel; "you and Schumer, and being alone with you made me afraid."

"And you are not afraid any longer?"

"With you I am not any more afraid," said Isbel, speaking with difficulty, and drawing a little pattern on the sand with her finger tip. Then, looking up: "Not even with Schumer, if you were there."

Floyd was about to take her hand, but he restrained himself.

"That is good," said he. "You need never have been afraid of me. I care for you too much to let any one hurt you, and that morning when I came out of the house and found you gone, when I searched in the grove and along the reef and could not see you and thought you might be drowned and that I would never see you again, the world seemed no use any longer."

He rose to his feet as if to check his words, and walked off to the house, leaving Isbel still seated on the sand, and still drawing the pattern with her finger.

He returned with one of the Winchester rifles under his arm, a revolver in his hand, and one in his pocket.

Isbel rose, and, going down to the

lagoon edge, they pushed the dinghy off, got in, and started for the fishing camp. As they drew near they saw that the fishing was going on apparently as usual, and the first person to greet them on the beach was Sru.

There were all the elements for a strained situation, but Sru showed no sign of the incident of the day before, and when Floyd stepped out on the sand, nodded his head as usual, and grumbled something in his throat that seemed intended for a welcome. But his eye lit on the rifle Isbel propped against the seat of the dinghy, and it doubtless took in, also, the revolver butt sticking from Floyd's coat pocket.

The seeming indifference of Sru to what had happened struck Floyd as almost uncanny; then, as they set to work, he let the matter drop from his mind. If it satisfied Sru to take a thrashing and say nothing, it satisfied Floyd's policy to let the matter drop. The man had been punished for his misdeed, and the incident was closed, for the present at least.

Now Schumer would undoubtedly have tried the man and shot him offhand, not only for the attack on Isbel, but to safeguard the little colony. Floyd, though just as courageous as Schumer at a pinch, and probably more so, was incapable of acting the part of executioner. He could not kill a man in cold blood.

So he worked side by side with the yellow-eyed one, and as the labor went on he forgot more and more the danger of the situation, but he might have noticed, had he turned, that Isbel, who had taken her seat on the sand by the boat, never left her position for a moment, and that position enabled her, if need arose, to stretch out her arm and seize the rifle that was propped against the seat of the dinghy.

Neither would she have anything to say to the fellows who were diving. The raft came several times ashore to discharge shell, and some of the hands drew close to her, but she told them to clear off.

Floyd heard her voice once or twice hard and sharp, a quite new voice for her. He could not tell what she said, but he noticed that none of the fellows approached her.

Some of them, as far as he could judge, seemed deriding her just as schoolboys joke at one of their number who has made himself unpopular, but they kept their distance.

At the dinner hour shortly before noon, the whole crowd of the labor men, joined by Sru, drew off to a spot close to the tents, and, squatting in a ring, set to on their food.

Work was always knocked off in the middle of the day, Floyd returning to the house for a siesta. He came now toward Isbel, intending to help her to push the dinghy off, but instead of rising, she made him sit down beside her.

"See them," said she. "They sit all together and like that." She made a ring on the sand with her finger. "I go and hear what they say if you wait. It is no good when they sit like that all together and talk while they eat—— Wait!"

She rose up and walked along the beach edge, picking up shells. Then she drew close to the grove and vanished into it. Some of the tents were situated close up to the grove, and the hands were seated eating and talking close to the tent. They looked after Isbel as she was walking along the beach edge. When she disappeared, they seemed to forget her, and went on with their palaver. Floyd waited. Five minutes later he saw the form of the girl away out from among the trees. She walked right down to the edge of the lagoon, and then came along toward Floyd, still picking up an occasional shell.

When she reached him she showed him the shells.

"No good," said she. "But look at them so they may see."

Floyd handled the shells and pretended to admire them; then she placed them in the dinghy and they pushed her off.

It was not till they reached the middle of the lagoon that she told of what she had done, and what she had heard.

She had crept through the grove to the back of one of the tents, and listened to the chatter that had come clearly heard on the slight wind that was blowing toward the grove.

Something was afoot, and whatever they were going to do was to be done that night. From what Isbel gathered, an attack was to be made on them, and the attackers would cross the lagoon on the raft.

Floyd, who was rowing, pulled in his sculls.

"The raft," said he. "I never thought of that. They can get twenty chaps on to it. We must stop this. It is going to be war anyhow, so we may as well strike first."

He told Isbel the fear that had suddenly occurred to him, and she laughed. Then taking to the sculls again, he rowed on as hard as he could, till they reached their destination.

Leaving Isbel to look after the dinghy, he ran up to the house and came back with a hammer, a big nail, and a coil of rope. Then they pushed off again, making for the fishing camp. The raft, when not in use, was moored by a rope to a spur of coral jutting out from the sand.

As they approached, they could see the labor men still seated at their powwow. Heads were turned as the dinghy drew near to the raft, but not a man moved till Isbel, with a rifle in one hand and a knife in the other, cut the mooring rope.

Then a yell rose up, and the whole crowd, rising like one man, came racing down to the water's edge, picking up stones as they ran, while some of them, turning, made off for the fish spears in the tents.

While Isbel had been cutting the rope, Floyd, with three blows of the hammer, had driven the big nail into one of the logs, tied the rope to it, tied the other end of the rope to the rings in the stern of the dinghy, and was now sculling for his life. The heavy raft moved slowly, and the crowd on shore held up for a moment by the water, were just taking to it when Isbel's rifle rang out, and the foremost of them, hit through the shoulder, sat down with a yell on the sand. The rush was broken for a moment, and Floyd, as he tugged at the sculls, saw a sight that would have made him laugh, had he been watching from a place of safety.

The balked ones literally danced on the sands. Fury drove them, but fright held them, and the dance was the result till the fellows with the fish spears made their appearance, racing down from the tents.

Floyd instantly put the dinghy alongside the raft, and, springing on to it, took the rifle from the girl, while she, getting into the dinghy, took the sculls and went on with the towing.

Floyd dropped the first spearman twenty paces from the water's edge, and he fell on his belly, while the spear slithered along the beach.

The second spearman, struck fair in the forehead, flung out his arms and fell on his back. The spear, striking the sand with its butt, stood upright and quivering, the point, still dark with fish blood, impotent and pointing to the sky.

It was enough for the others. They broke and ran, and, as they ran, Floyd fired on them, catching one fellow through the leg and knocking a tuft of hair off another's head.

In thirty seconds the beach was clear.

Floyd through it all had acted almost automatically and as if firing at a target. The whole business seemed strangely

impersonal and unreal. That he should be standing there, killing men like flies, seemed part of the everyday business of life, and yet, at the back of his mind, something was crying out against it all, a voice small as though it had traveled from a thousand miles away, and without substance or sound or weight in effect on his mind.

He stood with the taste of the cartridge smoke in his mouth, staring at the beach, while from behind him he could hear the sound of the sculls in the rowlocks as Isbel strained at the oars.

They were now well out from the shore, and he took his place in the boat at the sculls, while Isbel got on the raft.

The beach they were leaving was all trodden up, and the bodies of the two dead men lay, one huddled up as though he were asleep, the other spread-eagled and looking like a brown starfish, the spear he had been carrying so valiantly standing beside him, barb pointing to the sky.

The light wind was blowing the dry sand in little eddies, and under the blazing sunlight the salt white beach and the emerald shallows of the lagoon made a dazzling picture. Nothing could seem farther removed from death or the thought of death than this brilliant scene, where the slain were lying unburied and Death himself was watching from the grove of trees that formed its background.

Isbel stood on the raft as he towed it, her hand shading her eyes, her gaze fixed on the shore.

Floyd, recalling her horror of the hanging and the effect it produced upon her, could not help wondering at her attitude now, till he remembered the difference between the cold-blooded execution of a man and the killing of a man in self-defense.

When they had reached the middle of the lagoon, she turned from gazing at the shore and sat down on the raft. They did not speak to one another till the dinghy was landed and the raft moored by a long rope which they tied to one of the seats of the quarter boat, which was lying high and dry on the sand.

"Well," said Floyd, when this was finished, "we are in for it now, Isbel, you and I. These fellows won't sit down and do nothing, or, if they do, I am greatly mistaken."

"No," said Isbel, "they will try to kill us." She said it quite simply, as though she were talking of some matter of little moment.

"And we'll try to stop them," said Floyd, with a laugh. It is the sign mark of the Anglo-Saxon and Celts and all breeds that spring from their mixture, that they go laughing into battle, die jesting, and carve their enemies with epigrams as well as swords; battle brings a levity of spirit that in its turn brings victory, and Floyd, now that war was declared, moved lightly and felt a liveliness at heart such as he had not experienced since boyhood.

He had destroyed the enemy's fleet, but he had not destroyed their land forces, and, worse than all, he had not put their general out of action.

Sru was still alive, and he was more dangerous than all the others.

When the firing had begun, Sru had flung himself flat on his stomach on the sand, and from that position had yelled his orders. It was evident that he was the directing spirit of the whole business, and it was nearly certain that he would not take defeat lying down.

The weak position of the house as a defensive stronghold lay in its proximity to the grove and the fact that it did not command the approach to this bit of the island by way of the reef. The back of the building was close up to the trees, and, though there were chinks that made good loopholes for firing through, the trees, and especially their shadow by night, gave good cover for an attacking party.

Then there was the prospect of a siege. Floyd, taking his seat on the sand in the shade of the trees, called to Isbel to sit down beside him.

Then they held a council of war.

"How many fish spears have those fellows got, Isbel?" asked he.

"Many," replied Isbel. "They were making them a long time ago—too many for fishing."

"You mean they were made for the purpose of attacking us—I mean, of attacking me, for you were with them then?"

Isbel nodded.

"Yes, but I did not know. I thought then it was for the fishing. Now I know better. It was Sru who told them to make more spears, and they would all get together and talk. I had no feeling at all that it was wrong, else I would have listened. But now I see it all."

This cast even a darker light on Sru. He must have been plotting all along and from the first. Plotting to seize Isbel for himself, kill the only white man on the place, and seize all the valuables he could find. That was doubtless his plan of campaign. As to the far future, and how he was to escape from the island and from punishment, he was unlikely to have made any plan. The savage view is a short view, and is mainly occupied by immediate desires and the means of gratifying them. It is only the trained intelligence that forecasts and lays plans only to be carried out in the far future.

Sru wanted Isbel, and tobacco more than he could use, knives for which he had no use, firearms to glut his desire for lethal weapons, printed cotton, and the satisfaction of the lust to kill. He most likely promised himself Floyd served up roasted in plantain leaves, for he belonged to the man-eating order of Solomanders. So in his dark mind he had constructed a scheme for getting these things and satisfying these desires, and had carried out his scheme while working in amity with the man he intended to destroy.

His military genius had not proved itself on a par with his genius for villainy, but he had the numbers, while Floyd only had the rifles, for rifles, even though they fire five shot apiece, are of limited use without men behind them.

From the edge of the grove bordering the rough coral of the reef a good lookout could be kept toward the fishing ground. From here the lagoon, exclusive of the segment, including the reef opening, could be watched.

One could see the fishing camp and the whole of the reef leading from it. Standing here, one could command with a rifle all that strip of rough and broken coral that made a natural defense, and along which an attacking force must come, if it wished to reach the house by land.

Floyd determined that this was the point where watch must be kept by night. The coral, though rough and sharp here and there as knives, was not impassable to a determined foe. Isbel had got along it that time she ran away, and these fellows, with foot soles like leather and nerves insensitive to cuts and falls, could do what she had done.

He posted Isbel now to keep watch, while, going back to the house, he made preparations for a possible siege.

Taking the tarpaulin from the cache, he made a collection of all the tinned food that came first to hand. There were two bags of ship's bread still left, and these, with the tins of bully beef, potatoes, and so forth, he carried to the house. Then he filled two of the water beakers at the well and placed them in the main room of the building.

Then he remembered the albini rifles. These, with their ammunition, were stored separately, and the conveyance of them would have meant a considerable amount of labor and time. He took only the ammunition which was made up in four large parcels. These he

carted down to the dinghy, rowed her out into five fathom of water, and dumped the parcels in the lagoon.

The bottom of the lagoon where he dumped them was pretty rough coral, so they would not be shifted much by the tide, and could be fished up later on.

Having completed all these preparations, he rejoined Isbel at the lookout post.

It was late in the afternoon now, and neither of them had eaten anything since morning, so he sent Isbel to the house to get some food, and, taking his seat with his back to a tree, waited her return.

Alone like this, he sat with his eyes fixed on the enemy's country, on the lookout for any sign of movement on their part. He had brought the telescope with him, and used it now and then without effect. Through it he could see the fishing beach and the bodies still lying upon it, the spear sticking upright from the sand, the trodden-up sand, and the deserted tents. That was all. There was no sign of the enemy, who were no doubt hiding in the grove behind the tents, or on the reef beyond the grove.

He argued that they must have been considerably scared to have effaced themselves in this fashion, yet he knew enough of savages to prevent him from building too much on moral effect. They might be scared now, but the effect would wear off, and the desire for revenge and blood and loot reassert itself. Even now, though they were in hiding, they were doubtless holding a powwow, with Sru as chairman.

The position was bad. The pearl fishing had ceased, the island was in a state of war, there could be no peace or parleying with the enemy simply because there could be no trust placed in them while Sru was alive and active. At best, they could hold their own only by a continuous watch and defensive until Schumer returned. But Schumer might be delayed; he might never come back, the *Southern Cross* might even now be lying at the bottom of the Pacific, or hove up on some reef a thousand miles away from the Island of Pearls. As this thought came to him, he cast his eyes across the great space of sea visible on the ocean side of the reef. The sea, in the late afternoon light, lay calm but for the gentle swell that heaved it shoreward, but he knew well the treachery of that sea, of all seas the most fair—and faithless.

He was aroused from his thoughts by Isbel, who had returned, bringing him some food. She had also brought with her a rifle and some more ammunition. As she stood with the gun in her hand, gazing over toward the fishing camp, Floyd watched her, wondering at the change in her and the difference between this figure and the Isbel he had known at first—the girl he had seen that day of his first landing on the island.

Even during the last couple of days she had changed. Nothing makes for the development of the best and the worst in us like war. The struggle for existence, brought to a flaming point, is the true fire assay for character. Not only does the human soul develop in this ordeal, but the human being ages. Isbel, since the morning of the day before, seemed a year older, and Floyd's boyish character had taken on a sternness and received a solidification that ten years of ordinary life might not have effected.

She sat down beside him, and they ate the food she had brought, talking little, and each ever on the watch for any movement of the enemy. There was nothing. Nothing but the gulls flying in the blue, and the waves breaking on the coral and the wind moving the foliage of the distant trees.

The island might have been deserted but for their presence and those brown

spots lying on the sand of the distant beach.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE GREAT FIGHT.

No fires were lit on the fishing beach that evening, nor did the wind from across the lagoon bring any sound of singing from the fishermen.

Floyd remained at the lookout post while Isbel, returning to the house, put everything in order and gave a last touch to the defenses and a last look around. Then she returned and took her place beside him.

The moon, stronger to-night, yellow and brilliant, hung in the apple-green dusk of the eastern sky. It looked exactly like the quarter of a crystallized orange; then, as the sky steadily and swiftly darkened, it lost its yellow tinge and became a sickle of frosted silver.

The light was powerful enough to sparkle up the whole lagoon and show the reef like a curving gray road set on either side with the lagoon water and the foam of the sea.

The fishing beach showed clearly, and the grove, even the tents could be made out as gray flecks against the darkness of the trees, but sign of life there was none.

"I would like it better if we could see more of them," said Floyd. "They are a lot too quiet."

"They will come to-night, I think," said Isbel. "They are hiding now and talking. Sru will lead them."

Floyd laughed. "He led them finely on the beach over there this afternoon," said he, "lying on his stomach all the time!"

"That is why I fear him," said Isbel. "He is very clever; the others are not clever, but they are good to fight. Sru is the head; they are the hands. Sru is a devil."

"You did not know what Sru was that time you left me and went back to them," said he.

"No," replied Isbel; "I thought he was good then. He said to me: 'Why not come back to your own people?' The words he said to me grew in my mind like seeds in the ground. I did not know you then. I thought you were the same as Schumer."

"You know me now."

"Yes," replied Isbel, "I know you now."

He could see her profile against the stars and the line of her delicately shaped head. She was sitting with her hands about her knees, in just the same position as on the day when, drawing near the beach, Schumer had stood to receive him, and Isbel had sat watching, seemingly indifferent, gazing at him with those eyes whose gaze held so much of the unknown.

She wore a flower in her hair that day, and she wore a flower in her hair to-night, a perfumed blossom plucked as she was passing through the grove. The scent of it came to him with a trace of the hot, gorselike perfume of her hair, and for a moment he forgot Sru, the island, the fight on the beach, and the whole desperate position. For a moment only. As they sat beneath the stars, watching the moonlight grow stronger upon the lagoon water and the reef, suddenly from away out there came a cry like the sudden clamoring of sea fowl. A sound fierce and sharp and with the ring of triumph in it. The invisibility of the enemy and the absolute silence they had maintained up till now lent the sound a weird significance.

"They are starting," said Floyd.

Isbel nodded. She said nothing; she was listening. Then she said: "They will have been talking, all sitting round as they were to-day. Sru will have been making plans to come here and kill us. Then when all their minds went together like men with spears they

shouted like that and jumped to their feet and started."

She spoke like a person who was watching it all in some magic glass, slowly and in a dreamy manner and with a detachment as though what she were viewing had nothing to do with them.

"They'll start more before I have done with them," said Floyd viciously.

The events of the day, the tension of waiting, and that shout, cruel as a barbed spear coming out of the night, had raised the fierce fighting spirit of his race, a spirit all the more potent and terrible from the underlying sobriety that tempers its fierceness and levity.

"It's funny to think we may be knocked out before the sun rises again," said he. "What do you think happens to a man when he's dead Isbel?"

"I don't know. It is, I think, all the same as before he is born. He doesn't know."

"That's what I have often thought myself," said he "Look! What is that?"

Away toward the far end of the reef they saw moving points upon the coral. Huge insects seemed crawling here and there, aimlessly at first, and now approaching nearer.

"They are coming," said Floyd, seizing a rifle. "They are spreading themselves out, and that confounded coral gives them good sheltering places. We must stop them if possible."

He stood up, and, putting the rifle to his shoulder, aimed it at the nearest moving spot and fired. He continued blazing away till the chambers were empty. The movement ceased, but almost immediately it recommenced, and now they could see the brown figures crouching and crawling, spread out fanwise, taking cover at every projection, and always advancing closer.

It was almost impossible to fire effectively, owing to the uncertain light and the fact that at the first flash every figure fell flat or dodged behind cover.

Between the rough coral and the point where they stood lay forty yards or so of smooth ground, across which the final rush would be made.

"It seems we can't stop them," said Floyd as he emptied the contents of the second rifle, while the girl reloaded, "and once they get near the edge of that smooth bit they'll rush us. Get everything together when I give the word and make back for the house. Ah, I had one then!"

A shriek following the shot he had just fired told of a hit, but it did not stop the advance. On the contrary, the wretches had now reached the psychological point, the point where instinct told them collectively that a rush must surely succeed, and where optimism told them individually that it was the next man who would be hit.

They left cover boldly, and, heedless of the rough coral, of the pitfalls and sharp edges, leaped to the attack like bounding kangaroos.

Floyd bagged two of them with his two last shots; then calling to Isbel, who had also been firing, he led the way through the trees toward the house.

Isbel, with forethought, had lit the lamp in the main room, and the glow of it shining through the loopholes in the walls showed them their way. Once inside, they barred the door, placed the guns on the table, and began to reload.

They did not speak a word. Coolly and swiftly they shoved the cartridges in their places, and then, each with a rifle, stood at attention to the hell of voices from outside.

Never could Floyd have believed that human beings were capable of such sounds of ferocity and malevolence. Only in the long rage of the storm that had torn the bones of the Tonga to

pieces had he heard anything like this outburst.

Fists and feet were thundering at the door, spear points poking through the openings in the walls, but all that was nothing to the uproar of the voices. The calling of monkeys and the shrieks of parrots seemed mixed with the howl of hyenas, and more terrible than these came an incessant, fierce whistling, harsh as the whistling of steam.

Floyd was less a philosopher than a man of action, yet even so, and though he had no time for philosophy in such a crisis, his mind for a moment was held by one stupendous fact—these fiends storming the house were not devils just let loose from the infernal regions; they were the "hands."

The men he had worked with and overseen, pleasant and childlike creatures full of fun and laughter, most of them. It is true that many of them had, when in repose, that hard, set expression which seems to have come from ages of watching across the sun blaze on the sea, but their faces could express good humor, one might say, fluently, and as they had always been well treated on the island they had never cause to express anything else.

When Floyd had seen them first on the day that he and Schumer had boarded the *Southern Cross* they had struck him as a very hard lot, and a good deal of that expression had come from the shell nose rings and the slit ear lobes distinguishing most of them; as he got to know them better that impression became less vivid. Yet it had been the right one. The shell nose rings and split ear lobes were surely "features" inasmuch as they spoke of ages and ages of savagery, blood, and darkness.

Yet the second impression had been right in its way. Despite all their savagery these people were human, had in them a certain bonhomie and sense of humor, and possessed many of those traits which we associate with the word "gentleman." The latter curious fact had been impressed on Floyd several times in his dealings with them. Sru, for instance, the worst of the lot, though he had probably dined off his enemy in his time, and though he had planned and plotted murder, would not have hurt your feelings for the world by word or gesture. Floyd, having reloaded, disregarding the door toward which the main attack seemed directed, chose loopholes near the ones through which the spear points were being thrust, and fired with effect, to judge by the sounds that followed the shots. Isbel, crawling and creeping close to the walls, seized on the spear shafts, and, using all her weight, broke them off.

She managed to break three like this, and then returned to the loading. Dark, cool, swift, and absolutely fearless, she seemed in these mad minutes the very spirit of destruction. They had ammunition in abundance, and when she was not engaged in reloading for Floyd she used one of the revolvers herself. The smoke of the firing blown back through the loopholes made a haze round the steadily burning lamp, near which, from the ceiling, a big spider was swinging from his thread, laying his nets utterly undisturbed by the sounds and fumes of the fight.

Then gradually the attack died down. The gentry outside had exhausted themselves mostly by yelling; they had done no damage and had received several injuries. Had they possessed a single firearm they might have made the position untenable, but they had nothing, and they had evidently come to recognize the fact that poking spears through loopholes was useless work, besides being dangerous.

Floyd wiped his brow with his coat sleeve.

"The fools have never thought of forcing the door," said he; "they might

have done it with that crowbar. You remember the piece of iron I used to break open the big clamshell. They never thought of that. They came with spears only, and there is nothing over on this side they can use to force the door with. Let's hope they won't remember about it."

"Listen!" said Isbel.

Sounds were coming from the grove at the back of the house, sounds more of a jubilant than a warlike nature.

Floyd knitted his brow; then his face cleared.

"I know what it is," said he. "They have got at the cache."

The fragment of moon low down in the west lit the beach, and very soon Floyd's suspicion was justified. Peeping through the loopholes of the front wall, they saw the whole band of the enemy debouching on the sands away to the left, and every man laden with loot.

Some were carrying bolts of cloth, and others cases of provisions and boxes of tobacco.

They thought themselves beyond rifle range, and, like children, they wanted to examine their treasures. Floyd, assured that none of them had remained behind, opened the door, and, rifle in hand, stood watching them. Then he opened fire, and they scattered, leaving their treasures on the sand. Some ran along the lagoon edge, toward the reef opening; one dashed right into the water and swam in the same direction, while the main body made back for the shelter of the grove.

Not one of them was hit as far as he could see, and the men who had made toward the reef opening would return by the seaward side of the reef.

"I almost wish I had left them alone," said he. "It will only make them more vicious. The sight of that stuff lying there will keep them going. However, it is too late to bother now."

He turned back to the house and shut the door. He had been speaking to Isbel, and fancied her to be just behind him. She was not. She was at the table, quietly preparing some food. He noticed now for the first time that the flower was still in her hair. It looked dark purple in the lamplight. And now for a moment a strange sensation stole over him, as though the whole of the business were a fantastic dream, a sensation of unreality that infected even his own being. It passed, and, coming to the table where the food was now lying beside the rifles and ammunition, he drew one of the chairs up and sat down sideways to the board.

Isbel remained standing, and as they ate they talked, and what they said had little to do with the main business in hand. It was not a thing to be talked about. The situation was hopeless, if ever a situation was hopeless, and no plan had yet appeared to either of them by which their position could be bettered.

Ideas had come to Floyd only to be dismissed as useless, the idea, for instance, of making a dash from the house and taking to the dinghy, which they could easily push off. That would not help them in the least, since there was no place of safety to which the dinghy could take them. Their assailants would not expose themselves to rifle fire by day, and by night they would attack as they had done before.

The only spot where they could put up a defense for any time would be the pierhead at the break on the opposite side of the reef, and there they would be cut off from all food supplies.

"It's a good thing we have plenty of food here and water," said Floyd. "We have water enough for a week and food for a fortnight. I expect those fellows will get back to the fishing camp tomorrow and leave us alone."

He said it for the sake of saying something, but Isbel shook her head.

She knew the men they had to deal with.

"They will never leave us till we kill them or they kill us," said she, clearing the things from the table. "Or," she finished, "till we kill Sru."

"Yes," said Floyd, "he's the center of the whole business. Well, we will do our best to nail him."

He rose up and went to one of the loopholes by the door. Peeping through, he could see the trade goods still lying on the sands, but not a sign of the enemy.

One of the most disturbing things in this fight was the manner in which the attackers would suddenly efface themselves, as after the first fight over on the fishing beach. They had vanished now as though annihilated, leaving neither outpost nor sign to hint of what plan they might be brewing.

The moon was very low down over the western reef. It was close to dawn, and soon the sun would be flooding the world with light. If another attack was in preparation it would not be long delayed, yet not a sound came to indicate an approach to the house.

"All the same they will come," said Isbel, "and they will come before day."

"You think so?" asked Floyd.

Isbel nodded. She had taken a seat on one of the chairs, and was sitting with her hands clasping her knees. Floyd, who had taken his seat at the table, was leaning his arms upon it and following with his eyes the graining of the wood.

The spider overhead, who had finished making, or maybe repairing, his net, had just fallen on luck; a long-legged fly that had been flitting about the rafters was his prisoner.

The fly, caught by a few strands of the infernal web, was making a fierce resistance. It was caught by one of its legs and by the body. The wings were free, and the buzz of their vibration made Floyd look up.

Then, for something to do, he rose and examined the thing more closely. Isbel rose, too.

The spider was quite patient about his work, and horribly scientific in his methods. The buzzing wings did not disturb him in the least. He ascended to the rafter which was his base, and then came down again, fixed a thread to one of his victim's legs, and reascended. He was binding the legs together, making everything absolutely secure before the final assault and the moment when he would bury his fangs in his prey and suck its blood.

Watching the little tragedy, Floyd and Isbel for a moment almost forgot their own position. Then Floyd, with a laugh, raised his finger and broke the strands of the web, releasing the fly.

"It was in about as bad a position as we are," said he. "Maybe it's an omen."

Isbel did not know what the word "omen" meant, nor did she ask, for at that moment, as they stood in silence watching the released one trying its wings again, a sound coming from the back of the house made them turn.

A soft, stealthy sound, as though people were creeping close to the wall, and now and then the sharp snap of some stick of the undergrowth trodden upon and broken.

Floyd, springing to the table, seized a revolver and began firing through the loophole of the back wall. He fired six shots at random; then he paused to listen.

The sound continued. The men outside were evidently crouching at whatever work they were on, and so were safe and below the level of the loopholes.

"Brutes!" said he. "There is no chance of reaching them, but what on earth can they be about?"

Isbel, who had been peeping through

one of the chinks near the door, came toward him.

"The day has broken," said she.

CHAPTER XXIII.

DAYBREAK.

Even as she spoke the words, and as though in answer to the question he had asked, a faint smell of burning filled the air of the room, and through one of the chinks, like a little gray snake, a wreath of smoke coiled upward, clinging to the woodwork.

"So that's what they were doing!" cried Floyd. "They have fired the house."

Through every chink and crevice a curl of smoke was licking upward, and now came the sharp, crackling sound of brushwood burning and the snap and hiss of sticks blazing alight.

The air of the room was already turned to a gray haze of smoke, smoke that made the eyes smart, the smoke of burning hibiscus and poison oak and bay cedar bush, choking and suffocating fumes, followed now by flames as the wretches outside flung coconut shells on the fire, shells that blazed like flare lamps once ignited.

"The place will burn like a torch," said Floyd, "once the scantling gets alight. Listen! What's that above? They have got on the roof; they are lighting it. We must quit and make a dash for the dinghy. It's our only chance. Wait!"

He rushed into the smaller room, and returned with something in his hands. It was the tin box holding the pearls.

He opened it, emptied the contents wrapped in cotton wool, and filled his pockets.

"I'm not going to leave these behind," said he, speaking as if to himself. Then to Isbel: "Take a revolver and this package of ammunition. I'll take the other and a rifle. Unbar the door and run first. Don't stop to fire unless you can't help. Hark! What's that?"

A sound like a sharp clap of thunder shook the air and was followed by a yell from the grove behind the house and from the beach on either side.

"Open the door!" said Floyd.

Isbel undid the bars, and flung the door wide. Instantly the draft settling from the grove filled the place with volumes of smoke.

"Now," said Floyd, "run!"

They dashed out of the house, across the beach, running, half blind with the effects of the smoke. They had expected a flight of spears. They found instead an empty beach, full dawn, and a reef over which the last of their assailants were scrambling.

A great white cloud filled the break of the reef. It was the *Southern Cross* coming in with a fair wind and a flooding tide.

The first rays of the sun were on her topsails, which the wind scarcely filled. The water under her was still violet with night. White gulls, rose-colored gulls, golden gulls, as the sunrise took them, were flocking and screaming in the pale sapphire above her, schooner, gulls, lagoon, and sky making a picture more lovely than a dream.

As she cleared the reef entrance and rounded to her anchorage, the wind spilling out of her sails, a plume of smoke broke from her, and again the report of a gun shook the island.

As it died away the splash of the anchor was followed by the roar of the chain through the hawse pipe, and the *Southern Cross*, her long, long journey over, lay at her moorings swinging to the incoming tide.

Isbel turned to Floyd and clung to him, weeping. All her courage had suddenly vanished now that there was no need for it.

Floyd, holding her tight in his arms, kissed her black, perfumed hair. The

flower had fallen, but a trace of its scent remained.

It was the moment of his life, and then she drew away from him, cast one dark glance obliquely up at him, and stood with her breast heaving and both hands shading her eyes.

She was looking over the water in the direction of the *Southern Cross*.

The schooner was lowering a boat. It was the whaleboat, and Floyd saw the men tumbling into her, followed by a white-clad figure—Schumer.

Even at that distance he recognized Schumer. Following Schumer came another white-clad figure, evidently a European.

Besides the two white men there were twelve hands in the boat, fourteen in all, and as she approached rapidly, urged by the long ash sweeps, Floyd saw the rifles with which the men were armed, the barrels showing as they rested, muzzle upward, by the seats.

As the boat came ashore Schumer, from his place in the stern sheets, waved his hand to Floyd. Then the fellows, jumping out, beached the boat, and Schumer, following them, set foot on the sand.

He did not waste words.

He had seen the whole business at a glance, and he had brought canvas buckets. Dense columns of smoke were rising from the back part of the house, but the roof had fortunately not caught alight. The crew had their orders, and in a moment they were filling the buckets and carrying them up to the grove while Schumer, Floyd, and the newcomer helped and superintended.

The mutineers had piled stacks of underwood, sticks, and all the rubbish they could find against the house wall. The stuff was burning with more smoke than flame, and the fire had fortunately taken no considerable hold on the building. They kicked the rubbish aside, flung water on the wall, and in twenty minutes or so the situation was saved.

Isbel had been posted by Schumer as a lookout in case the enemy should return. She had not contented herself by standing by as a watch, but had gone as far as the grove end, from where the reef could be seen up to the pierhead. She had seen nothing. The whole crowd of the enemy, in fact, had scattered back to the fishing camp by the road they had come the night before, and Schumer, standing now on the beach, could see them through his glass congregated about the tents.

Then he turned to Floyd. "Well," said he, "you seem to have had a lively time. What was the bother?"

Floyd explained in a few words, and, Isbel not being by, told of the trouble with Sru.

"He was plotting mischief all the time," said Floyd, "and this is the result."

"Well," said Schumer, "we will deal with the gentleman all in good time. What luck have you had with the pearls?"

Floyd told.

Taking off his coat, and laying it on the sands, he began to remove the pearls, in their casings of cotton wool, from the pockets. He explained why he had placed them there, and, as he went on with the work, Schumer and the stranger, standing by, looked on.

Schumer up to this had been too busy to introduce the newcomer. He did so now.

"This is Captain Hakluyt," said he. "He's in this venture, as I will explain to you afterward. His firm owns the *Southern Cross*."

Floyd looked up, and nodded to Hakluyt.

The new man's face was not a certificate of character. There are faces that repel at first sight, and Hakluyt's was one of them.

He had the appearance, not so much of a man who was ill, but of a man who never enjoyed good health.

Anæmic looking despite his exposure to sun and wind, he seemed unable to bear either the full light of the sun or a full gaze. He was continually blinking, and to Floyd in that moment he suggested vividly the idea of a sick owl.

It was the curve of the nose and the blinking of the eyelids that produced this impression. The eyes themselves were not at all owllike, being small and set close together.

The whole figure of the man matched his face, slight and mean, with shoulders sloping like the shoulders of a champagne bottle. It was a figure that no tailor could improve.

His hands, as he stood with the thumbs in the armholes of his waistcoat, showed lean and clawlike, birdlike. Birdlike is the term best suited for the whole man; light, restless, peering, and without grace, for it is a fact that the animal and the bird translated into human terms lose both grace and nobility. Man standing or falling by his approach or recession to the type, man.

As Floyd looked up from his work he took in Hakluyt's appearance fully for the first time, and the idea that this man was the new partner in their concern filled him with repulsion and uneasiness.

He had been on the point of exposing the pearls triumphantly to view, but in a flash he altered his decision, and, asking them to wait for a moment, left his work and ran up to the house for the tin cash box from which he had taken them.

He placed it on the sand, and packing in the precious cotton-wool-covered parcels, closed the lid and handed it to Schumer.

"We can examine them afterward," said he. "Keep them for the present. They are not a bad lot, but they might be better."

"We'll put them in the house," replied Schumer. "I've got a safe on board; brought it from Sydney, but I can't get it ashore till to-morrow. Meanwhile they'll be all right in the house. Well, Hakluyt, what do you think of the island?"

Hakluyt looked about him as though taking stock of the place for the first time.

"It is not so bad," said he. "It is a fair bit of a lagoon, but it might be bigger."

"Oh, it will be big enough for us," replied Schumer, with a laugh. "Come up to the house with me, Floyd, till I put this stuff away. I want to have a talk with you."

They left Hakluyt, and walked up to the house.

"I say," said Floyd, "if that's our new man I don't like the look of him."

Schumer laughed.

"He's not a beauty," said he, "but he's the best I could find. He's Hakluyt & Son. He's the son; the father's dead. He's in a good way of business as a shipowner and ship's chandler in Sydney. He has got the money and the means to help us. I have drawn up a contract with him; he gets a third share."

"A third share. That means that the total profits will be divided into three parts. One for you, one for me, and one for Hakluyt."

"Just so," said Schumer, "and you pay me for the trade goods we salved from the *Tonga*."

"Of course," said Floyd, "but it seems to me that Hakluyt ought to stand in with me and pay something."

"I suggested that, but he refused. He would only come into the deal on condition that he got a third share of the profits without deduction."

Floyd felt inclined to grumble at this. Hakluyt would have the benefit of those goods or what was left of them, but he said nothing. He wanted explanation on another point.

"How about the *Southern Cross?*" said he.

"In what way?"

"Well, we salved her, didn't we, or as good as salved her? Hakluyt ought to pay for that."

"It was this way," replied Schumer. "Before coming into the venture he wanted half profits. He gave me to understand that our connection with the *Southern Cross* was in no way a salving job, since the crew were on board, and he said straight out that he would fight the matter in the courts. Now, as he has lots of money to fight with, and we have none, or next to none, I didn't see any sense in that. He said to me: 'I'll tell you what I'll do. In recognition of your trouble in bringing the schooner back to Sydney, I'll be content to take only a third of the profits in this pearling business. What's more, I will use the schooner for it free of charge and victual and man her.'

"Now, that seemed to me a fair proposition, and I agreed to it. What do you say?"

Floyd did not reply for a moment. He could come to no decision. The whole thing was so intricate and the values involved were such unknown qualities that at last he gave it up. If Schumer was satisfied it was doubtless all right. Schumer knew more of business affairs than he did, and it was better to leave it at that.

"Well," said he, "I suppose you couldn't do better, but it seems to me Hakluyt won't do badly out of the business. Wait till I show you something."

They had reached the house, and, taking the cash box from Schumer, Floyd placed it on the table and opened it.

He carefully removed some of the contents till he came to the package he was looking for; then, carefully removing the cotton wool from it, he exposed the pink pearl.

"Heavens, man!" said Schumer. "Why didn't you tell me of this?"

"Wait!" said Floyd.

He took another small ball of wool from the box, unrolled the wool, and held out the big white pearl.

Schumer laughed.

"Any more?" he asked.

"Not of that size," replied Floyd. "Well, what do you think of them?"

"Think of them? They are a fortune in themselves."

He carefully rolled them up again and replaced them in the box.

Meanwhile Floyd had been unpacking other specimens, which Schumer examined in their turn. He seemed well pleased with the take since his absence, as well he might be.

"I will have the safe brought ashore to-morrow," said he. "Meanwhile they will be all right here. Put them all back and come on. We have to tackle these scamps now and bring them to their senses. I don't want any fighting, if possible, for that would mean killing more of them, and we want them all for the fishery."

"Do you mean to say you are going to trust them to work again?"

"Of course I am. Why, man, it is nothing when one is working fellows like these to have revolts and rows. You shouldn't have let them get so much out of hand. I don't blame you, mind, for you are new to the business, but in the first instance you should have dealt properly with Sru. You should have shot him after that business about the girl. Martial law is the only law by which you can hold your own in a case like this. Well, we will see. Take your gun and come along."

They went out, and Schumer ordered the whaleboat to be manned.

Floyd for the first time recognized that the crew of the whaleboat were the same Kanakas who had formed the

original crew of the *Southern Cross*. Mountain Joe was one of them. He saluted Floyd when he was recognized, and then took his place as stroke oar. Each man had a rifle and seemed to know how to use it, and they had all the stamp of men reliant and trained to arms.

They were not the same men—viewed as fighting men—that Schumer had taken away with him. He had done wonders with them in his absence, and the thought suddenly occurred to Floyd: Did Schumer expect that there would be trouble on the island during his absence? Did he train and arm the crew of the *Southern Cross* in view of this possible trouble?

It seemed so.

Then came another thought: Suppose you had been defeated and killed, would not Schumer have benefited? There would have been one partner the less, and ought he not to have warned you more especially as to the danger of a revolt?

Schumer had, in fact, warned him casually to be on the lookout, but his warning had chiefly to do with the cache and the necessity of preventing its locality and contents from becoming known. He had not dwelt on the matter of a possible revolt, nor had he prepared plans to meet it.

Did he hope to return and find a clear field and his partner put out of the way?

Floyd instantly dismissed the idea as unworthy of himself and Schumer. He had no tittle of real evidence to support such an idea—yet it had occurred to him.

There are some ideas that arise not from any concrete basis, but from vague suggestions. This was one of them.

As they approached the fishing beach they could see the enemy scuttering about in alarm. Fellows came out of the tents, shaded their eyes for a second, and then darted off into the grove. In less than a minute not a soul was in sight.

"There'll be no fighting," said Schumer as the boat came to the beach, and they sprang out. "Floyd, you stay here with the men and I'll take Mountain Joe up to the wood edge and have a palaver. I'll leave my gun with you so they may see we've come for peace, not war. They are sure to be peeping and spying from the trees."

He left the rifle, and, taking Joe with him, walked steadily up from the lagoon edge to the grove. Twenty paces from the trees he stopped and began to speak.

Floyd could hear his voice, and it was strange enough to see him standing there and seemingly addressing the trees.

Mountain Joe also put in a word now and then as if on his own account.

The effect was absolutely negative, and Floyd expected to see them turn and come back.

But Schumer knew the native mind and its ways, and he did not seem the least disconcerted at his failure. He paused in his oration, walked up and down a bit, and then began to talk again.

Presently, not from the trees before him, but from the trees at the left-hand side of the grove, a native appeared. He stood for a moment, now resting on one foot, now on the other. Then he said a few words, to which Schumer replied.

They kept this up for a minute or so, and then, from the wood, another native joined the first, then another and another.

"They are all right now," cried Schumer to Floyd. "Come up and help to jaw them. Leave your gun behind."

Floyd handed his rifle to one of the men and came right up to the group of natives before whom Schumer was now standing. He was talking to them,

to use his own expression, like a Dutch uncle. Talking as only he knew how.

The Polynesian native, pick him up in most places, has a good deal of humor in his composition. He can both feel and use sarcasm. He has over and above this a certain bonhomie, a good spirit readily worked if one knows how.

Schumer knew how. He did not speak them fair by any means. He told them what was in his mind about them, told them they were pigs who would have dashed to their own destruction but for his arrival, yet told them it in a way that did not stir resentment.

These half-civilized creatures had been cast right back into savagery by some influence beyond their control. Sru had not been the influence, but he had worked it, just as a sorcerer might raise a devil.

Sru had not yet made his appearance. Schumer asked for him, and the reply came that he was dead and lying over somewhere in the grove near the house. One of the stray shots fired by Floyd while the brushwood was being placed against the house wall had found Sru and sent him to his last account.

"Well," said Schumer, "that's the best news we have had yet. It clears up everything. You don't want to punish these fellows, do you? Seems to me you have given them a pretty good grueling already, three dead and several wounded."

"I don't want to punish them," said Floyd. "You can tell them I call it quits. Sru was the man most to blame, and now he is dead. But there is one man I have a grudge against—Timau—and I don't see him here."

"Timau," said Schumer. "Which one is that?"

"He's a fellow whose life I saved at a great deal of risk and trouble. He stepped into one of those big clamshells and got seized, and I managed to free him, but he's not here."

Schumer turned to the natives and asked them where Timau was; then he translated to Floyd.

"It seems he wouldn't take part in the business because you had brought him back from the dead."

'So I did, with artificial respiration."

"Just so—and Sru bound him and put him in one of the tents. He's there now. We had better go and loose him."

They walked up to the tents, and there sure enough they found Timau lying on his side and chewing tobacco. He had managed to get one arm free and could have freed himself entirely had he taken the trouble. He had not. He just lay there, chewing and waiting on events. He was the laziest of the whole crowd employed on the fishery, and since his return from death he seemed to take everything as a fatalist.

But he had refused to join in the attack on Floyd.

Schumer undid his bonds, and he stood up, stretched himself, grunted, and walked off to join the others.

Schumer looked after him.

"He's a cool customer. Well, there's an end of the business. To-morrow they will all be working again, except the dead men. Now let's get back and bury Sru. We'll have to hunt for him in the grove. Then you can come on board and we will have something to eat. You haven't had breakfast?"

"Lord, no!" replied Floyd. "I had a sort of supper some time in the night, but what I want most is sleep. I'll lie down and have a snooze when we have finished up with Sru."

They came back to the house, and then started out to find what the grove had to reveal to them.

The cache had been half rifled, but most of the goods that had been taken were still lying on the sands and had not been injured.

Then they found Sru lying at the foot of an artu tree, a broken spear

in his hand. He was lying on his face, and he would not trouble them any more.

Schumer buried him after a fashion of his own. He ordered two of the crew to carry the deceased to the pier-head at the break in the reef and cast him to the sharks.

"They'll look after him," said he.

CHAPTER XXIV.

HAKLUYT.

Next day work resumed as usual, Hakluyt assisting, or, at least, standing by to watch the proceedings.

The mutineers had destroyed nothing. All the shell that had been taken since the beginning of the work was intact, and the oysters that lay awaiting search when the revolt broke out were still there, lying where they had been left. As though fate wished to stimulate Hakluyt's interest in the business on this the first day of resumption of work the take proved to be exceptionally good. Three large pearls of good size and form came to hand besides several of less value.

"You mustn't reckon every day's take by this," said Schumer. "Often there's nothing much. In this business it's the take of a week or month that counts."

"All the same it is good," said Hakluyt. He spoke as though there were some obstruction in his nasal organ, and Floyd, listening to him and watching him, felt more than ever the aversion for him that had influenced him so powerfully on their first meeting.

Hakluyt watched all the proceedings just as a predatory bird watches its prey. He stood with his thumbs in the armholes of his waistcoat—his favorite attitude—a cigar in his mouth, and his panama hat tilted back. He had a habit of thrusting his head forward, tortoiselike—one might have fancied that his neck was telescopic like the neck of a tortoise—and continually he kept drumming on his chest with his finger tips. On the middle finger of his left hand he wore a huge ring set with a diamond, an adornment that did not match with the shabby suit of white drill that flapped about him in the wind, showing to full disadvantage the thinness of his legs and arms and the protuberance of his stomach.

"That chap," thought Floyd to himself, "would do anything short of murder—and maybe wouldn't stop at that."

Isbel also did not seem to have much liking for Hakluyt.

With the return of Schumer, Isbel had gone right back to her previous position in the social scale of the island and also to her home in the grove. She helped in the cooking as before, and she kept watch for ships when Floyd and his companions were over at the fishing grounds, but beyond that she had little to do with them.

From the moment of the landing of Schumer she had avoided Floyd. It was as though a veil had suddenly fallen between them after that moment when suddenly released from death she had clung to him as they stood watching the *Southern Cross* casting anchor. She had drawn away, and now it was as though nothing had ever been between them at all, as though they had never fought together and lived together and faced death together.

Floyd, simple soul, could not understand her in the least. At first he was perplexed, thought he had done something to offend her, and tried to imagine what it could be. Then he sulked—turned his head away when she drew near and avoided speaking to her.

One day, a week after the return of Schumer, he was on the windward side of the reef behind the grove and the house. Schumer and Hakluyt were over at the fishing camp. It was an hour before noon, and he had finished

the work he had been upon and was seated on a lump of coral watching the breakers coming in, a wonderful vision of sunlit foam.

The breeze brought the spray almost to his feet, and a scent of ozone and seaweed and salt that seemed to come from the very heart of the sea.

As he sat like this a shadow fell on the coral before him, and, turning, he saw Isbel.

She sat down beside him.

He had been thinking of her, and nothing could have surprised him more than this action of hers in coming and sitting beside him. He moved slightly as though to make room for her, and then turned his face seaward again.

A frigate bird was approaching the island, moving without an effort on the wind. They watched it as it came along. Its shadow passed over them and vanished, and Floyd, turning his head to take a last look at the bird, found himself face to face with his companion.

Isbel had not spoken a word, but now, as their eyes met, her lips moved as though she were whispering something to herself impossible to say aloud. She seemed like a person in a trance, and her eyes, wide-pupiled and fixed on those of her companion, seemed trying to tell something impossible to tell by speech.

Next moment he had taken her in his arms. For a moment she resisted slightly, as though that soul, strange and free as the soul of the sea bird, were struggling feebly against the final capture of man.

Then she raised her lips to his.

CHAPTER XXV.

ORDERED TO SYDNEY.

Next morning Schumer took Floyd aside.

"Hakluyt is well pleased with the work here," said he. "He thinks the prospects even better than I made them out to him, and now he wants to go back."

"Does he?" said Floyd. The news came as a pleasant surprise.

"Yes, he has got his business in Sydney to attend to and he's keen on getting back at once. Of course he goes in the *Southern Cross,* but he can't go alone, for the schooner has to be brought back."

"To be sure."

"You must go with him," said Schumer. "There is no one else for the job."

"I!" exclaimed Floyd.

"Yes, there is no one else. I have been away too long. In fact I only got back in time to save the situation. You are a very good fellow, Floyd, but you aren't much use for working natives. It's not your business in life; it is mine."

"But see here," said the other, "why can't Hakluyt send the schooner back with another man in charge? There are lots of men in Sydney who could do the job."

"Yes, and what would that mean? Letting another man into our secrets. Surely you are not against doing your share of the work."

"I!" cried Floyd, flushing. "Have I ever refused to do all in my power to help? Of course I will go. Only, the thing has come on me as a surprise, and, I will say it frankly, an unpleasant surprise. You say Hakluyt wants to go back at once. Well, I think you might have told me of it some days ago. You must have known all along."

"I did not," said Schumer. "Of course I knew he wanted to go, but I did not know he wanted to go so soon. What does it matter? You have no preparations to make."

"How about the navigating on the way back?" asked Floyd, ignoring the last remark. "You had Hakluyt to help you coming, but if I am to come back

single-handed it seems to me I will be in a bad way."

"You will have Mountain Joe," replied Schumer. "I have given special attention to that gentleman's education on the voyage to Sydney and back. You remember he could work out a dead reckoning even when I took him in hand. He was absolutely useless by himself, but under guidance he could be quite useful. Well, he knows a lot more now, and if I could get to Sydney with him as he was then, you can surely get back from Sydney with him as he is now."

"Oh, I suppose that will be all right," said Floyd. "And what am I to do in Sydney besides dumping Hakluyt there?"

"You will unlade the shell which I am sending and take in some more provisions. The *Southern Cross* wants an overhaul—that will take a week or ten days—she wants some new spars and a few barnacles scraped off her. We want a big lot of canned stuff, vegetables, and bully beef. I'll talk to you to-night about that. Hakluyt is in the way of getting it cheaper than we could if we were working alone."

"How long do you think we will have to stay in Sydney?"

"Oh, about three weeks or so."

"It will be over two months before I can get back."

"About that."

"And when exactly do you want me to start?"

"Oh, in a couple of days. It will take us that to get the shell aboard. I am going to start on the work this morning. I'll get all the hands on it, crew and fishermen both. We can get the stuff on board on the raft and with the help of the whaleboat."

"Very well," said Floyd, "I'll go."

He turned away and walked along the lagoon edge. Always when Fortune turned toward him she had something unpleasant to add to her gifts. The pink pearl had been followed by the running away of Isbel, and the great white pearl by the mutiny of the hands. Isbel had been given to him only yesterday, and now he had to leave her.

Since yesterday he had lived in a state of extraordinary happiness. Wonderland. To love and to find that you are loved. There is nothing else. No dream can come near this reality. And now he had to leave her.

He crossed the reef, and stood looking out to sea.

The Pacific lay blazing beneath the morning light, blue beyond the sun dazzle and heaving shoreward to burst in foam at his feet. The breeze came fresh across it, vivid and full of life. Floyd loved the sea. It had become part of his nature and part of his being. It was his second mother. But to-day he was looking at it with fresh eyes. It was no longer the sea; it was separation from all he cared for and all he loved. He would have to leave Isbel and leave her with Schumer.

When he had landed on the island first, Schumer had impressed him favorably, but little by little and by that slow process through which a complex and illusive personality makes its quality known to a simple and straightforward mind, he had come to the point of distrust as regards Schumer.

He had no fear at all that Schumer would harm Isbel. Isbel was a person who could well take care of herself, and Schumer, he distinctly felt, was not a man dangerous to women. The instinctive feeling of danger had to do with himself. He was a fifth wheel in Schumer's chariot, an absorber of profits, and though he refused the thought that Schumer might attempt to get rid of him, he could not refuse the instinct.

He felt suddenly surrounded by an atmosphere of danger none the less disturbing from the fact that he could not

tell from what point it arose. He disliked this journey to Sydney, and he disliked Hakluyt even more.

Brave as any man could be, he feared for his own safety, not for his own sake, but for the sake of Isbel. Should anything happen to him what would become of her?

And there was nothing he could do. He was completely in the grasp of events. He could not refuse to perform this obvious duty that had suddenly been laid down before him by Schumer. He could not take Isbel with him, and he could not take any precautions as to his own safety beyond simple watchfulness.

He turned back from the sea, and as he turned he saw Isbel. She was standing at the edge of the grove, and the trees quite sheltered them from the sight of the people by the house. He came toward her, and they entered the grove together.

Close to the sea edge of the grove a huge tree had fallen. Rotten with age, it had crashed its way through the lesser trees and lay like a dead giant over which the undergrowth had cast its green skirts in part. They sat down upon it, and Isbel, nestling up close beside him, rested her head upon his shoulder.

Then he told her that he was going. Told her the whole thing and the reasons that held him. Told her that the separation would only be for a little while, and surely, surely he would come back, and as he talked and explained he felt her shudder as a person shudders from the cold.

CHAPTER XXVI.

GOOD-BY.

All that morning and all that day Schumer kept the hands busy at work bringing the shell across the lagoon and storing it aboard the *Southern Cross*. Some of it was rafted over and some brought in the whaleboat. Schumer superintended everything himself, and now that speed was urgent he proved what he could do as a driver.

Never did a Yankee stevedore work a set of hands harder. His voice acted as a whiplash, and his energy infected everybody.

Next day it was the same, so that at sundown the last of the shell was on board, the locking bars secured, and nothing remained but to take on the water.

"We can do that to-night," said Schumer, "and if this wind holds, though there is not much of it, you will be able to start at sunup. It will be slack tide about then. Now if you will come up to the house I will give you the last details of what you have to do in Sydney. There is nothing like having everything cut and dried."

They went up to the house, and Schumer at once plunged into accounts. He had tabulated a list of all the stores required, and he had written down the main points in Floyd's program, even to the address of a house, where he could stay.

Hakluyt looked on while the two men talked, and, when they had finished, the three went out, Hakluyt and Schumer to see to the watering of the vessel and Floyd to find Isbel.

It was a night of the full moon, a hot, almost windless, night filled with the scent of flowers and the song of the reef.

The moon hung almost in the zenith, the apex of a pyramid of light, and under the silent whiteness of the moon the island lay clipping the vast pond of the lagoon in its arms as a mistress holds her lover.

Hakluyt and Schumer had taken the boat to fetch the water casks, and from away out over the water came the sound of the oars. The fellows over at the fishing camp were singing, untired by their day's work, and now and

then on a stronger puff of wind a snatch of their song came over the lagoon water, and, just for a moment, as Floyd stood by the water edge, all his trouble of mind lifted from him—for a moment. The brilliant light, the beauty of the scene before him, the snatch of song from the fishing camp, and the perfume of the flower-scented wind seemed to open doors in his mind through which from some remote past came happiness. The moonlight for a moment caught some magic from the morning of the world. Then he turned and went toward the outer reef edge, where Isbel was waiting for him.

An hour before dawn the beach before the house was astir. The moon had sunk, but the stars gave enough light to work by. The water was all aboard, and now some coconuts, breadfruit, and taro roots were being taken off. Floyd was directing operations. He had said good-by to Isbel, who was nowhere to be seen. He sat in the stern sheets of the fruit boat, steering, and when the stuff was transshipped he boarded the *Southern Cross* and sent the empty boat back for Schumer and Hakluyt.

Schumer came on board, and stood chatting while the hands were at the capstan bars getting the slack of the anchor chain in. Then when the mainsail was being set and the hands were at the halyards, Schumer slipped over the side into the boat and pushed off for shore.

As the anchor came up, Floyd, who was forward superintending the men, left Joe to see to the securing of it and came aft to where Hakluyt was standing by the wheel.

The dawn was now bright in a sky that showed scarcely a trace of morning bank. It came over the reef and between the palms, whose trunks stood like bars against the brightening east. It flooded the lagoon as the schooner gathered way, and the great trapezium of the mainsail showed a tip of rose gold as they passed the pierheads of the reef. On the pierhead to port something showed white against the coral. It was Isbel.

The *Southern Cross* rose to the swell at the break of the reef just as a horse rises to a low fence, the foam roared in her wake, and the noise of it mixed with the clatter of the rudder chain as the fellow at the wheel twirled the spokes. Floyd raised his hand, and Isbel signaled in reply as the wind, now gaining its morning strength, pressed the schooner over to the tune of straining cordage and creaking blocks.

Floyd, leaning on the after rail, looked backward. The little figure of Isbel was no longer to be seen, blotted out by distance. Then distance took the reef, leaving only a trace of palm tops above the blazing water, and in an hour the island of pearls had vanished like a dream beyond the edge of the sea.

CHAPTER XXVII.

SYDNEY.

Hakluyt, despite his appearance, was a very efficient schooner captain, and as day followed day, Floyd's respect for him as a sailor rose more and more. As a man, he disliked him just as much as ever.

It was not an active dislike. His temper never rose against him, for Hakluyt, to give him his due, was perfectly easy to get on with. He neither swore at the hands nor heckled the subordinate officer. On the contrary, he seemed always endeavoring to make himself agreeable, always anxious for smooth water. The dislike that Floyd had for him was instinctive and beyond the reach of reason, but he did not show it outwardly as he would have done had Hakluyt been difficult to get on with.

The *Southern Cross* was a good deal

of a Dutch ship. Hakluyt hailed originally from Amsterdam, and he brought the Dutch flavor with him. He was an eternal cigar smoker, and the food and drink on board were reminiscent of Holland, especially the De Kuyper. There was a certain slackness also, and a go-as-you-please method of doing things foreign to an English ship.

Yet she made good way without taking any risk. The great art of schooner sailing as laid down by Hakluyt was formulated by him as follows: "Carry all the canvas that you can without danger to your sticks."

And this art implied not only good handling of your vessel, but incessant weather watchfulness, at all events in the Pacific, where squalls drop on you out of a perfectly fair sky.

Three weeks brought them to Sydney, and though it was not Floyd's first acquaintance with the harbor which seems to have been made when the gods were making harbors for great fleets that have vanished, it still filled him with the same wonder and admiration and surprise.

They anchored close to McGinnis' wharf, and Floyd on the morning of his arrival found himself a comparatively free man for a few days.

"Run round the town and amuse yourself," said Hakluyt. "Id is worth seeing. Id is good to stretch one's legs after a voyage, but first come to my place and I will show you over."

Hakluyt had two places, one on the wharves and the other an office on Market Street.

The office was a dingy-looking place with wire blinds to the windows inscribed with the legend "Hakluyt & Son" done in dingy gold.

The place on the wharf was much more lively and pleasing to the mind.

It was an enormous emporium where everything was sold that could be wanted by a shipmaster. Here you could buy an oilskin coat or the provisions for a voyage round the world. It was all the same to Hakluyt. He could put you in the way of a spare anchor or a barrel of petroleum or a slush tub with the same hand that dealt out tobacco and preserved fruit. His storehouses were enormous, he victualed his own ships, and his influence in the maritime world was ubiquitous.

A man who can give you a job if you are out of work or if your board of trade certificates are not quite clear is a power. A man who can lend you money and who is willing to do it if you are on your beam ends is also a power.

Hakluyt had helped many a man. He had established that reputation, yet the men he helped had better have gone without his help, for once he touched a man in this way he held him. The money he lent always, or nearly always, returned to him with heavy interest. Sometimes he made a dead loss. He did not mind that, for he was a man who reckoned up things in the large, and in the large he always profited, with this addition—he could always put his hand on a man ready and able to do a dangerous or dirty job for him.

Floyd, when Hakluyt had shown him over the wharfside store, took his gear to the house recommended by Schumer, where he obtained rooms. Then he went out to see the town, and finished up by dining at a restaurant and going to the theater.

Next morning he went down to superintend the towing of the *Southern Cross* into dry dock for an overhaul. This business held him for most of the day, and most of the next day he spent at the dock having a good look at the vessel's copper sheathing. It seemed to him that the dry docking was a work of supererogation. The *Southern Cross* was in excellent condition, and Hakluyt was not the man to waste money in frills. Why had he gone to this expense?

There were several of Hakluyt's ships in the harbor, and chumming up with one of the wharfside loafers, he managed to obtain a good deal of information as to Hakluyt and his ships.

Said the broken-down sailorman who was one reek of rum and navy twist:

"*Southern Cross* in dry dock havin' her bottom scraped? I dunno in the nation what bee's got into Hakluyt's bonnet. There's the *Mary and Louise* —that's her lyin' by the oil tank—the weeds fathoms long on her keel and the barnacles as big as saucers on her copper, yet she's good enough to put out o' port without no dry dockin'. There's the *Boomerang,* another of his tubs. You can se her forrard, the yaller one, beyond that point. She's wrong from stem to rudder, she's held together mostly by her paint, she hasn't seen a dry dock for years, an' the sight of one would make her spew her bolts. I reckon she's just held together by the salt water she floats in, yet he docks the *Southern Cross!* Is that all his vessels? No, it ain't. D'you see that schooner out there by the whistlin' buoy? She's the *Domain.* She's Hakluyt's. Just come back from the islands a month ago. Been lyin' there waitin' for I don't know what ever since. The copra's been out of her this fortnight, and there she lays waitin' her job.

"What sort o' man is Hakluyt? Well, he's no sort to speak of. He blew in here twenty years ago out of a Dutch ship that was glad to get rid of him, and here he's stuck and prospered till he's fair rotten with money and has his thumb on the town and half the harbor side as well. He's owner and ship's chandler both. I've heard folk say he's sold his soul to the devil, but that's a lie, for he ain't got a soul to sell. The grub aboard his ships is most salt horse, and the bread bags has to be tethered they're that lively with the weevils. Go and ask any sailorman on the front, if you don't believe me."

Floyd did not need to confirm this view of Hakluyt by making inquiries of sailormen on the front. He took a long look at the *Domain,* and then turned away from the wharfside and walked uptown to Hakluyt's office.

Hakluyt was in, and they went over the list of stores together.

"You leave id all with me," said Hakluyt. "I shall have them all aboard by the date of sailing. Well, and how do you like Sydney?"

Floyd expressed his opinion of Sydney. The dullest place in the world for a lone man unaddicted to barroom festivity or horse-racing. Hakluyt gave him a pass for the theater, regretted that he could not ask him to dinner, as he was a lone bachelor, told him to enjoy himself, and dismissed him.

During the next fortnight Floyd managed to amuse himself innocently enough. He had never been much of a reading man, but picking up a cheap edition of the "Count of Monte Cristo," he suddenly found a new world open before him. He read it in bed at night, and he took it out with him and read it by the sea front.

It occupied a good deal of his time, as he was a slow reader, and it gave him a new horizon and new ideas and a new energy.

Monte Cristo's discovery of the treasure, his escape from the Château d'If, the girl he loved, his cruel separation from her, his revenge, all these things appealed to his mind with the power of reality, as they have appealed to minds all the world over and as they ever will appeal.

When he had finished "Monte Cristo," he bought a new novel. It was about a young lady, who, starting life as a shop assistant, married a duke at the end of the third chapter. The book did not hold him, and he fell back on fishing.

There is good fishing to be had in the neighborhood of Sydney, and one day toward the end of the third week and close now to the time of the sailing of the *Southern Cross,* he met an individual on one of these fishing excursions, a joyous and friendly personage who, returning with him to Sydney, proposed drinks and led the way into a bar.

Floyd was not a drinking man, but the best of men make mistakes, and the hot air of the bar, the friendliness of his new companion, the pleasure of having some one to talk to, and the strength of the whisky had their effect. He had not eaten since breakfast.

Presently he found himself one of a mixed company. His first acquaintance had departed, yet he did not trouble about that. He scarcely recognized the fact, and presently he recognized nothing. He had been doped. One of these new friends had done the business, and an hour later he found himself lying on a couch in Hakluyt's inner office, of all places in the world, his pockets empty and his throat like a fiery furnace.

He recognized at once his position. He had been robbed and left in the street and had managed to reach Hakluyt's by that instinct for a known place common to homing pigeons and drunken men, an instinct that in the man is much more tricky than in the bird, as in the case of Floyd, who, instead of finding himself in his rooms, found himself at Hakluyt's.

His mind, as he lay there on the couch, was terribly lucid. He remembered everything up to a certain point.

It was still daylight, so that his intoxication must have passed away very quickly, as it does in those instances where it is produced by a doper and through the medium of a "knock-out drop" placed in the victim's drink; but Floyd knew nothing of this. He did not suspect that he had been doped by some scoundrel for the purpose of robbery. He only recognized that he had been drunk and incapable, and, to use the old term so unfair to animals, had made a beast of himself.

The awful depression that comes after drink or drugs had a hold upon him, and the unfair spirit that waits upon depression of this sort began to exercise its power.

It showed him the vision of Isbel standing on the reef against a background of blue and burning sea; it showed him the coconut trees and breadfruits, their fronds and foliage moving in the wind; it showed him all that was brilliant and fresh and pure in that extraordinary life through which he had passed out there, away from civilization and its dirt, and then it showed him himself lying in Hakluyt's dusty office recovering from drink and fortunate in not having been jailed.

It seemed to his simple mind that he had sinned against Isbel and that he never, never could rise from his degradation and look in her face again. All his homesickness for the island came upon him like a wave, and he was endeavoring to raise himself on his arm to leave the couch when a voice from the outer office made him lie down again.

It was Hakluyt's voice. He had just entered, and Floyd, as he lay, heard the door of the outer office close.

"Well," said Hakluyt, who seemed to be continuing a conversation begun outside, "id is just so. There is noding to fear. Wait for a moment, though."

He came to the door of the inner office where Floyd was lying, pushed it more widely open, and peeped in.

Floyd, more from shame than any other reason, lay with his eyes closed.

Hakluyt stood looking at him for a few seconds, then he closed the door.

Floyd instantly opened his eyes and sat up on the couch.

Hakluyt and the other man, whoever he might be, had been talking about him. Of that he felt certain. He had no concrete evidence to go upon, yet he felt sure that he had been under discussion and that they were discussing him now. His ego had become abnormally sensitive, fortunately for him. He felt sure that his disgraceful conduct was the subject of their talk, and the overmastering desire to hear the worst that could be said of him prompted him to leave the couch, approach the door, and put his ear to the paneling. He heard Hakluyt's voice and every word that he said distinctly.

"Look here, Captain Luckman," said Hakluyt, "when I say a thing I mean id. You need have no fear. Schumer will see that there is no evidence against you. You will dispose of the young man so that no trouble will be made, no questions asked. You will not raise the price on me on that account. You run no risk. That is all Schumer's work, and no blood need be spilled. Schumer is nod the man to make any blunder. Two hundred pounds now and two hundred when you get back. That is my uldimatum, and what have you to do for that—noding, *absolutely* noding."

"I'm not troubling about what Schumer does to the blighter," came Luckman's voice. "I'm thinking of myself, and I say it's not enough. Two-fifty down and two-fifty when I get back is *my* ultimatum, and poor enough pay it is for a job like that."

Floyd heard Hakluyt laugh. Just a single laugh, mirthless as a rap on a coffin lid.

"So you would dictate terms to me," said he. "Why, God bless my soul," his voice rising in inflection, "suppose I order you from my office, suppose I say to you, 'Get clear out of this place, Captain Luckman, and never you ender id again,' hey? Suppose I say to you, 'Very well, Captain Luckman, all those papers in my hands go to the owners of the *Morning Star*. Sent anonymous.' Suppose——"

"Oh, stow that!" came Luckman's voice. "Suppose I put the mouth of a revolver at your head and blow out your dirty brains? I'd do that same as I'd poison a rat, if you cut any capers with my affairs. You're not going to frighten me with threats. Put me beyond a certain point and I'd do you up before the authorities could nab me, and if they did nab me I'd croak you when I came out of quod. Talk like a man to a man or I'll leave your office and let you do your own dirty work. Who else is there in Sydney you could get?"

"Hundreds," said Hakluyt.

"Not one," replied Luckman. "Not one who would not either mess it or give the show away in drink some time or another. Five hundred is my price. Two-fifty down, two-fifty when I land back. Not a halfpenny less will I take."

In the momentary silence that followed, Floyd heard a drawer opened, and then came Hakluyt's voice counting: "One, two, three, four—*and* five."

Then Luckman's.

"*And* five. Right you are."

The money was being paid over, and from the chinking sound it was being paid in gold, five bags of fifty sovereigns each evidently.

Floyd did not wait for any more. He went back to the couch. He had forgotten his position, he had forgotten the drinking bout, he no longer even felt the headache and the parching thirst that had tormented him on waking. Hakluyt and Schumer had made a plan to get rid of him. That was all he knew for the moment. The idea excluded everything else by its monstrosity and strangeness.

The discovery that a plot is on foot

against one's life is the most soul-stirring discovery that a man can make. The knowledge that one is an object of enmity is always disturbing. It unsettles the placidity of the ego, almost more than the discovery that one is an object of love. It also raises the temperature of the soul.

But the discovery that one is plotted against with a view to one's removal from the world is a heart-chilling discovery which at all events in the first moments reduces the temperature of the soul and body both.

Floyd, taking his place on the couch again, closed his eyes. He heard the two men go out; then after a moment he heard Hakluyt return.

Hakluyt opened the door and looked in on him, and Floyd, moving and pretending to wake up, rubbed his eyes. Then he sat up, asked in a confused manner where he was, got on his legs, pretended to stagger, and made for the door.

Hakluyt, nothing loath to get rid of him, followed him to the stair top.

"Where are you off to now?" inquired Hakluyt as the other went down the stairs clutching the banister tightly.

"Going to have a drink," replied Floyd. "See you in the morning."

"Right," said Hakluyt. "Take care of yourself."

In the street Floyd turned into the nearest bar, drank a bottle of soda water, and, having sat for a moment to collect his wits, started for his rooms. He had now entirely recovered mastery of himself. His discovery about Hakluyt was finer than any pick-me-up or tonic, and his mind before the problem clearly stated by fate had little inclination for sleep.

The problem itself, though clearly stated, was intricate and in some respects obscure. If Hakluyt and Schumer wanted to clear him out of the pearl business, if they were scoundrels enough to plot his destruction, why did they not commit the act themselves without calling in a third man? He could imagine no answer to this question that satisfied him, yet there were two answers that might have been put forward by a man with a knowledge of Schumer and Hakluyt, a knowledge of psychology and a knowledge of the world.

Firstly, neither Schumer nor Hakluyt might be murderers in an active sense. Very few men are capable—God be thanked—of taking a fellow man's life in cold blood with their own hands. Schumer was without doubt a man of sensibility and parts. Hakluyt, though without parts or sensibility, was not of the active type of scoundrel. Both of these men might be capable of planning the destruction of another man, but neither would be likely to do the work himself.

Secondly, in a business of this sort it is always safer for the murderer to employ an agent than to act himself.

It is the assassin who leaves traces, the assassin who is followed, the assassin who is hanged.

Of course, he may accuse his employer, but an employer of the type of Schumer or of Hakluyt is not likely to give an agent any chance to make evidence against him. He had paid Luckman in gold, and when the job was finished he would pay him in gold. Gold cannot be traced—and that is one of the greatest pities in the world.

Floyd could see nothing very clearly in the whole of this business with the exception of the fact that foul play was to be used against him, but he saw that fact clearly enough. Leaving the problem of Schumer and Hakluyt aside, he tried to imagine what method Luckman might possibly employ. The remainder of the money was not to be paid to Luckman until his return. Return from where? There could be only one answer to that—from the sea.

Luckman would sail with the *Southern Cross,* be put on board either as mate or supercargo; and on the voyage he would do what he was paid to do.

The *Southern Cross* would most likely never reach the island. An accident would happen to Floyd, and she would return to Sydney. Luckman would be paid off for his job, and Hakluyt, taking charge of the schooner, would sail for the island and shake hands with Schumer over the fact that they two were the sole possessors of the place and its wealth.

And what would happen to Isbel?

At this thought a wave of fury rose in his soul against the men whom he imagined to be plotting his destruction.

He half rose from his bed, and had Hakluyt appeared at that moment it would have been a very bad thing for the shipowner.

Then he lay down, a deep determination in his heart to deal with this matter in the only way it could be dealt with satisfactorily, to match cunning against cunning, and force, at the proper moment, against force.

He determined to say nothing and do nothing to arouse any uneasiness or suspicion in Hakluyt, to welcome Luckman on board, and then to deal with Luckman when they were clear of the Heads.

If Luckman were put on board as mate or supercargo the matter would be easy, but if Luckman were placed over him as captain it would be much more difficult.

If Hakluyt were to suggest such a thing he determined to oppose it, to stand on his dignity and refuse utterly to give up his post as chief in command to a stranger.

Then as he lay down again the thought came to him what a miraculous and providential thing it was that he had gone out fishing that day and fallen in with the bibulous stranger. He had been robbed, it is true, of a few pounds, but that was a very cheap price to pay for his life.

Floyd, without being a professedly religious man, had a deep and intuitive belief in a God who rules the world and deals out justice and protects—though sometimes in a roundabout way—the innocent. He felt that Providence had a hand in this affair, yet he was not of the type that believes in a Providence who works single-handed. He determined that in this matter he would give Providence all the help he could, and having come to this determination he fell asleep.

TO BE CONCLUDED.

The fourth and last installment of this novel will appear in the POPULAR on the stands May 23rd.

ONE WAY NOT TO HANDLE WITNESSES

WHEN former Senator Joseph W. Bailey, of Texas, was practicing law in his native State, he appeared on one occasion as counsel for the defense in a celebrated murder trial. In cross-examining the witnesses for the prosecution, he questioned them sharply, and with that skill for which he is famous.

When he began to call his witnesses, the prosecuting attorney leaned toward him, and said in a loud voice:

"Now, Mr. Bailey, I'm going to handle your witnesses without gloves."

"Well," replied Bailey, in an equally loud tone, "that's more than I would like to do with yours."

A Matter of Geometry

By Captain Ared White

"Tactics is a fine thing and you can't get along without 'em, but you need sand too and a taste for just plain fighting." Take it from Sergeant Brinton, a tough fighter who lost his chance of promotion through his inability to prove that the square upon the hypotenuse of a right-angled triangle is equal to the sum of the squares erected upon the other two sides.

IT used to be," said Sergeant Brinton rather bitterly, "that soldierin' was a red-blooded man's business. Now it's got to be a mere matter of cold-blooded calculation where the biggest man in the end is the one with the longest nose and the biggest pair of specs hung on the end of 'em."

The square-jawed, muscular old sergeant paused abruptly and leaped to attention as a brisk young lieutenant, studious of mien but bristling with activity and authority, came up the desolate troop street.

"Sergeant," ordered the officer sharply, "you will remain in charge of the camp while the troop is deployed on the border, as there is another racket blowing up among the cholos over the way."

"Yes, sir," replied Brinton, saluting smartly, while his face dutifully betrayed no hint of the keen disappointment he must have felt.

"There's just one thing," muttered the sergeant, as his superior strode off, "that stands between my issuing orders to that chap. I can't get higher mathematics through my head—though when it comes to push and dash and tactics, why——"

Brinton lit a commissary weed, and shifted himself nearer his shelter tent to escape encroachment of the hot border sun. He sat there in reflective silence, his gaze lost in the baked, barren swales and gullies of the troubled lands across the sluggish Rio Grande. Presently the troop, in light marching order, went trotting animatedly from the camp, sabers and equipment clanking a tantalizing refrain under which Brinton blanched. At the head, proudly astride a big roan, was the lieutenant, who was in command while the captain was on detached service with a foreign embassy.

"Say!" Sergeant Brinton turned on me sharply. "Prove that the square upon the hypotenuse of a right-angled triangle is equal to the sum of the squares erected upon the other two sides."

"What's that got to do with guarding the camp?" I asked him.

"Everything," he asserted. "Everything in the world. That's the reason I'm here instead of at the head of F troop. I couldn't prove it. The best thing that I can prove is that one American regular is worth two ordinary fighting men or twenty greasers. The best thing I ever proved was that a brisk frontal attack under fire is sometimes

more effective than beatin' around the bamboos a week tryin' out a newfangled enveloping maneuver. That's the reason I am barred from a commission."

He pressed a fresh match to his stale cigar and puffed away an overwhelming pressure of pent-up emotion.

"But I guess there's no use kicking," he said, when his mood had burned itself into a tranquil ember. "I suppose that is the changed order of things."

The second platoon in command of a bandy-legged top sergeant was now swinging by in column of squads which brought a fresh flow of thought to Brinton's poisoned mind.

"There's your modern soldier," said he. "If he hadn't passed the age limit he'd get a commission sure. As it is, they've got him as far as he can go, for he's had his nose inside every book in the military courses and snores mathematics in his sleep."

"This is the day of science and the specialist," I consoled him.

"So I've found," Brinton replied quietly. "But in the hard, harsh din of battle they'll find that a man with dash and savvy and natural cunning is worth as much as ever, even if he does think trig is a short cut for trigger instead of trigonometry. They'll find that red corpuscles will generate more corpses among the enemy than a whole corps of corpulent bookworms. Why, the time I made that frontal attack on the Googoos, in the islands, and won, a young shavetail had been trying higher tactics on the problem for a week."

I left Brinton in his unhappy reflections and rode anon to the border, some two miles away, where there was promise of military diversion. Already there was a sharp rat-a-tat of musketry across the border, where rebels were attacking a final fortified stand of Huerta's hard-driven Federals. It was the third attack in a week, which is something of a record for Mexican fighting men, and as usual outposts were banging away at random.

Lying on the New Mexican side of a little knoll, I observed the little military drama through binoculars. The firing grew, with the morning, into a subdued roar. Billowing clouds of grayish smoke from unmilitary rifles blurred the duller gray of the undulating Mexican terrain. Dots and masses of dots no larger than the minutiæ under a microscope maneuvered back and forth in haphazard fashion, now trying a flanking movement, now seeking an enveloping attack; backing and filling tactically but getting nowhere.

Owing to the great range which the combatants discreetly maintained, the casualties must have been very light. Plainly, one side was afraid and the other dared not. Theirs was a fancy for the smoke and din and picturesqueness of battle, with no taste for the dangers. Indecision and caution were the prevailing features.

As the day grew on, one or two sorties were attempted. Federal cavalry went forth in extended order at a gallop and stampeded a flanking battalion that had worked into position to drive in an enfilading fire on a line of Federal trenches. The infantrymen gave ground to the yelling horsemen, and ran confusedly before the troopers were within two hundred yards of them. Whereat the horsemen, fully satisfied, wheeled and rode back to shelter.

"Oh, to be in command o' that infantry!"

A disgusted exclamation right in my ear nearly precipitated me over the protecting sand dune on which I was lying at the summit of the rise. I turned to see the stolid features of Sergeant Brinton glued to field glasses right behind me. The distant sound of combat had proved too strong a lure, and he had come forward.

"Greasers sighted on this side beyond the camp, and I came out on re-

connoissance," he hastened to explain, in justification of his presence. "Left the corporal in charge of the camp detail while I looked into the matter. Quite justifiable.

"The idea of that infantry retreating," he muttered. "Cavalry ain't dangerous to infantry if the men'll only keep cool and hold their ground. But the idea o' that cavalry drawin' off when they got the doughboys on the run! That's like gettin' your boxin' adversary groggy and then goin' back to your corner to wait till he recovers. It's worse'n watchful waitin' in war time."

"That's the first real action all morning," I suggested.

"Too much tactics," he responded. "I've been here for the last hour, and I've seen everything tried that's in the book. Bet they've got a whole class o' Mexican military grads on each side. Bet there's more trigonometry experts out there in command than you'd find in a State university; and as much red blood as you'd find in a frog.

"What they need," he proceeded critically, "is less tactics and more sand. Bet they've got too many military experts, when what they need is a man or two like that bandit Villa that's been whoopin' things up o' late over below Juarez and Chihuahua. Tactics is a fine thing, and you can't get along without 'em, but you need sand, too, and a taste for just plain fightin'."

He turned and started back on hands and knees.

"Nothin' will come of it until one side runs out o' ammunition or gets bought off," he protested. "I'm goin' back to camp. But if they had a fightin' man to handle 'em, either side could win hands down."

The reckless waste of ammunition kept up all day, with no advantage to either side. As night came on, the musketry lulled; then, after a sudden burst of life at dusk, died out. Only the occasional drumming of an outpost exchange of greetings disturbed the night. As many of the American troops as could be spared were marched back to camp to sleep on their arms, while patrols moved along the boundary through the night. For the better part of a week these hopeless activities continued, with no prospect that the thing would ever come to anything. It became no longer necessary to keep the full command on duty during the day. With the exception of a squad or two, the men were allowed to remain ready for emergencies, but on duty.

It was on the morning of the fifth day thereafter that the thing broke out again in earnest. Long before reveille on that morning we were routed out by a fearful commotion across the international boundary. The troopers tumbled out with the alacrity of firemen responding to an alarm, and whisked off, double time, to the line; empty of stomach but full of hope.

Day was just breaking, a deathly pale glow into which there was torn a thousand flitting jets of fire. Overhead, a starry note from the song of conflict zee-ipped our way every once in a while.

"It looks like they've stirred up a little of the real thing this time," exclaimed the first lieutenant, addressing the captain.

"Nothing more than the usual burning up of ammunition, with the principal danger over here to us innocent bystanders," snapped the captain in a cynical antebreakfast voice.

But as light seeped in it was plain the captain had misjudged the matter, and the first lieutenant was correct in his surmises. There was a desperate struggle on, and the rebels had taken the offensive, with an obvious determination to do or die.

Now the Federals were intrenched on a rise in a broad semicircle, with the American border on one flank and a line of rifle pits on the other. In front

of the rifle pits, on the flank, was a set level strip a full thousand yards across. The improbability of Mexican troops braving that open stretch doubtless accounted for the indifferent strength of that flank. The Federal tacticians knew their countrymen well.

But now there was a movement against this flank which was in accordance with the grim principles of real warfare. The enemy was using rare courage along with his tactics.

A battalion, deployed at intervals of one yard, was halfway across the level danger zone. Behind it, at intervals of fifty yards, were second and third lines. The first line would rush forward a few rods and fall flat, the men scooping with all their might at the hard gray ground until they had burrowed a shallow pit. Then they would move forward, firing, and the second line would move into the vacated pits and dig deeper while the first line, alternately digging and firing to keep down the enemy's fire, started a new set of holes. The third line was thus able to move forward and perfect the rifle pits in comparative safety.

"They'll get the Federals sure with that trick—but why didn't they think of it a week ago?" exclaimed the captain.

"It's a cinch that commander o' the firing line is a new one on the scene," replied the first lieutenant, without lowering his binoculars.

Even through the distance the new commander of the advance element was a warrior of distinct personality. He was a tall, wiry individual, uniformed in what looked like khaki infantry breeches and an old-issue blue shirt. There was about him the cunning of a Japanese field officer and the grit of a seasoned Yankee. For it was plain that the Latin-American firing line didn't particularly relish the music, and it was only his iron hand and mastery of the situation that was taking them across.

"Give 'em the point of it!" yelled an enthusiastic enlisted man, quite unmindful of the fact that his voice was entirely lost to the object of his remarks.

His outburst was inspired by the action of the leader in beating several of his warriors out of the shallow pits with the flat of his saber when they showed an inclination to lie close. Getting the line started, he would lead the advance, bounding forward in big, clumsy bounds, swinging his saber and yelling orders which came to us like the distant squeaking of a phonograph.

"Bet my clothing allowance against ten cents Mex that it's a Yank doin' that trick," shouted the first sergeant.

"An American adventurer taking treatment for ennui, no doubt," responded the captain.

Wagers, at odds, that the maneuver would succeed within an hour were suddenly interrupted by a spectacle that made the troopers gasp in astonishment. It was almost too much to believe even when spread out right before the eyes.

Within three hundred yards of victory, with the Federal troops already breaking and sprinting for the rear, running low, the commander of the advance suddenly threw down his saber and coolly walked back and away by the right flank. It was not panic, not blue flunk, for the fellow paused in a leisurely way to fill and light his pipe.

The border patrol stood speechless, watching the fellow. It had staggered them—this spectacle of a leader taking his men to the front door of victory and then turning off without entering, quite as if he suddenly had lost interest in the game. Stranger still, he did not once look back. The din of battle and the fate of his troops did not appear to hold further interest for him.

"Hi, there! Look at your pesky army, now!" the trumpeter with the bellowslike lungs screamed.

But if this strangely behaved enigma heard he did not heed.

There followed a truly remarkable demonstration of the one-man power in battle—the mysterious capacity to drive scores of men into the face of death. For the very minute that he dropped the reins his line began to break. Before he was out of pistol range they had launched a record-breaking sprint back to the rear. Even the second and third lines broke from their rifle pits and retreated pell-mell.

Straight for the international boundary the apparition that had led them was now headed. Presently he appeared to note the presence of the American troops, halted, leveled his field glasses, and then, turning in a direction parallel with the boundary, disappeared into a brushy swale, and was gone.

"Lieutenant, that man's going to try to cross into the United States at some point," announced the captain. "Put out patrols and bring him in, if he tries it. Be careful," the captain added, "that he doesn't outwit you, for, judging from what we've seen, he ought to be clever at reconnoissance and avoiding patrols."

E Company had interest in nothing else, as the men, late in the day, swung into the mess tent. Sergeant Brinton turned out the guard as the troops marched into camp, standing like a statue labeled "Soldier At Attention," as the column went by. At mess the whole wondrous tale of that charge was told and told again.

"But whatever got into him to quit!" exclaimed first one man and then the other, without any satisfactory theory being offered.

"Maybe he never had any intention o' carrying the thing through—maybe he was just experimenting," suggested Sergeant Brinton, in his turn, "and didn't want to really take sides too strong in the fracas."

Several glances of contempt at such shallow judgment were cast upon Brinton. Otherwise his remark was ignored.

"Or maybe," the sergeant added in a caustic drawl, "maybe he was tryin' to prove that the square upon the hypotenuse of a right-angled triangle is equal to the sum of the squares erected upon the other two sides."

Later, in the waning light of tattoo, Sergeant Brinton came to my tent, tied the flap carefully behind him, stripped off his blouse, and handed me a broken first-aid packet.

"You bein' the only civilian in camp, I'm asking you to do it up for me. I'm taking no chances on any the others." He bared a big black-red splotch on his shoulder—an ugly flesh wound, that was in sad need of attention.

"Do you mean to say that you——" I gasped.

"I admit nothin'," he replied coolly. "But if I was goin' to bet on it I'd bet that the chap who led that line couldn't prove that the square upon the hypotenuse of a right-angled triangle is equal to the sum of the squares erected upon the other two sides."

The Little Beggar

By A. L. Provost

A boy's part in a miniature drama of the Soudan of to-day. A story with "atmosphere" as well as action

PAYNE had picked him up on the edge of a pestilence, a little gray-brown parcel of bones with solemn eyes and an unpleasant habit of dodging when one moved suddenly. Accused of philanthropy, Payne denied it shortly, and said the little beggar amused him, but Mahmoud at that stage was scarcely an object to arouse the average sense of humor. After a few days of feeding he took on flesh and began to look human, but he was a slim reed, even when fattened. Moreover, he clung to Payne with the single-minded persistence of a leech. He even imitated Payne's walk and the set of his shoulders; did it, too, with ludicrous exactness and a vast amount of dignity. Whoever Mahmoud's forbears may have been, the boy looked pure Arab, and the dignity sat well on him.

A few weeks later, when the Forty-ninth left its quarters to take up a grilling march where troop trains were not known, Payne said good-by to Mahmoud and handed him over to a native woman, with plentiful baksheesh. Mahmoud stood on the river bank like a brown statue, and watched them go. That was in the early dawn, but late that night, when the Forty-ninth was sleeping, and Payne should have been, something small and slim, gray with desert dust and lurching with fatigue, appeared suddenly between Payne and a star-whitened hummock of sand.

"I am very late, excellency," the small thing said clearly, and flopped plummetlike at his feet.

Payne swore at him gruffly, and worked over him for an hour. When dawn broke and the camp stirred, the brown scrap was already awake, and sedately intimated his desire to serve. From that time forth Mahmoud was Payne Pasha's and Payne Pasha was Mahmoud's, and there was no further talk of being left behind. When the way was overlong for short legs Mahmoud tacitly passed as luggage, and learned the language that exasperated troopers use when bedeviled by small boys.

When the regiment went up to Assuan, Mahmoud was as close to Payne's heels as military decorum permitted, and while his master was stationed there, he waxed light and joyous, toiling industriously in Payne Pasha's service, which, after all, was not onerous, and flickering through street and bazaar by night and day, like an impish shadow. That was life!

Beyond a doubt, Payne gave the youngster a long tether. "He's not a half-bad little beggar," he said mildly to those who protested, Mahmoud not being without his bag of tricks to be played on unsuspecting outsiders. Only on outsiders. With Payne Pasha's dignity he took no liberties. It was Major Curtis Pasha, also of the Forty-ninth, who took Mahmoud's beloved one more seriously to task.

"That little devil will get you in trou-

ble, Payne," Curtis prophesied wisely, coming on indubitable evidence that Mahmoud had been in his cigarette case.

Payne had taught his young charge much English, and many oddments of learning and deportment in the last six months, but when it came to tubbing himself like an Englishman and observing the law of property with respect to other people's cigarettes, progress with Mahmoud was admittedly slow. These were superstitions of the infidel which he could not grasp.

"Oh, he's not bad, but I can't have him stealing your cigarettes. Here, take mine!"

"It isn't the cigarettes. They all steal. Born that way. But you are giving him too much rope, and some day you may get robbed and knifed for your pains."

"By that baby?" Payne roared at the idea.

"Oh, well, you can laugh, but I shouldn't count on his being such a baby. They never are. They're blasé at an age when you and I were getting floggings at school. And they are all alike when it comes to the dog of an infidel. They hate us, and the best of 'em are only waiting their chance to get rid of us. He'll run your errands and eat your bread and steal your movables now, but if somebody starts a holy muss he'll try to knife you for the glory of Allah. They can't be trusted, not by the accursed infidel. They're Mussulmans first and human beings afterward, no matter how young you catch 'em. Give him the end of a belt now and then, and he'll have more respect for you than anything else could give him. They're built that way."

"Oh, he gets the belt when he needs it." Payne grinned in the sultry dusk, aware that he wielded the belt rather mildly. "I know what you mean, but he's not a half-bad little beggar, really."

Nevertheless Payne Pasha read Mahmoud a serious lecture that night, less, it is to be feared, on the moral obliquity of stealing cigarettes than on the duty of a gentlemanly little beggar toward guests in his master's house. And Mahmoud, being Arab, took that part of it acutely, and abased himself passionately at Payne Pasha's feet. He was but the slave of the excellency's slaves, the dust in his pathway, and it should not occur again. Allah was his witness, it should not occur again. And for a week at least Mahmoud was oppressively polite to the big men in uniform who clattered in and out of his master's quarters. He did not always like them, and he bitterly objected to those who treated him as a child, but if it pleased Payne Pasha, what matter?

Perhaps it was for this reason also that he listened politely to the tall civilian in eternal black, a visiting kinsman of Payne Pasha's, who told Mahmoud a long story of Payne Pasha's god, who had once taken the Jews out of this country by a great magic. Payne Pasha, appealed to, confirmed the report with gravity, and in his soul Mahmoud wondered at the god of the infidel. Did not the tall civilian know that the Jews are an accursed race, who wear the black tarboosh only to point out to the true believer that they are to be spit upon? Mahmoud turned it over carefully that night, huddled in an incredibly small space in a teeming bazaar, and for the sixteenth part of a second heaviness settled down on his soul. Could it be that to please the beloved one he must abjure even this time-honored right? Payne Pasha, he had observed, never noticeably spit on anybody.

Then the delight of the crowded bazaar swept over him again, the flickering lights, the wells of shadow, the hundred vagrant smells, the surge of warm bodies, the flash of strong colors, and over and around and under it all the buzzing murmur of voices, from which a sentence detached itself now and then. Mahmoud's eyes gleamed in

the shadow. He huddled closer in his hiding place, and listened.

Late that night—very late, indeed, for both Mahmoud and his master kept reprehensible hours—a brown shadow appeared demurely at the door and glided across the room to prostrate itself at Payne's feet and squat there. The boy sat so long like a slim statue that Payne looked at him critically.

"What is on your mind, Mahmoud?"

Payne Pasha's ways of speech could be crudely direct. Whatever sinuous approaches Mahmoud's Oriental mind may have been contemplating were abruptly shattered, but he presented an unruffled front. There is a legend that the king can do no wrong.

"Excellency, in the bazaars men speak in whispers."

"In the bazaars, Mahmoud, men chatter like old women."

"Old women do not speak of war, excellency."

Payne looked down at him from half-closed eyes. What a queer little beggar he was.

"Then men speak nonsense."

Mahmoud shook his head obstinately, and wriggled closer. His voice went very low.

"There is a breath in the palm trees, and the storm follows. Far back in the desert, excellency, men are whispering also. The word is being sent forth. There will be a *jihad*. A mahdi has arisen, and they gather about him, very silently. Watch for the flood time."

The boy resolved himself into a brown shadow again, and vanished, but Payne sat quite motionless for a long time.

Two days later the Forty-ninth was ordered south, and conjecture buzzed here and there. It may have been purely for exercise—the Colonel Pasha, for instance, was getting notoriously stout—or it may have been that the Great One at the head of them all had his own ways of watching those who speak guardedly in bazaars. In any case, the word was passed that there was a small uprising somewhere back in the desert, and two regiments crowded into troop trains and jolted and rolled and cursed until they came at last to a small desert station, where they streamed out like a khaki river, the British Forty-ninth and a regiment of English-officered, grinning Sudanese. Then they began their march through the tossed billows of sand toward a misnamed city that was built of one white "palace" and many clustering huts, with narrow and evil-smelling streets where pestilence bred unmolested.

It was a futile thing to be called an uprising, much less a holy war. Mahmoud watched it, quite chapfallen, from the background to which such fry as himself must inevitably be ordered. (The Colonel Pasha, indeed, had not been at all pleasant when he had discovered that Mahmoud was along.) Where was the ancient valor of the followers of the Prophet? There was not even a feeble resistance; only a handful of men within the mud-walled town, and a brown potentate in the palace, who politely deplored the revolt among his people which had made it necessary for the Great One at Cairo to send down fighting men. A mahdi? What mahdi? He had heard nothing of these things.

Nevertheless the Forty-ninth and the Sudanese beat up the town thoroughly in their search for suspects, and for a fortnight thereafter combed the desert for sight or sound or hint of trouble, but there was none. In the end the khaki river streamed out over the sands again to go farther afield, leaving the misnamed city in charge of Payne Pasha and a detachment of the Forty-ninth, and incidentally taking the brown potentate with them for the sake of the moral effect on those who stayed behind.

Left with his lord in possession of

the white palace, Mahmoud strutted mightily. The British army in little patrolled the baking street in front of the royal residence, and the slim brown reed watched it and threw out his atom of a chest as he critically wondered which uniform he would choose when he should be of sufficient stature to enlist beside Payne Pasha, but for the most part he either trailed in shadowy silence at Payne's heels or disappeared for hours together, as he had at Assuan.

Meantime life in the huddled town had seemingly resumed its normal swing. Brown faces met British faces impassively, children played and dogs fought in the twisting alleys that passed for streets, where filth and offal persistently resisted Payne's efforts to clean up the town. At the door of the single mosque a thrice-holy beggar, compounded of piety and dirt, exposed lamentable sores as he plied his ancient calling, the drone of his voice rising in monotonous singsong above the buzzing of flies and the occasional querulous snarl of a camel:

"In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful!"

The coppers of the Faithful clinked piously in his bowl. He was a very holy man.

In the wretched bazaar the chatter of bargaining went on as usual, and if the garments of true believers were sometimes drawn aside to avoid the polluting touch of the khaki infidel, that, at least, was something to which the infidel was accustomed. All day long the stream of life crawled by sluggishly, but after nightfall Payne Pasha's men had orders to avoid the black twisting streets where the huts huddled closest.

Often in the dusk Mahmoud squatted mutely at Payne's feet, but his lord was unusually silent in these days, and spent much time on the housetop, looking out over the desert. In the dusk two frowning wrinkles came between his eyes, which men never saw there by day. No pool was calmer than the surface of life in the misnamed city of evil smells, but Payne Pasha was feeling the ground swell of trouble beneath his feet. Nothing, seemingly, had happened, but it was by little signs that Payne Pasha read the portent.

One day one of the khaki men was closeted with him for half an hour, and in the darkness of the night Mahmoud saw this man slip down the black streets, past the British sentries, and out into the desert beyond. Two days passed, four, and on the fifth night the frowning lines were deeper between Payne Pasha's eyes as he sent another man—he to whom men were very precious—out across the shadowy sands toward that distant hut of a station from which help must come. In the morning light the man's severed head grinned horribly at them from a lance thrust upright in the sand. The first waves were splashing against the walls.

Mahmoud saw Payne Pasha's face as he ordered it down, and in the dusk he crept up to him in the cooling housetop.

"Excellency!"

"Yes, Mahmoud."

"It was for this that they sent their women away."

Payne looked at him curiously.

"How long have you known that?"

"Since the morning after the army left us. Much I had guessed before, but guessing is foolish."

Payne did not smile at the scrap's wisdom, as he sometimes did. Instead he continued to look out across the huddled mass of blank, walled houses and mud huts, toward the black desert by which help must come. And the question in his mind was this: How long may a handful of khaki men hold out in a mud city that is honeycombed with hatred, against the swarming host of the fanatic, gathering somewhere out there under the banner of a mahdi?

"Excellency!"

"Yes, Mahmoud."

"The men who went out with messages were killed."

Payne grunted shortly.

"I am very small, excellency."

Payne Pasha's eyes flickered toward him. He frowned, and his voice sounded gruff.

"Nonsense!"

"Very small." Mahmoud's voice was a mere breath in the dusk. "Where a man would be as a lighted torch I can slip by like a shadow. And I am not of your people."

"We don't send children on errands like that, Mahmoud."

"I was born in the desert, and I am not a child. At midnight, then? Excellency knows there is little time to lose."

The insistent breath stopped, and silence fell between the big man in uniform and the slim, squatting statue at his feet.

At midnight, with a kindly veil of cloud dimming the stars, a shadow flickered imperceptibly down the twisting streets, past the British sentries, and out into the desert beyond, but all that night Payne Pasha sat sleepless, and with the dawn took a swift survey of the mud walls and the tawny sands beyond. There was no small brown head there, and Payne Pasha let a long breath escape him. He spent the day fortifying his paltry stronghold and placing his handful of men craftily. Night crept around them, and the city of a few tortuous streets lay quiet, but miles away shadows arose out of the desert and gathered like a flying cloud. At dawn the first popping of shots told that the siege of the cornered infidel had begun.

The desert is awesome by day, and of a terrible immensity by night. The huge silence of it took Mahmoud by the throat as he melted into its shadows, but he pushed ahead mightily. All night he toiled forward, until the east was a miracle and the desert turned to rose and gold. Along the edge of the sky something moving came into view. Mahmoud dropped flat in a hollow, and squirmed forward for a better view. It was a horseman—very many horsemen. They were a long distance away, but Mahmoud went flatter.

The horsemen wheeled and vanished. Mahmoud took up his journey again warily. The sun rose higher, and beat down in a shriveling glare from a brazen sky. Fine sand sifted on hair and skin and clothing, until he was powdered a uniform gray. His eyes smarted and his tongue was dry. He paused for a moment and took a precious swallow from his water bottle, heroically refrained from more, and stumbled ahead.

Somewhere about here, if he headed aright, there would be an ancient tomb under which one might hide for a brief space and rest. Mahmoud mounted a sand hummock and looked anxiously about him, but there was only the monotonous swell and dip of the eternal desert. He had missed his way, and he turned on his tracks with terror tugging at his heart. Had he not promised to save Payne Pasha and his men?

Half an hour later he came upon it, a strange fragment of massive stone upthrust through the encroaching sand, and, craftily hidden behind it, a hole where one could crawl into cool darkness. Mahmoud put his head in, and jumped nervously as a scared lizard scuttled past him. He did not like tombs, although he knew that this was empty. A camel driver he had once known had told him that long ago—at least two years—a saint had been buried here at one time, but infidels had come and violated the tomb for gold, and would themselves be accursed. It was quite true—the camel driver's uncle had seen it.

Mahmoud wriggled uneasily. The camel driver had beaten him at times, but he had made his pilgrimage to

Mecca, as his green turban plainly showed, and without doubt was a very wise and holy man. For some reason Mahmoud, who was on his way to deliver a mahdi into the infidel's hands, did not crawl into the cool darkness and rest. Questions of right and wrong may be very abstruse, even for a brown scrap with fingers that stick to other people's cigarettes.

A few hours later a slim reed of a boy, desert bitten, dusted gray, and wrung with fatigue, gave his message in husky whispers as the operator at the hut of a station worked over him to get the words out. Then the instrument of magic on the table clicked smartly, paused, and clicked again, and the operator laughed shortly to himself, which was his way of expressing excitement. For the god of slim chances, by the agency of a loose rail, wrongfully set in its beginnings by an Arab workman who scorned the infidel's worship for the thirty-second part of an inch, had halted none other than the Forty-ninth and the Sudanese on their belated homeward way, and already orders were going forth to bring them back as rapidly as troop trains could come.

Once again Mahmoud saw the khaki river stream out over the sands, but this time great persons, even the fat Colonel Pasha and that other who led the Sudanese, crowded about him with short, sharp questions, and Major Curtis Pasha, who had once suggested the end of a belt for his education, personally superintended his transportation.

"There's no use in leavin' the little beggar behind," he urged apologetically, "he'll only trail after us until he finds Payne."

Major Curtis Pasha frowned as he spoke. He was wondering—they all were wondering—just what the tale would be when they did find Payne. Time had been lost, and what is wreaked on the infidel invader is done for the glory of Allah.

The march through the desert began again, this time under the stars. Mahmoud, far in the rear, shut his eyes and saw a huddled city of a white palace and many mud huts, and Payne Pasha holding back from it the flood of a holy war. The men about him had little to say, and they did not say that prettily. They were of Payne's own regiment, and they pushed ahead with haste and some grimness. In the end, with a new day painting the world gloriously, and that moving cloud of horsemen showing on the edge where sky and desert meet, they sent him still farther back, he rebelling fiercely.

The khaki river had become a rhythmically heaving lake. Then it broke, mathematically precise, into three smaller lakes, and all the time the particolored cloud was advancing. Ahead and slightly to the left lay the misnamed city where Payne and his little force were penned, alive or dead, and in front the cloud of horsemen came on with screams and shouts and gallantly flying horses, until the frantic mass met the solid one and jarred under the impact. Again and again the cloud drew off, broke into groups, circled here and there, and came dashing on again, hurling itself with flashes of dark skin and white burnoose against the khaki lake that had become one again, and by scores and fifties and hundred the lake closed over them. The Forty-ninth had a score to wipe out.

Once more the mahdi's followers drew off, badly shattered, and a khaki wave rolled after them, submerging line after line, so far as lines were there at all, until there was but a disordered flight spreading out into that far distance where the desert melts into the sky.

These things were not done quickly. For three hot hours the turmoil lasted, while the brown scrap called Mahmoud

slipped away from the remote safety of the luggage, and by dodging here and there behind sand hummocks and into sheltering hollows edged his way along the outer fringe toward the mud-walled city where he had left Payne Pasha. Circling well to the left, he came in time to a point where the whole field lay magnificently before him, the resistless khaki lake on his right, the whirling cloud under the green banner on his left. The din and the shouts and the clatter of rifle fire were in his ears, the jerking rattle of it on his left, the steadier roar on his right. His eyes dilated with excitement, and he crawled to the top of a sand hillock, and watched the hosts of the mahdi come on. They came gallantly, shrilling the holy name of Allah, so close that he caught the hypnotic flash of their eyes and the whir of their onslaught as they thudded by. It left him with pumping heart and whirling brain. How they fought, like seven thousand devils, throwing themselves howling on death, with that methodical khaki tide sweeping remorselessly over them. He felt dimly, without in the least understanding it, the overwhelming odds between the method and the madness, and he shivered in the glare of the sun. The whirl of their frenzy was dragging at his feet.

Something went very tight in Mahmoud's throat. They were his people, and he had betrayed them to this. The scorn of his race would be upon him from this day. His name would be accursed, and the children of the Faithful would spit upon him. As the scattered horde swerved and reformed and came on again, he struggled to his feet and ran forward, shrilling their battle cry.

It was Curtis Pasha, an hour later, who personally carried him to the demolished courtyard, where Payne Pasha stood, hollow-eyed and grim, with a great bandage around his head. There were unpleasant sights in plenty, by the way, brown men flung deadly quiet against walls, khaki men limping painfully or lying very still, and a few feet away from Payne Pasha, a twisted heap of rags that had caused the bandage. It was the thrice-holy beggar who had prayed at the door of the mosque, and his outflung claw of a hand still clutched stiffly at an old rifle.

A rug was dragged forth hastily, and Curtis Pasha laid Mahmoud down.

"Done for, poor little beggar," he said jerkily. "Caught between the two fires, God knows how, but he was runnin' right into it!"

Mahmoud opened heavy eyes.

"I would see Payne Pasha," he said, and looked up to see the beloved one leaning over him, with the stained bandage on his head and a queer twist to his lips.

"What was the trouble, Mahmoud?"

It was an old formula between them. Mahmoud's lids dropped again, and he stirred uneasily.

"I betrayed my people," he said heavily. "It is not well that I should live."

Years of brotherhood with the desert had taught Payne Pasha some of its mysteries, and a little of its wisdom. He leaned over the slim brown thing and spoke as man to man.

"It is something to have saved a friend, Mahmoud."

A small paw crept into Payne's big one. Mahmoud looked up again, vaguely comforted.

"Excellency is my friend," he said dimly. "Excellency knows that my life is his."

The strong fingers tightened over the slim ones. Curtis Pasha went away hastily, and left them alone.

Letters of a Cowboy to His Pard

By Robert V. Carr

Author of "Bill Smith, G.A.," "That Perfect Confidence," Etc.

WHAT PETE SAID IN PREVIOUS LETTERS

Both were cowboys, but Dick left the ranch to become an artist, leaving his sweetheart, Clara, in the hands of his pard, Pete. Pete busies himself trying to cheer up the lonely girl, and he endeavors to play the part of the absent lover; reporting each move by letter to Dick. Clara responds to his efforts with verve, and Pete finds himself a consoler of high merit. And to report accurately to Dick grows more and more difficult until he learns of "an artist girl" that Dick seemingly admires. That solves Pete's problem, and he and Clara are engaged. Dick calls Pete "a snake in the grass." Pete is wounded deeply in his feelings. But good old Dick forgives all. Pete overflows with enthusiasm: "Now you can go ahead and marry that artist girl," he writes to Dick, "and all will be well. That is the best thing you can do. Clara and me are to be married next week."

(A Two-Part Story—Part II.)

DEAR OLD FRIEND DICK: It has been a coon's age and then some since I have writ you. The last year or so since I quit the Flatiron outfit and went to live with Clara's folks has kept me busy making a living. You know when Clara and me got married I thought you was going to marry the artist girl which you did not. You was more or less lucky, Dick, for marrying any woman is more or less of a chance. Marrying any women is not what it is cracked up to be though I am saying nothing against Clara.

To start with Clara's paw said if I married Clara he would give me a bunch of cattle on shares. But when he said that he did not mention that he was mortgaged clear to the hocks and could not give nobody a bunch of cattle on shares. As you know Clara and me married in the spring and I quit cowpunching and went to live with her folks. I worked around her paw's ranch, patching fence, milking and choring around.

Along toward fall I said to her paw —How about that bunch of cattle on shares?

And he said—We will see in all good time.

I kept on working around her paw's ranch doing odd jobs and getting nothing but my board and room. Between you and me, Dick, I would rather have a roundup bed full of cactus than that room because Clara was not used to having no man in her room right along and she let pins and gimcracks lay around everywhere. I could not set down nor nothing without setting on some danged woman truck. I want to tell you, Dick, I got good and plenty sick of it.

You would not know Clara now, Dick. She ways so much. Last time she wayed she wayed one-65 and still gaining. You was a good friend of Clara's, Dick, and I might say at one time expected to marry her and so I can talk to you without seeming to be complaining. I am not complaining, Dick, but by Judas Preest if this keeps up I am going to skip the country. Dick you can never tell what a woman is till you live with her and her folks.

Some times when I get to thinking about you I could kick myself for a

lowdown pup. You was sure a white man to pass up all I did about jollying up Clara when Sleepy was right about me wanting to cop her out for myself. I was a lowdown pup to treat you that way, Dick, though now I see that maybe I did you the greatest favor a man ever did you. For you are still single and ought to thank your stars for that regular. Dick, you are clean strain all through. If there is anything mean you can think of to write me about myself please write it. I will sign my name to it. I stole Clara from you thinking I was robbing you, but I do not think so now. I done you a great favor, Dick. I thank Sleepy for them three pokes he give me in the jaw only I have wished many a time he had used a forty-five instead of his fist.

I saw Sleepy the other day and told him how things was going and that I wished he would take me down in some draw and knock me in the head. I told him I would like nothing better than to be back riding for the Flatiron and single with nothing to bother but a little night guard now and then. I told him I wished when he slammed me that he had used a double-barreled shotgun and I would not now be alive to be nipped and nagged by Clara and her folks.

Then Sleepy said—Well Pete you know I never had nothing against you and was glad when you married Clara. You made the first pass at me and I had to do something. I had to defend myself.

I said—You sure can defend yourself, Sleepy. Only I wished you had emptied your gun into me instead of tapping me three times.

Sleepy then said—Come on now, Pete. It may turn out all right. A man is like a bronk when he is first married—always more or less pitching and jumping.

Then I told him about her paw promising me them cattle on shares and how he had fell down and how I was working like a slave and getting nothing but my board and room and not a cent to spend of my own. Besides Clara a taking sides with her people and running me down as a worthless cowpuncher. And about her room which no Injun teepee full of brush would be worse.

But Sleepy said that he could not tell no married man what to do as he never had been married and would not get married unless they caught him when he was asleep and hogtied and blindfolded.

I said—You are just right Sleepy. I wished I would have looked before I jumped.

But Sleepy would not give me no advice so I said—If you was in my boots, Sleepy, what would you do?

He then said—If I was in your boots and could not make the game win I would skip the country if there was no kids for me to be tied to. If there was kids I would stick for a man should take care of his babies rain or shine. But if there was no kids and I could not get along with her I would skip the country and you could not see me for dust.

I said—But Sleepy a woman can jerk a man back and make him pay allmoney or go to jail. I cannot pay no allmoney and I never liked no jail though I guess it would beat that room of Clara's seven ways for Sunday.

Then Sleepy said—Well Pete they got to catch you first before they put you in jail. Any time you want a fast horse you can have mine and welcome. We have had our differences but I wont never go back on no old cowpuncher.

Now Dick I would like that you write me what you think I had better do about Clara. She has no use for me no more and she and her mother throw slurs at me every time I come in the house. Her old man is cranky all

the time and for two cents I would bust the old maverick in the jaw and leave him lay. I do not like his style even if he is my father-in-law. I am going to tell him to come through with me one way or the other or there will be trouble for as I am related to him by marriage I have got some rights. I would not have got married had I thought the old man would not come through. I could not cowpunch and support a woman on $40 a month for it is all a cowpuncher can do to support himself let alone one wife.

I am sending this letter to the magazine that has one of your pictures on the outside. I hope they will see that you get it. You must be making lots of money and flying high for you have no one to worry you if you spend a cent on yourself. I am glad of it and no one wishes you any more luck than

Your old pard,

PETE.

DEAR OLD PARD: When all is said and done the old friends are best. Your letter Dick after all this long time of not hearing from you was as welcome as the flowers in May as well as the money you sent thinking I was not making much and it would come in handy. It will but God only knows when I can pay it back. I was telling Bill Weems about how clean strain you was and he said that you was as white a man as ever jumped a horse and that he wanted to be remembered kindly. Old Bill is one of my true friends like you Dick. Rain or shine old Bill is the same old Bill. In time of trouble a man turns to his old friends and that is the silver lining in the cloud when he finds them right there and a little bit over with kind words and offers of help.

You say that I had ought to stick with Clara and not skip the country if I can possibly help it. But Dick you only knew Clara as a girl and was never married to her. Besides you have not seen her since she got fleshy. No, Dick, I am saying nothing against Clara, but just talking as man to man. Then you never had to live in the same house with her and her mother and the old man. If I hated you like a snake I would wish you no such luck for you might better be dead. I tell you Dick I have about reached the limit.

This morning her paw said he had troubles of his own and that it was about time for me to quit laying around and get out and support my wife.

I said—How about that bunch of cattle on shares you promised me if I would marry your dorter?

He looked at me like I was crazy and said—What bunch of cattle on shares you poor fool?

I then said—Why you poor old windbroken hummerhead you know as well as I do that you promised me as plain as day a bunch of cattle on shares if I would marry Clara.

He then said—You poor eediot I did not promise you no bunch of cattle on shares to marry Clara as you was crazy about her and I could not have drove you off the place with a canning. Besides I can not let you have no cattle on shares as I am carrying a mortgage that is keeping me awake nights now. You had better get a move on you and get out and get to work supporting your wife as I cannot afford to have you laying around here eating off of me no longer.

I then said—Is that so, you poor old stiff? I suppose I have not earned what little I have et doing three men's work and putting up with your slack and the old woman's lip and Clara roweling me all the time.

I was sure sarcastick.

Then the old man got real hot and told me he had give me notis and I had better be gathering up what plunder I had though I could put what I

owned in a pocket handkerchiff and have room to spare.

What is more he told me that I would have to take care of Clara or he would see that she got her rights if he had to ride down every horse on the place.

I said—You may need your horses to ride in the other direction from me old boy and dont drive me too fur or I may forget your gray hairs and give you a bang in the jaw.

With that he bounded in the air like a wolf and dared me to touch him.

I said—You are my father-in-law and on your own ground or I would knock you so fur your clothes would be in rags before you got back.

Yes siree, Dick, if he could not have put me in the pen for hitting him on his own ground I would have sure tapped the old Limpy-go-lightly and dont you forget it. I can be drove just so fur and no furder.

You was sure lucky you did not marry that artist girl and not be able to call your soul your own and be sent to jail if you tried to get away from her. Dick if you had married Clara you would sure now have my sympathy though I am saying nothing against Clara for she is a good woman in many ways. But when she was a girl she was all candy and cream but now she is sour and never for a moment does she let up nipping and nagging at me with never a kind word. She is always throwing it up to me how you wanted to marry her and how you would have took her to Chicago and give her everything her heart could deesire. And she is always saying that a flea would have to bring his vittles along if he come to live on me or starve to death. Then if I say a word she cries and then her mother cuts in and takes a hand at running me down and then the old man shoves in his beak and gives me hail-ka-daisy and there you be. I will leave it to you if I am not in some bad fix and can you wonder that I turn to my old pard for advice and help in getting me out of this bog hole.

Believe me Dick if I ever get loose and free again no woman if she is as fine-looking as the angels above will get her rope on me for a minute. But that is not saying that I do not admire a fine-looking woman now as well as any man going.

You ask me if I have been true to Clara and I can cross my heart and take a Bible oath I have. What could I do with no money to get around on and no clothes to look like anything in and just plugging around on the ranch like a hunny-yawk farmer? No Dick I have been true to her.

I do not see how I can put up with it much longer. Maybe when you think it over some more you can think of a trail out. Please write soon. You was wise to not marry that artist girl for women are all the same. You can think better than I can now for half the time I am so sore I cannot think of my own name. Dont forget and write soon. Yours in the gumbo,

PETE.

DEAR OLD PARD: I got your fine old letter and I can see that you are giving me what you think is for the best. I dont know but what you are right, Dick. When a man has lived with a woman as long as me and Clara have lived together he can not gather up and leave without feeling it. You know I think Clara just as fine a woman as ever lived and think just as much of her as ever I did, but I have been kicked and cuffed around so much that I am not reesponsible half the time. Maybe if she did not have her people cutting in she would be all right as you say. I think that a good pointer for me to locate a homestead and get a place of my own. She will have to come with me as you say then or I will have

grounds for deevorce. I am holding that under my hat till the time comes.

Got the money you sent and it will be more than enough to file on claim and build shack. I have told Clara what I was going to do.

She said—I will not move on no claim and live in no shack with you as I am used to better things. You would starve me to death on a claim for you have no money.

I said—Dont be so sure about that old girl. When I get the place built you will either come and live with me or I will see a lawyer and we will then see what you will do. You dont want to forget that a man has some rights. You women have got all the best of it and are hollering for more but once in a while a man has three of a kind he can play and dont you forget it. You think your paw is a wise old gobbler but he does not know it all and you can tell him for me that I said so.

And she said—Why Pete how can you talk so.

I could see that my talk about the lawyer had throwed a scare into her. She thought that a woman had all the rights and a man had none except to be a good dog and set up and bark when told. But she found out that a woman had to toe the mark when married just the same as a man and I could see she was beginning to weaken.

I then said—I am going to fix up a place of my own and if you do not come and live with me I will have the law make you and what is more when you are married your folks cannot say nothing against me for I can take all your old man has and the roof over his head for ellenating your affections.

Then she said—My, Pete, I did not know you knew so much about the law.

And I could see that she was beginning to realize that a woman has to bend her neck to the collar the same as a man.

Then her old man cut in and I told him what I could do as you said about him ellenating my own wife's affections and he went outside to think it over for it was a bet he had overlooked.

I never let on who give me the money to build the shack and everything for I will keep it mum as long as possible as you request. I will not let none of them know that it was my old pard Dick who pulled me out of the gumbo when I was mired clear to the hubs. Dick, if ever in word or deed I did not treat you fair write down all the mean things you can think of to say about me and I will sign my name to it before a notorious publick. I wish I could see you for your sending me this money and writing me them wise old letters sure hit me where I live. I feel I am small potatoes beside you when it comes to being a white man and clean strain in every respeck and aside you for knowing things I am as a baby and I thank you Dick more than tongue can tell. If I should ever have a boy I should be proud if he was anything like you, old pard.

Well, old friend, I have got to get to work on the shack. Will write more later as I will not be able to send this letter for some time.

I am starting in where I left off and must tell you how fine it feels for a man to be fixing up his own place. I have got the shack done and though I am no carpenter, Dick, it sure looks homelike. I put in a big cupboard so that Clara could have plenty of room to put stuff away in. If I can find enough rocks I will build a fireplace, as my dad back in Missouri had a fireplace and we kids used to roast apples in it. I was thinking if I had some kids of my own they should have a fireplace to roast apples in.

But I must tell you about Clara. Since I have got the shack ready and all fixed up to live in and money left to pay some on team and wagon and with some credit at the stores in town

she has changed for the best. I guess she got to thinking over what you said for me to tell her about a man having rights too.

Anyway the other night she come to me of herself and said—

Pete I have not been like I should have been to you. I have changed my mind about living in a shack with you and am sorry that I did not stand by you all along. I will try and do better now as a woman's place is with her man and I will go with you if we only have a tree to live under. I see now I have listened too much to my folks and thought too little of what you had to put up with.

Then I said—Well Clara old girl I knowed all along that your heart was in the right place and that it looked like I was no good for not getting out sooner and getting us a home of our own. I know that there is no house big enough to shelter two families without more or less jawing back and forth and it was all my fault. But thank goodness Clara we still love one another.

Then she asked me who gave me the money to start on.

And I said in a joking way—Dick Lainer, your old feller.

Then she looked kind of sad and said—Dick was always a good boy and I wished we had been more aboveboard with him.

Then I said—Clara for anything I have did behind Dick's back I have suffered a thousand times and will keep on suffering till the day of my death. I know that I do not deserve to be called friend by him but if living straight and keeping him in mind always will do any good you can gamble I will hang onto a little of Dick's good will.

Then she said—We must pay him back with interest.

I said—No, old Dick would be insulted if I sent him interest. Do you think if he needed a dollar I would want interest? No, Clara, I would give Dick the shirt off my back and wash it for him.

That night her paw and maw started to horn into me as usual and she turned on her paw and said—

Paw you leave Pete be. He is doing the best a man can do. You did not always have a home and you know you stayed at grandpaw's place for five years and never lifted a hand to support mother. Now you begrudge poor Pete time to even get his house built. I am glad I am getting away from you, for Pete has had nothing but abuse from you since he came.

With that the old man kind of set up and took notis. He took a chaw of tobacker and walked around the kitchen kind of nervouslike and looked at Clara's mother like he did not know what to say. Then he goes over to Clara and puts his arm around her.

He said to her—You would not go back on your old paw would you, honey?

And Clara said—No, paw, I would not go back on you but you must remember that Pete is my husband and I must stick to him.

Then the old man looked at me and said something in his whiskers and later I see him setting on the woodpile a chawing and a thinking.

Later when Clara and me went into her room to be by ourselves she fixed it up so a man could be comfortable in it and we set and talked till way late about our new home and what we was going to do. I told her that I would work my fingers to the bone now that I had a place of my own. She said the same.

Dick, there is no use talking I cannot see how such a lowdown sneaking pup as me could deserve such a good friend as you and such a good wife. If I was a praying man I would ask the Old Gentleman on high to always deal you aces and dont you forget it.

This is writ later. Well Dick we moved into the shack. I must tell you about Clara. She is a changed woman. She is just as kind to me as can be. You should hear her singing while fixing up the shack. She has curtings on the windows and everything as neat as a pin. Other night her maw come over and before she thought she started finding fault with me.

Clara put up her hand and said—Maw, remember you are under Pete's roof and that he is boss of this ranch. It is not much yet but what there is he is boss of.

Maw thought it over and changed her tune and they went to talking about woman stuff.

No, the old man has not visited us yet. I have nothing against him but him and me dont hitch. I am glad I took nothing off of him as he might be now throwing it up to me. I feel that I owe him nothing for I worked for every mouthful of grub I got off of him. I will feel a whole lot better when I owe no man, not even you, Dick, though you are my best friend. But you know a man feels better when he is clean and dont owe nobody a cent.

Later: I am sure playing lucky these days, Dick. I struck a feller with more cattle than he could run on his range, and we made a quick deal on shares. Other day the town banker told me he could let me have a little money even if my security was not the best. He said that a married man fixing up a ranch was a good risk. Then I got credit at the stores for when cowpunching I always paid my bills.

Clara is busy putting up preserves and jell. We went out and gathered pretty near a wagonload of wild plums and buffalo berries. Down by the crick we struck a patch of wild grapes and we will have grape jell and wine till further orders. I have dug a root house and got it full of good grub. Never saw the like of it, Dick. When a man's luck changes he begins to gather like a squirrel. It is great to have your cellar full of grub and plenty of wood up and a woman to turn to you can love and trust. I dont see how I deserve it all.

Saw Sleepy the other day and we had a good long talk.

I said—Sleepy, my luck has changed. I would not now be a dog of a cowpuncher if you gave me the Flatiron outfit.

Sleepy then said—You are just right, Pete. It is a dog's life with nobody to think anything of you and a grave on the lone pray-ee at the finish.

He looked so down-hearted that I took him home with me and on our way we met old Bill Weems, and I said—

Come on, boys, and eat some real vittles cooked by the finest woman in the world.

They then went home with me and I axed the heads off a couple of chickens and we had a great spread with cake and jell to wind up on and I thought poor old Sleepy and Bill would founder theirselves.

After dinner they both shook hands with Clara.

Sleepy said—Mrs. Hikes I want to say that if I had a choice of going to heaven or eating one of your dinners I would say no heaven for me. Them chicken dumplings was the finest things I ever tasted in my life.

And old Bill said—Mrs. Hikes you must let us wash the dishes.

And nothing must do but them two cowpunchers go right in the kitchen and wash the dishes.

Then we played cards till late and I went out with the lantern and helped the boys saddle up and when they was on their horses old Bill and Sleepy leaned down and shook hands with me again, and Sleepy said—

Pity us, Pete, for that is all we get

in this world, while you has a home and somebody waiting for you.

And old Bill did not say nothing, for I heard once that the girl he loved died and under all his joshing old Bill still thinks about her. Such is life. I held the lantern till their hoofbeats died out and then I went in the house to find what a man would not trade for nothing in the world—a smiling woman and a door to close and shut out the dark and all trouble.

Well Dick this is all for this time as I got to put up some hay though I do not think I will need it. It looks like a soft winter and no losses to speak of. In two or three years I will be on Easy street.

Always your grateful old pard,

PETE.

DEAR OLD PARD: I can hardly wait to tell you the news, Dick. What do you think, old boy, we got a increase in our family and it is twin boys. They be the first twin babies borned on this range. By Judas Preest, Dick, I named them first thing, and Clara says I did just right. What do you suppose I called them, old pard? Well I just called one Richard for you and then thinks I that is not enough and so I named the other boy Lainer for you, too. Dick and Lainer is their names, old friend. I know you will be glad to have two of the finest chunks of boys ever borned named after you. Clara is doing well and sends regards. My, Dick, she is proud of her boys, and such a mother you never did see.

I must tell you how my paw-in-law acted when he heard we had twin boys at our place. He chewed up a pound of tobacker he got so worked up. But he hung back being bullheaded that way and stayed away from my place for two days. Then he could not stand it no longer and he come over with grandmother to see the two boys. I never let on like the old man and me had had words and met him at the door and got a chair for him. Then I went and brought out the kids and gave them to him.

The old feller just looked at them, first one and then the other. Then he said—

Pete, for these boys sakes we must let bygones be bygones. I was a cranky old fool and should have known better than to run you down. If you will forgive an old man's meanness I will thank you greatly, Pete, for being grandfather to twin boys has made me see that I was about the meanest man to my own children as I could be. For you are my son Pete and this is a great day for me—a great day.

Well the women got to bawling for some reason or other and the twins set up a yipping and so I handed them back to Clara and me and the old man went out to the stable, and though I have quit drinking I found a little left in a bottle and threw a slug into him and we set down and had a talk that got us mighty close. For when the old boy's shell is broke he is all man inside.

Then we went back in the house and Clara's maw cooked supper and the old folks stayed till way late and I took them home.

Dick, you don't know how queer I felt when the doctor told me I was the daddy of twin boys. I was outside the shack all keyed up when he come to me grinning and told me. I could not say a word. I was full to the neck with the dangest feeling.

Later: Clara is looking fine these days and the boys are growing like young badgers. You should see her walking around with a youngun riding on each hip.

Sleepy and Bill Weems was over first thing to see my two boys. You ought to see them old rannikins set and look at my boys. They just could not say nothing, only old Bill looked so

sad. Poor old cuss I guess it is true about him having a sweetheart and she died. You never can tell what a man has hid in his heart.

Dont blame me if I write too much about my boys. I am full to the neck and got to let go to somebody. Dick, my one hope now is that you will get out to see us while the babies are in the silk and cute. I killed an antelope the other day and gave the boys a chunk of raw meat apiece to suck on. They went after it like cub bears.

Say Dick the old days with their carousing around, seem a million years behind me. How could I see anything in such a life is sure a puzzle to me now.

Write soon as I want to hear what you think of my two boys and naming them after you.

Your old pard,

PETE.

DEAR OLD DICK: Say that is doing too much. Really Dick I had not ought to let you do that much for us. But you crept up on my blind side when you said that you would give what I owe you to my two boys as a present. That receet in full for all I owe you and your saying that you was still single and nobody to spend your money on except little Dick and Lainer made Clara cry. Dick, old pard, how can I ever tell you how I feel. I owe you for everything I have in this world. And with a scratch of the pen you wipe out all for the sake of the babies named after you. What can I say, Dick—what in blazes can I say!

Last night I took the boys on my knees and give them a talk although Clara said I was foolish to talk to babies who could not understand yet.

I said—Now Dick and Lainer your Uncle Dick Lainer has done more for your dad and you than all of us can pay back in our lives. Only thing we can do is to act so we are a credit to him for he is a white man from the ground up. We must never do nothing but what is square, straight and honest and above board in every respect. When you grow up and get a good pard like your Uncle Dick never hold nothing back on him, but put all your cards on the table face up. And when you get married remember what your Uncle Dick told your daddy that it is not wise to think that marriage is not what it is cracked up to be for most married folks love each other if they will only take the trouble to find it out.

Remember, Dick and Lainer, that your Uncle Dick Lainer is the model you have to foller and dont you ever forget it.

Well sir Dick they both just wiggled on my knees and woggled their eyes and slobbered at each other and Clara just laughed and said I was silly. But just the same I am going to give them boys just such a talk about every so often as long as they are under my roof.

Dick, you have only to ask for it and my life is yours. And I cant help but thinking but maybe there is a little good in me or as white a man as you be would see nothing in me to tie to this long time. Yours to the last ditch,

PETE.

P. S.—Grandpaw was over last night and played checkers till late. Said he had cleaned up his mortgage and would probably get a place in town as him and grandmaw was getting old. Said everything would go to Clara and me and the boys and I might as well take charge of his place and get some good out of it now.

I said—All right, grandpaw, just as you say and want.

Then I got the lantern and took the old man home.

THE END.

The Horse Editor's Side Line

By Edward M. Thierry

Picking winners on the sporting page. How a man who couldn't write ordinary English boosted circulation by a turf department that was anything but a model of literary excellence, but it meant ready money—and money talks as loudly in a newspaper office as it does anywhere else.

IT beat the eternal blazes how that money-grubbing business office kept interfering with the editorial department. I was running the sporting desk on the *Morning Mail,* and I had a scrap on all the time with the fellows downstairs. If it wasn't the business manager himself, it was the equally pernicious circulation manager. The "Big Boss"—his name was Suffran, but we called him "Old Suffering"—would bluster into my office with a great kick about pulling something off in the sporting pages that would be a little more nourishing to the advertising receipts, informing me with elaborate sarcasm that we weren't running a philanthropic institution and my department ought to be self-supporting.

At first I used to try to argue with him. You know the old stuff—that we had to print the news. Then he'd smile in that uncanny, fat way of his and tell me he hoped I'd understand some time that, if it wasn't for the advertising, we fellows on the news end wouldn't get any salaries.

Then Pennyril, the circulation manager, would pussy-foot in and give me an earful of complaint. He'd tell me we'd have to do something about appeasing the wrath of the subscribers in Coalchuteville or some other God-forsaken burg that couldn't possibly have more than fifty or sixty inhabitants. His moan was that "constant readers" were writing in and threatening to stop the paper if we didn't print the box scores of every ball game the town team played.

I'd stop pasting up flimsy long enough to point out that to do it we'd have to cut down on sports for our own city; and I told him I'd like to know what the eighty or ninety thousand subscribers right here at home would say about that. Well, that didn't faze him at all; he just said proportions were up to me. Then I thought of a sarcastic comeback, and told him the business manager wanted something to boost advertising. That was meat for Pennyril. He wanted to know where I thought the advertising end would be if it wasn't for the circulation. Then I shot back: "What kind of a circulation would you have if we didn't furnish the news?" That was a poser for him, all right. But I remembered what Old Suffering had said about no salaries for the news department if there was no advertising. I realized I was traveling in a circle, and gave it up.

Well, it was getting along toward June, and I was trying to figure out how I was going to find room on the

sporting page—what with box scores of the big and little baseball leagues and the amateurs and the track meets and other things crowding up the schedule—for summaries of the harness-horse races that were just starting. We had a Grand Circuit meeting of our own coming off about the first of September, and in the meantime I had to figure on carrying Grand Circuit summaries from the other cities, to say nothing of about a million mushroom trotting meets in the mob of tank towns in the *Morning Mail's* territory.

In the end I did as we always had done—used as much as I could and threw the rest into the wastebasket. Of course, the circulation manager put up an awful howl. I told him, with sarcastic politeness, that the composing room had run out of rubber type, but if he wished I'd have the races from the tank towns set up and he could pull a dozen proofs and send them to his precious subscribers who were kicking. So, when he got no satisfaction from me, he went in to see Mr. Egler, the managing editor. The wily old chief smoothed Pennyril's ruffled feathers, and later remarked to me that the sporting department couldn't possibly have any more space, so I should just go ahead and do the best I could. He knew how it was.

But that didn't stop the complaints from downstairs. They got worse all the time, but I wasn't paying much attention because I was getting ready to be married. Along about the last of June, the presumably happy event came off, and I left the *Morning Mail* flat on its back for a ten days' honeymoon. We beat straight up into Canada in the Muskoka Lake region, and very few civilized newspapers penetrated there. I was content to forget all about editions and space and box scores and horse races, for I was on a real vacation.

Finally my ten days were up, and we started back. We landed in Buffalo late one afternoon, planning to take the night train out of there that would land us home the next day. In Buffalo I thought I'd hunt up a copy of our own *Morning Mail* and find out if the old sheet had suspended publication because of my absence. I bought one at the hotel news stand, and shot first glance at the sporting page. It was there, all right, so I guessed my assistant was still on the job. The sporting news always did run over into the next page during the summer, but it seemed to me, as I scanned it, that the space was bigger than ever before. Why, sports took up the whole two pages! I blinked, wondering if the business office finally had turned philanthropist.

Then I had a shock. I looked twice to make sure. Yes, no mistake. It looked as though the summary of every harness-horse meet on earth was spread out there in full! Two and one-half columns all together, led off with a half-column story about some blamed races down at Faredale. I rubbed my eyes—right above it in a cute little box was a list labeled "To-day's Best Bets." And topping the whole thing was a fancy head, three columns wide. I read its legend:

TURF NEWS AND GOSSIP.
J. HAMILTON POE, Turf Editor.

Say, I guess I disillusioned my bride right there with a fine line of cussing. Who the devil was J. Hamilton Poe? I was so mad I was seeing bright red. What was he doing on the *Morning Mail's* sporting page—my sporting page? Was I the sporting editor, or was somebody else running the shop? It sure looked as though some one was playing fast and loose with my little department.

When I cooled down, I saw a light. I recognized the fine Italian hand of the sleek, mercenary business manager in the thing. Well, that made me hotter

than ever, and I fretted and fumed to get back home. I was for marching right in and throwing up my job. The nerve of Old Suffering—planting a horse editor in my castle without so much as asking my leave! Waited until I was out of sight, eh, and then pulled his pet scheme! I lay awake in my berth that night thinking hard thoughts, and framing some decorative things I'd call that business manager when I got home.

Naturally I wasn't quite so choleric after I had slept the edge off my anger. We landed home the next morning and got settled in the new flat. So about noon I ambled down to the office. I had a chip on my shoulder, all right, but my wife had begged me not to do anything rash, so in a way I felt a little conservative. You know the little eight-by-ten room that holds the sporting department, the first door on the left off the local-news room? There's a public hall on the other side, so the room had two doors, and about six feet inside there was a tall railing, with a gate, dividing the room in two parts. Inside, toward the local room, its side against the railing, was my roll-top, and on the other side of the gate, facing the railing, was the flat-topped desk used by my assistant, Jerry McCloud. The room was divided so the hordes of amateur baseball stars and the bowling fanatics and the ham boxers would have to keep a respectful distance while they unwrapped their troubles.

I walked in through the public hall. Jerry wasn't there yet, but I glimpsed a tall, lanky, shabbily dressed person with a scraggly mustache bent double over my opened desk. I bristled. I had left that desk closed. I had a sharp suspicion as to the identity of this person squatting in my chair. He didn't hear me come in.

"Hey!" I yelled suddenly. The fellow jumped about a foot. Then he twisted around and looked at me.

"'Lo, old scout!" he said breezily, grinning. "Wanta put a piece in the paper?"

Say, I didn't like his face, I didn't like his grin, and, most of all, I didn't like his funny little mustache. I could see he was about forty years old, ten years more than myself. And he had a shiny red nose.

"No," I retorted, with biting sarcasm, "I don't want to put a piece in the paper. And if I did I wouldn't ask you. Say, Fresh—who the devil are you, anyway?"

He studied me a minute, and then his face cracked all over into what I guess he meant for a friendly smile. "We-ll! We-ll!" he drawled. "I'll lay a button fifty to one straight that it's the boss. Welcome home, son, welcome home! And congratulations! How's the missus? Glad to meet you!"

He uncoupled himself swiftly and got up—say, I thought I was tall, but he had it on me about three inches—and he shoved out a big ham of a hand that I noticed wasn't very clean. If I saw the hand, I didn't let on.

"Well," I said slowly, "you haven't told me who you are and what you are doing at my desk."

He looked surprised, and then laughed again. You couldn't insult him if you tried.

"Oh, don't throw a shoe, old fellow!" he returned conciliatingly. "Don't break, don't break—come right up to the feed box. Don't know me? Why, my name's Poe—J. Hamilton Poe—the J. stands for Joshua, but I don't use the Josh much—and I don't mind telling you, modestlike, that there ain't any bird in or out of the woods that has anything on me when it comes to doping the ponies—harness, you know, pacers and trotters. No, I ain't much for the running game. Say, pal, we're getting out some page, aren't we? Regular

turf stuff, with a punch—and, believe me, sport, I sure am pickin' the winners! See the best bets to-day? No? Say, you wanta get a line on 'em—I've got the right dope, and——"

"Well!" I said sharply, cutting in on his line of chatter. "Mr. Joshua Hamilton Poe, you certainly do hate yourself! You're trotting right up to that lopped-off front name of yours!" He blinked as that sunk in. I glanced at the mess on my desk—horse weeklies, sheets of records, and copy paper scrawled with writing. I snorted. "Move your luggage out into the alley, Mr. Poe!" I continued witheringly. "That's my desk!" Whereupon I turned and went out.

I went in to see the managing editor, sure that he'd pass me along to the business manager, and I felt like scrapping with that gentleman just then. The chief was glad to see me, asked me all about my wedding trip, and so on, and, before I knew it, I wasn't feeling half so belligerent. Then I got around to the subject of the new turf editor. Mr. Egler explained it beautifully; said I wasn't to take offense; you see, the business office had opened up and handed more space to sports when this fellow Poe happened to come along and make a deal with Old Suffering to boost circulation, get horse advertising, and run a department all by himself; he wasn't a newspaper man by a long shot, but he could get along all right because he was wise on the horses, and it would help the paper. I admitted it did sound pretty good from a business standpoint, but I felt hurt, I told him, about the way they had dumped him in while I was away.

The managing editor laughed, and said I had been marked down for a nice little raise in salary as a sort of wedding present from the office and I better forget my troubles and swallow the grouch.

II.

Considering how the office was taking care of me, I felt like trying my level best to get along with the new turf editor. But it was a pretty tough job. J. Hamilton Poe was the cheekiest fellow I ever saw; he had more nerve than the ordinary run of book agents, and that is saying a lot. Long since he had been calling everybody around the office by their first names, and he was on giggling terms with all the girl employees downstairs.

Why, the first week I was back I was going through the business office one day when I saw Poe come breezing down the aisle from the mezzanine, where the business manager had his headquarters. The first day I had noticed a new girl behind the counter in the advertising-accounts department—and, say, she was a stunner! She was tall, and had a wonderful figure—a perfect blonde, strikingly pretty. I had wondered who she was, but hadn't dared speak. Well, I nearly fainted when I saw this fellow Poe stop a second, grin, and call across the counter, in that loud voice of his:

"Hello, kid!"

Say, I sized up that lady as one who wouldn't stand for that sort of talk. But when he speaks she smiles and blushes and pipes up sweetly:

"How do you do, Mr. Poe?"

Well, he sees me then, and, as we both turn into the side hall toward the elevators, he throws out his chest and grins.

"Hi, Mr. Man!" he sings out. "How's tricks?" Then proudly: "Say, she's some doll, ain't she?"

"Didn't notice!" I fires back sourly. "But, say, Poe, let me hand you a tip—I wouldn't monkey with dames in the office if I were you. It isn't healthy sometimes."

He only laughed at that as we got out of the elevator. We went into the

sporting room, and I got busy. It was early Saturday afternoon, and there was a lot of work ahead, for there were four pages of sports to be shot out for the Sunday paper. That was the first I had seen of Poe since Monday, and I had found out a few things for my own benefit while he was away.

He left right after we had our little fuss the first day I got back, telling me he was going to a race meet in a little town twenty miles out that was starting that afternoon. It would have been easy for him to turn up at the office every night with his stuff, but he didn't show himself. Every evening he used to send a little rat-faced guy that had race track written all over him—and the professional odor sticking all over his clothes, too—with the summary and a string of dope and "best bets" for the next day's races, and so on.

Heavens, but his copy was rotten! I used to swear a blue streak when I got it, and finally, in self-defense, I turned it over to my long-suffering assistant to wrestle with. Why, Poe couldn't write ordinary English. Well, Mac would struggle with it, and finally get it up to the composing room, and then we'd shoot up all the summaries that came in from the press associations. The result was that Poe's turf department took up between two and three columns of good space every day —and a good deal of our time and patience. It was some relief, anyway, not to have Old Suffering and Pennyril coming up with kicks from "constant readers" in the tank towns.

I was curious all along about Poe, and finally I got talking with his little, horse-smelling messenger. There was nobody home with him, I guess, except when it came to horse dope. Anyway, I drew him out and learned a lot of things. Poe hadn't told me anything about himself, but I discovered he was a professional starter of races, and had been for years. I saw a light, then. That explained that megaphone voice of his and his raucous tones. Little Rat Face evidently looked up to Poe as a superior being, for he told, with a certain pride and big, wondering eyes, about the fellow's exploits.

"He's a big man, sir," he tells me. "Why, they all wants him fer starter—he's that good! He's booked up fer every week, and he won't work cheap —no, sir! Some starters only gets fifty dollars, or mebbe seventy-five dollars a week, but Mr. Poe he gets a hundred dollars every week or he don't work. I seen 'em pay him! He's some class, sir; some class when it comes to gettin' the nags away with the bell. An' he's got them drivers on the hip, on the hip, all right! They're scared stiff of him, that's sure, fer he plasters fines right and left if they don't drive on the square. No monkey business with Mr. Poe—he gets 'em away with the bell every time!"

The little guy sure did admire the fellow. But, say, I nearly dropped. What do you think of that—this fellow making a hundred dollars a week as a starter? What was he doing fussing around the *Morning Mail?* I knew they were only paying him twenty-five dollars a week. Well, I began to be suspicious after that, and I was on the lookout. Poe didn't look right to me at all, and I felt sure there was an ebony gentleman in the woodpile.

Well, this Saturday afternoon I got wise to a few more things. I didn't pay much attention to the turf editor; he sat on the other side of the little railing at the desk that had been moved in for him, and I didn't notice what he was doing. Finally he gets up, and shoves over a huge sheet of paper covered with printing.

"Say, Mr. Man," he remarks genially, "is that fixed right for the printers? I wanta send it upstairs."

I looked at the thing. It was the complete list of entries for the race

meet to be held the following week at Scottville. I gasped. A quick glance told me the stuff, when set up in type, would fill about five columns in the paper.

"What!" I cried, in astonishment, hardly able to speak. "You want to send *that* up? Why, man, that'll eat up nearly a page! Are you crazy?"

"Why, no," he says, grinning. "What's wrong with it? The boss said I was to have a full page every Sunday besides space for the regular races."

Well, we grappled again, and it ended by me going in to see the chief. And the worst of it was I had to swallow my wrath again, for Poe was right. They had promised him all that space. Of course, when I kicked, I got that much extra space. But it galled me, I tell you, to see all that rot go into the paper. I felt it was so much space thrown to the dogs.

To give Poe his due, though, he tried to be nice to me. He asked my advice about everything, as though he was trying to show me that he knew he was an awful duffer in the newspaper game. I didn't bother much what he sent up for the page, because I had decided to wash my hands of any responsibility for it. And I cooled down under his breezy good nature.

As I was going out of the room once, I happened to glance over his shoulder, and my eye was attracted by a *Morning Mail* billhead. I noticed it, I guess, because such a thing never appeared in the editorial room. The bills for advertising were made out downstairs, and we hardly ever saw a billhead. At that, I didn't pay much attention, for I was thinking about the Sunday sporting pages. But a thought sort of shot through the back of my head, and I wondered vaguely what Poe was doing with the blank bill. I guess he saw my look, for he covered the thing with a sheet of paper and quickly picked up a horse weekly and started to look through it, whistling. I promptly forgot all about the incident, but I sure did recall it when the blow-off came.

Four or five weeks passed, and I began to get used to the turf editor. He had the same program every week. He would show up at the office only on Saturday. He always had a roll, too, and was forever trying to be a good fellow with me. He was very friendly, and one day, when I remarked casually about him being a starter, he looked at me sort of queer and then laughed and admitted that was his long suit. He told me all about it; how he got a hundred dollars a week, but he had to work for it, he said, because getting the horses away every heat in three or four races every day wasn't an easy job. He said the business manager knew all about it and thought it made it easier for him because he could combine his work and his acquaintanceship with all the people of the track for the benefit of the paper, not only sending in the news but getting advertising and booming circulation.

It did seem to be a pretty good stunt, I had to admit, for the circulation manager told me one day that Poe was pulling a big increase in the sales in all the towns where they were having harness-horse racing that summer. And he had turned in a couple of columns of advertising that ran daily, making a big hit with the business office, for the advertising rate for turf stuff was fifty cents an inch, and, with twenty-one inches in a column, that meant the two columns pulled in twenty-one dollars a day. Most of the advertising was ninety-day-contract stuff he got when he first started with us—ads from sales stables, veterinary surgeons, patent-liniment manufacturers, harness sellers, carriage makers, and so on. Then he had a little advertising running all the time from the race meetings. It seemed that he got all the associations in the circuit putting in ads about four weeks

in advance of their meets, each running an inch a day for three weeks, and then the week of the meet he had them running three inches a day. I guess he got a pretty fair commission, but, of course, he was entitled to it.

Altogether he seemed to be doing pretty well, and, of course, money talks around a newspaper, and I had to stand for his little peculiarities and his monumental gall. He would show up every Saturday and produce a new bunch of entries for the coming week and get out his Sunday horse dope. Usually he was pretty far away during the week, and he'd telegraph his summaries and a lot of dope. The tolls must have been pretty high, but he got away with it because he was pulling the money for the office by advertising and circulation.

I couldn't get my suspicions out of my head, though. I didn't know just what was being pulled off, but I felt sure Poe was a clever rascal, and I had a sneaking idea that something would drop some day.

Well, it did. The blow fell about the middle of the sixth week after I was back. One day I got a call that the chief wanted to see me. I went in, and there sat the business manager, fuming. The managing editor was smiling behind his hand as though he was privately enjoying a joke on the Big Boss. The business manager was very nice to me. He wanted to know what I knew about Poe, whether I had any particular reason for objecting to him at the beginning. I told him I knew nothing. Well, finally he shoved over a letter for me to read. It went like this:

OAKTOWN, August 15th.

BUSINESS MANAGER, *Morning Mail.*

DEAR SIR: I am inclosing herewith your bill for twenty-one dollars for advertising space in the *Morning Mail* used by the Oaktown Trotting and Pacing Association during the four weeks ending July 29th. Some mistake has been made in your bookkeeping department, and I take this means of advising you. One of your clerks must have erred and rendered this statement for a small part of the advertising we did, all of which we paid for.

However, there is one thing that puzzles me. The bill says: "To forty-two inches display advertising, at fifty cents per inch, twenty-one dollars." In your previous bill, which I paid, the charge was two dollars per inch. I would be obliged if you would see that our account is straightened out, for of course we have paid your bill in full, not only for the space you mention in the inclosed bill, but for all other space used.

Your records will show that on July 29th, the last day of our race meet, I paid to your Mr. Poe three hundred and thirty-six dollars in full for our advertising account. As I now recall it, this sum included one hundred and five dollars for space in publication of entries, one hundred and forty-seven dollars for space used daily and Sunday during the week of our meet for publication of reports and summaries of races, and eighty-four dollars for display advertising during that week and the three previous weeks.

Of course, mistakes are natural at times. For my part, there has been no harm done, and with the return herewith of your bill and an examination of your records the incident can be closed. Yours truly,

CHARLES K. POST,
Secretary Oaktown Trotting and Pacing Association.

I couldn't help gasping. "I knew it!" I exclaimed at last. "I knew it! He sure is one clever bird!"

I looked at the business manager. He was apoplectic with rage. The managing editor sort of smiled at me, and I knew it tickled him because I had been right about the horse editor, without knowing it, from the very beginning. He didn't have much love for Old Suffering, either.

Say, I had to admire that fellow Poe after reading that letter. Talk about graft in a newspaper office! Well, it looked as though this man Post, down at Oaktown, didn't have a receipt, or he would have sent it along to prove his claim. We wondered how Poe got by without giving a receipt—or perhaps Post had mislaid it or else didn't think it necessary to send it to the *Mail.* Our confab ended by me being instructed to investigate and get all the goods on

Poe. I was to cotton up to him and think up some excuse for going along on his next trip. The business manager was mad as a wet hen, and was strong for catching the horse editor red-handed and landing on him with both feet—hard. For once I seconded his motion.

III.

I had noticed lately that Poe was looking very prosperous, but had not thought a great deal about it until this letter came along. It was easy to dope it out now. Knowing what I did, and looking back to the day I first saw him, the difference was like day and night. He used to be rather seedy. Now he was dressed like a real sport, his mustache was neatly trimmed and waxed at the ends, and he had a couple of sparklers. He must have been down on his luck during the winter and spring until the trotting races started and the pickings were good for his peculiar talents.

Well, the next Saturday, when Poe landed at the office, I didn't let on I knew anything, and I hadn't even told Mac for fear the thing would get out and our bird would get wise. I became a regular pal of the horse editor. I pretended to have grown very much interested in harness racing, and I talked enthusiastically about the good work he was doing along news lines, to say nothing of advertising and circulation. I blew him up to the sky and told him the business manager had been talking to me and was tickled to death over the turf department's success.

We went down to Sewell's after the paper had gone to press, and off in one corner we had a dandy supper. We had a cocktail apiece, and I insisted on opening a bottle of wine.

At length, after I had pretended to be envious of his luck and brains, he leaned over the table and said:

"I like you, pal, and I'm gonna let you in on something. Why can't you and me get together and grab the dough right? I'm getting my share now that mebbe you don't know anything about." He smiled craftily. "But there's no reason why we both can't get it—and in bigger wads. Are you with me if I tell you a few things I know? I ain't no hog and no piker, neither—just say whether you're on."

He bent his cold eyes on me questioningly. I flatter myself I was playing my part pretty well.

"*With* you?" I exclaimed. "Am I with you? Well, I should guess yes! I've been wondering how I could make some extra coin lately, but I guess I'm not wise." I said the last sort of dolefully, trying to appear that I wished I was as smart as he.

"You're on!" he said, rubbing his hands in satisfaction. "Don't worry; I'll put you wise. Of course, we're partners now, and mum's the word right through!"

I nodded assent. I had him now, sure. He tossed off some more wine that I'd thoughtfully poured into his glass.

"You know how much the *Mail* pays me," he went on. "Twenty-five bucks a week!" He laughed scornfully. "Think of it—*twenty-five bucks!* Well, that's cigarette money, anyway. Of course, I get a hundred dollars a week as starter. That's mine by rights. But here's where I shine: I make a deal with the secretary of every race meet four weeks before the races come off. I get him to put in an inch ad every day for three weeks and three inches every day the week of the meet. That's forty-two inches. The *Mail's* regular rate is fifty cents, but that sounds too cheap, so I tell the boob secretary that it's two bucks an inch. Then I tell him that all trotting associations always advertise their list of entries, but before this few papers'd print 'em because they didn't have the space to sell. He's hungry for all the dope he can get in the paper,

and I tell him we'll print his entries the Sunday of the week the meet opens, at half rate, one dollar an inch. He grabs at that. The entries usually run about five columns, sometimes a little more and sometimes a little less. With twenty-one inches to the column, I can figure on five times that or one hundred and five inches, which means one hundred and five dollars to father.

"Then I tell him that it means money to him in attendance and enthusiasm if he gets all he can printed about the races. So I soak him the same rate for the stories and the summaries of the races we run every day. That comes to about a column a day and a column of dope on Sunday, which makes seven columns, or one hundred and forty-seven inches. And that means one hundred and forty-seven dollars more for father! Then I fix it up in advance to act as press agent of the race meet for two weeks at fifty dollars a week, and give him a stall about sending dope about his meet to all the papers in town. He never sees the papers, and he falls for it—he's glad to, because he thinks I'm doing him a special favor in printing all the dope about his races at what he thinks are small rates.

"The only trouble is that I've got to give a little of the dough to the office." He grinned and winked. "I've got that fixed so the secretary doesn't get the regular bill for his little bit of straight advertising at a half a buck an inch. I've got a pretty little friend down in the advertising-accounts department. You've seen her—the tall blonde. Some kid, eh? Her name's Marie, you know Sweet Marie! What's the last name she calls herself? Oh, yes—Miss Hope—and you can bet she's *my* white hope! She's my friend, and when the bills go out she holds out the one to the trotting association—all of 'em, in fact—and slips 'em to me. My blond friend also swiped a pad of billheads for me, and I make out the bill the way I want to touch the secretary and hand it to him the last day of the meet, saying I'll collect for the *Mail*. He pays without batting an eyelid. Then when I get the bill from Sweet Marie, I keep it a week and then walk in one day and pay the cashier the twenty-one dollars it always calls for, and I get a receipt. I tell him I met the secretary and he paid me and asked me to turn it in and get the receipt and give it to him at the next race meet I see him at.

"You see, pal, it's as easy as rolling off a log. Now, just look here—let's add it up and see what it comes to." He turned over the menu and jotted down the figures. When he finished, he shoved it over to me, with a triumphant smile. Here's the way his graft was compiled:

Salary from the *Morning Mail*, per week	$ 25
Fee as starter of the races, per week	100
Entries, 5 columns (105 inches), $1 per inch	105
News, et cetera, one column per day, 7 days (147 inches)	147
Display advertising (42 inches) $2 per inch. $84, my split	63
Press agent of meet, 2 weeks, $50 per week	100
Total	$540

"That's not bad for one week, eh!" said Poe, with pride. "And the best of it is the secretary of every meet falls the same way right off the bat. They don't know anything about newspapers. This is a brand-new touch of mine, and I hand 'em so much publicity, more than they've ever got, that I get away with it easily. Well, it's a cold week, you see, when I don't pull down between five and six hundred bucks. You see, my *Mail* salary and my starter's fee belong to me any way you take it, but I'm making four hundred and fifteen dollars every week besides that. Can you beat it?"

"Say," I said admiringly, reaching out my hand, "put it there, old man! You're a wonder! Count me in quick!"

That tickled him, and he went on to tell me his plan whereby between us we could make even more..

He said I'd have to arrange for a lot more space for the turf department, but I assured him that wouldn't be difficult because he had made such a big hit with his work so far. Because he would do most of the work he offered to split the spoils sixty and forty per cent with me on everything, except, of course, his fee as starter and his regular salary. I agreed. He had it all figured out on the back of an envelope how we could shake down the horse people for from twelve hundred to fifteen hundred dollars a week, which would give him between seven hundred and nine hundred dollars and me from about five hundred to six hundred dollars every Saturday night. Of course, that meant he would almost double his present graft, in addition to his legitimate earnings, and at the same time give me a cut of the pie. Naturally it couldn't last long, with the racing season closing in September, but Poe sure was going to make hay while the sun was shining.

I appeared to be enthusiastic, and we drank each other's health. Then he proposed, after I had inserted a few covert suggestions, that I go with him the following week to the race meet down in Osnaburg so I could get a line on his system and the stalls he pulled on the secretaries of the four or five meets to follow. He said they were always on hand, and he lined them up in advance. I didn't make myself too eager, but finally told him I thought I could arrange to get away on the plea of writing a special story for Sunday about the *Morning Mail's* big success as a turf paper and I would go with him.

IV.

On Monday I met Poe, and I pretended to be just as much worked up as ever over our combination. We took the train for Osnaburg, and, say, he talked a streak about the plan. He bored me to death, but I had to keep up the bluff.

In the meantime, in the back of my head, I was thinking about tripping up my money-making friend. I mapped it out so I would keep with him for about three days and then make an excuse to get back to the office so I could slip over to Oaktown, up in the next county, and interview Mr. Post. The trouble was that so far the horse editor hadn't taken a cent that belonged to the *Morning Mail.* He was turning in the regular advertising rate of twenty-one dollars for the display advertising of every race meet, and all the other turf advertising was paid direct to the office. He got some commission on that, but I guess he hadn't figured out a way to get a big split, so he had to let it go.

What Poe had been doing was to shake down every trotting association. They were the victims of his graft. They were being bunkoed out of a pot of money, and they didn't know it. Of course, the horse editor was using the *Mail's* name as a sort of cat's-paw to drag out his chestnuts. I wanted to see him actually at work on his schemes, but I wasn't going to warn anybody among his prospective victims because we planned to nab him before he could get any more coin. My idea was to double back to Oaktown to see if Secretary Post really had Poe's receipt for three hundred and thirty-six dollars. Of course, the business manager had not replied to Post's letter, giving him the impression that the mistake had been rectified.

We had been wondering all along how the bill happened to be sent to Post, and the only explanation was that it must have been duplicated by mistake and sent out without the tall blonde seeing it. The business manager at first had been strong for calling her before

him and finding out how much she knew about Poe's graft. But I advised him not to, because she might tip off the horse editor. Anyway, I told him I didn't think she knew anything or really was much to blame. I thought she simply had been enticed by Poe's soft words and his breezy manner and believed it was all right to hand over the race-meet bills to him for collection, for naturally she could see that he was paying them regularly. I didn't believe she knew Poe was a crook at all, but that she merely was an unconscious tool.

Ham Poe certainly was taking a big chance every week in handing out a receipt for his inflated bills. But I guess he felt comfortable in the thought that they would be filed away and forgotten. At that, he was pretty safe, for there wasn't one chance in a hundred of such a thing happening as had occurred in the Post case. He might have gone along indefinitely without such a thing bobbing up. But along came that little slip that he didn't dream about, and it was going to prove his undoing.

Well, to make it short, we reached Osnaburg, and I met a lot of turf people and saw Poe dating things up with visiting secretaries for "advertising space" and "press-agent work" for meets in the future. I loafed along with him until Wednesday evening, when I made an excuse about leaving all the arrangements to him because I ought to get back to the office. He agreed, and handed me the entries for the meet to be pulled off the following week, and asked me to get them ready to print Sunday. He said he'd meet me Saturday and report progress.

I boarded the train for home, but changed at the junction and went over to Oaktown. I told Post I was a clerk in the advertising department, and I had stopped off while on a trip through Oaktown to get any receipt he might have in order to adjust the disputed bill. Sure enough, he said he hadn't been able to find the receipt when he wrote to the *Mail,* and, since he didn't get a reply, he thought it was a mistake and everything had been fixed up. I told him it would be all right after I showed the business manager his receipt. He hunted around, and finally dug it up, and I took it back home Thursday. There it was, as big as life: "Received payment, July 29th, J. Hamilton Poe," in that gentleman's scrawly handwriting.

The next day, Friday, I told the whole story to the business manager. He nearly had a fit when he learned how much Poe was cleaning up and what he was framing up. He swore like a trooper.

"Blast that horse grafter!" he exclaimed, in a white heat. "I'll fix his clock Saturday. Think of it—*five hundred and forty dollars a week!*"

I cautioned him in alarm, fearing some one would hear him. Well, he quieted down, and we arranged to lure the horse editor down into Old Suffering's office Saturday afternoon, spring Post's receipt on him, and have him pinched—without publicity, of course, for we could easily fix that. We wanted to recover the money Poe had grafted, if possible, and turn it over to his victims without giving a detailed explanation, for we thought if the secretaries of the trotting associations he had milked found out the whole story it would only hurt the *Morning Mail,* even though the paper wasn't to blame.

Saturday afternoon came and went, and Poe didn't show up. I began to feel worried, and I wondered if he was wise. That night his stuff came in over the wire, with a personal note addressed to me at the end, saying:

Delayed with work here. Please get out Sunday dope. Plan going great. See you Monday.

That took the edge off my suspicion.

I believed he was busy cooking up his enlarged graft system in the belief that I was in with him. I told the business manager, and we decided everything was all right, and we arranged to make the pinch Monday.

I got down to the office early Monday, for I wanted to be there when Poe blew in. Old Suffering saw me come in the door, and he yelled at me to hurry up into his office. I felt there was something wrong, and I knew it when I got a good look at the business manager. He was tearing his hair, and he shook a letter under my nose.

"Read that!" he gurgled, his voice a half sob. I thought he was either going to burst a blood vessel or cry with anger and disappointment.

Sure, you guessed it—escaped. No, the letter wasn't from Poe—he couldn't have written *that* letter. It was in a woman's writing. I've still got that little farewell message as a memento. Listen:

Saturday afternoon, August 26th.

DEAR MR. SUFFRAN: Yesterday afternoon I overheard your vulgar language in your conversation with Mr. Sherlock Holmes, the *Mail's* able sporting editor, who is a better sporting editor than he is a detective. Really, you should know better than to shout so loud with the mezzanine windows open. I must say that I never liked to hear profanity—it is not fit for a lady's ears. So I beg to resign herewith, and am sorry that I must leave town this evening, for of course you will not get this letter until Monday.

It has been a severe strain to work for the past eight weeks for a meager ten dollars a week, but of course my husband has done very well during the same period and I do not complain—nor does he—for the racing season will be at an end in a couple of weeks, and something over four thousand dollars in less than two months is enough to compensate. In Mr. Poe's name I beg, also, to tender you his resignation, also taking effect to-night. He telephoned me from Osnaburg this afternoon that in collecting his bill from the trotting association there he did not include in his statement your twenty-one dollars for display advertising, so perhaps you can collect it yourself, as of course it is due you.

Since Monday will be pay day, naturally neither Mr. Poe nor I have drawn our salaries for the past week—my ten dollars and his twenty-five dollars. Small as the sum is, we can use the money. So, if it is convenient, please mail our salaries and any letters that may come for Mr. Poe—letters that look as though they had contributions in them—to General Delivery, New York, where we expect to spend the winter.

Of course, you will not be angry over our activity during our pleasant stay with the *Morning Mail,* nor vindictive, I am sure, for while it would be inconvenient for us, you also appreciate that it would not be a good business proposition for you, since the news of how the *Morning Mail's* turf department was operated would not be healthy for the *Mail's* circulation or advertising in the towns Mr. Poe visited.

Thanking you for every kindness shown both of us, and the lovely opportunities, I beg to remain, yours most sincerely,

MARIE POE.

When I had read the letter, I walked weakly to the window overlooking the advertising-accounts department. Yes, the tall blonde—Sweet Marie—was absent. Then I stared at the letter again. Nerve! Cheek! Why, I think gall ran in the Poe family. No, we never landed them—for, as Mr. Poe's wife pointed out, they had us tied hand and foot. Say, I always thought since that the tall blonde was the real brains of the combination—she furnished the brains and J. Hamilton provided the wind.

There is another story of the race track coming soon. It is called "The Peg-Legged Filly." A story of the South. The author is Mason Houghland.

Men of Iron

By Frank E. Evans

Author of "The Madness of Cranston," "The Road to Adventure," Etc.

Why one man left the fleshpots of San Francisco to serve his flag in the outposts of the China Sea for fifteen "iron men"

TERRY CALHOUN leaped from the crowded ranks of the Pacific Slope's second-rate "pugs" into the inner circle of the nation's middleweights by virtue of the mighty wallop that sent the Vallejo Kid crashing on his knees for the full count. The flood tide of fame swallowed up the patronym of his fathers, for that night the dean of San Francisco's sporting editors fastened on him for the rest of his stormy life the nickname of Wallop. Terry would have climbed to the top round of his profession had it not been for the crooked streak that seemed bred in his bones, and that the limelight of his new estate uncovered without mercy. In spite of his superb footwork, his uncanny gift of ferreting out the point of attack, his undoubted gameness—the Vallejo Kid had broken two of his ribs before the stormy wallop landed—the streak brought swift retribution.

First there was the ten-round go with Curly Flinn, and Wallop's flagrant foul in the eighth. Then came the faked match with Spider Andrews. The storm of disfavor broke with all the bitterness of accumulation on his close-cropped head when the match with One-round Thorpe degenerated in the rankest of frame-ups. His clear superiority to Flinn, Andrews, and Thorpe gave bitter irony to the recurrence of the streak.

Toppled from his throne, his descent to the second-raters was as disastrous as his accession to it had been full of promise. The dissipations that beat about the prize ring like surf against a sea wall caught him in their undertow. They had left him unscarred in the days of obscure apprenticeship. Now they found him easy prey; drained him of his strength and cunning, and tossed him, spent and broken, into the fringe of the ranks from which he had sprung.

Wallop would have ended his days in the backwash of the prize ring's trainers and seconds—had he eluded the corridors of San Quentin—if he had not swung vicariously one night at French Sadie. An ill-tempered jibe, a retort tipped with Gallic venom, and the right hook that had wooed the Vallejo Kid to sleep crashed between the woman's eyes. It was her eyes that had first attracted Wallop; eyes of so deep a blue that the black lashes seemed tinged the color of California's sky. Wallop stood over the huddled body in the back room of Carncross' saloon, waiting in sudden panic for the black lashes to open and fade into the blue of the eyes. In his befuddled mind ran the spaced count of the referee: one—two—three—four!

Like the vivid white light of a shell bursting over sodden trenches the picture of his degraded depth flashed before him. The tense, driving muscles of his right arm flexed into impotence.

His knees wavered, and Wallop dropped on them at the side of French Sadie. A gold piece rolled slowly from the handkerchief clutched in her hand. He followed its curve until it struck a cigar butt and curled over it. He raised himself from penitential knees, and snatched up the coin. With one eye slanting toward the door that opened on the bar, he edged furtively to the side door and slipped out into the street. On the floor the woman's head rolled to one side, jerked, and French Sadie opened her eyes on an otherwise empty room and peopled it with befitting language.

Wallop made straight for the water front, fighting down the impulse to break and run. At the first corner he could make out the anchor lights of a ship, and his heart jumped at the solution. He knew them as the lights of an army transport, for that afternoon he had watched, his lips curled in scorn, troops swing out along the wharf and file up the forward gangway. Wallop had seen other detachments—marines and infantry, cavalry and artillery—pass through San Francisco from the Presidio and Oakland, en route to the islands, and had affected a caustic wonder that men should leave the fleshpots of the city to serve their flag in the outposts of the China Sea for fifteen "iron men."

The only use that he had found for that flag, until to-night, was to slip a paralyzing jab below it when his opponent wore it entwined through the loops of his fighting trunks. Now the flag that flew by day at the transport's taffrail spelled safety, for he had left French Sadie for dead on the sawdust-covered floor of Carncross' back room. They would never think to look for him in the islands. No idea of rehabilitation in the haven of the islands appealed to him; only the prompting of panicky flight and a vague decision to mend his fortunes in the ring out there under an assumed name.

The patent log line dipped and swayed from the port wing of the transport's bridge the next day until it had measured off the dripping toll of a hundred miles before the last of the monthly quota of stowaways had been routed out. To be precise, the last of them, Wallop Calhoun, emerged from his hiding behind the sea bags of Deering's battalion of marines on the berth deck aft, and swaggered up the iron ladders to the main deck. There he gulped his lungs full of salt air, pulled his checkered cap to a truculent slant over his eyes, and waited for results. In a swift sequence that mentally left him "hanging over the ropes" the results trooped along.

A bos'n's mate, ignorant of the stowaway's ring pedigree, propelled him by the coat collar to the office of the captain quartermaster. Wallop had an uncomfortable feeling that the sailorman would have cared little even if he had known. The grip on the collar choked off remonstrance, the lifting decks tangled up his footwork, and the words that the bos'n's mate breathed into the "tin ear" that Curly Flinn had given him in the first round of the Sausilito battle bit like acid into the outraged feelings of Wallop. The interview with the transport's autocrat was a brief prelude, attuned to the efforts of the bos'n's mate in its sparing but precise English, to a trip down ladders and along steel-walled passages until Wallop, stripped to the waist, was tossing coal into the fire box of a boiler.

Half an hour later he bent, gasping, over the handle of his shovel, his eyes glaring at the iron plate on which the scoop was grounded. His chest was heaving, his heart pounding, his lungs wheezing in protest. Across the small of his back a protesting muscle kept him from straightening out to his full height of six feet. The spirit of re-

volt was turbulent within him, none the less acute for the realization that cigarettes and steam beer were as poor training for the fireroom of a transport as they had been for the squared circle. The salient chin thrust out in its old-time challenge; the jaws clamped until the mouth was a sinister slit. The shovel rattled on the iron plates as he loosed his hands, knit them into their fighting compass, and braced his shoulders back, heedless of the twinge that raced through his back.

To the spur of his fighting instinct Wallop's cold gray eyes swept the space about him in feverish desire to find the man who represented the authority that chained him, once an ornament to the middleweight class, to the degrading toil of a galley slave. Indifferent to his pugnacious glance his mates shoveled away, and to Wallop, as he eyed them, came the dim memory of a fire in the redwoods country. The searching glare of the fires as fresh fuel stirred them gleamed red on the black-smudged, naked torsos. They were shaped huge, rugged, like the trunks of forest giants. On their arms and backs muscles swelled out, glistening with sweat, like the gnarled ribs of the redwood. He, alone of them all, stood clean built as a hemlock, his shoulders sloping down to the slim hips like a wedge; his muscles sleek and pliant servants of his fighting genius.

His eyes halted truculently on a man in blue dungarees with a long-stemmed oiler's can in one hand, whose eyes flashed back the challenge. Wallop shouldered aside a tousled-haired Russian to get at him. Another shovel crashed with the boom of a heathen gong on the floor plates, and a coal passer, whose stolid Scandinavian features were empurpled with drink, raised his voice to a bull-like bellow. Still his mates worked on, supremely indifferent to the Scandinavian ultimatum that the ship would sink before he'd lift another blasphemous shovelful. The man in dungarees casually picked up a steel maul and moved with the litheness of a panther to an arm's length of the mutineer.

Wallop saw, rather than heard, the words come clipped and hard from his lips, and watched the coal passer raise his huge fists, kneading his fingers for the rush. The steel maul arched, and fell on the mutineer's head. He sagged to his knees, and rolled over on the iron plates.

"Here you, you pop-eyed, soldiering idler, pass me that bucket of water, and bear a hand at it or I'll swing on you, too!"

Wallop mechanically handed over the bucket, and the man in dungarees flushed the water over the prone body.

"That'll bring him out of his dream of the old home and the orchard and the snow on the mountains," sneered the voice of authority. "And if there's any other scenery-loving, square-headed son of a sea biscuit in this watch working off his liquor who wants a picture of the 'God Bless Our Happy Home' motto let him step up."

Wallop picked up his shovel.

"None of yer moving pictures of the old homestead for mine," he grunted, and tossed the chunks of coal into the fire box.

The fireroom was no refuge for a weakling, and Wallop was none. Pride alone, however, was all that kept him from lagging behind at the first in the cold count of shovelfuls. That first day came back to him through many months as blurred as the closing round of his first finish fight. The iron hand of discipline held him to the watch of "four hours on and eight off" through that long day, and drove him back to it day after day. The iron hand smashed smuggled flasks, as it had the mutineer's head, and deprived him of the liquor he craved. For variety of toil it herded him into the bunkers to trim coal in

a black haze of flying coal dust, or thrust a slice bar into his blistered hands and set him to the task of reducing unwieldy lumps into bits that could be handled.

Barred from the avenues of dissipation that had led him down grade into the culminating shame of Carncross' back room, Wallop came for the first time into the circle of regenerating influences. The fire of revolt died from open blaze into weakening ashes. His undisciplined mind shaped slowly, unconsciously, to the ordered life of the transport. The fat sloughed off from his body, the twinges left his back, and into his skin and eyes, when he washed down after his four-hour trick, the clear glow of perfect condition crept back.

It was a week before he cared to venture from the black strip of canvas on which he stretched his aching body between watches. Then came Honolulu and a day's respite, but the haunting fear that he had killed French Sadie, and that the long arms of the wireless might seek him out if he left the black strip for the decks above chained him close to it. His impressions of Honolulu were registered through the medium of a porthole. Honolulu dropped astern, and the next day Wallop swung up the ladder to the forecastle deck with the truculent swagger of old.

There was a solid, weaving ring of men on deck, a ring colorful with the red stripes of the field artillery, the yellow of the cavalry, and the red stripes and yellow chevrons of the marines. Boat skids, guard rails, and the roof of the forward deck house were preempted by them. Aft of the ring loomed the hurricane deck superstructure, and its rails were lined with officers and civilians and their womenfolk.

Wallop, with a quickening of dormant passions, swung himself on top of an up-edged grating. Two lightweights were circling inside the ring. They were stripped above the waist to government undershirts, and one wore the red piping of a marine bugler on the seam of his trouser leg, and the other the stripe of a cavalry corporal. To Wallop's trained eye they were crude fighters, but he chuckled at the spirit of their rushes and the vicious slap of their six-ounce gloves. A gong rang, an army officer held up the cavalryman's right glove, and through the forecastle deck ran the cry: "Cavalry wins! K Troop!"

After that Wallop timed his visits above decks, for not an afternoon passed without its bouts. They were clean, hard fights, and Wallop, with each visit, found that fighting in any form was the ruling passion of the transport. Once he heard the incongruous crow of a bantam, and found it was one of six that a captain of marines was taking out to the islands to pit against the best of the native cocks. He listened, spellbound, to the casual tales of service in the islands, and his Celtic imagination wove splendid tapestries of heroism and suffering on the matter-of-fact warp and woof of them. His insatiable curiosity about this bizarre type of professional fighting man, for already he felt pride of kinship, taught him the significance of the multicolored "war ribbons." The red and yellow of the Spanish campaign, the yellow and black of the Boxer expedition became as familiar to him as the pedigree of his idol, Kid McCoy. A tiny tricolored rosette on the left of a strip of "war ribbons" worn by a sergeant of marines eclipsed them all when Wallop learned that it was the diamond belt of the service, the rosette of the Medal of Honor. Kid McCoy lost caste in that discovery.

"Say, Sergeant Knox, what'n thunder did you put over to win that?" he demanded, his index finger quivering with excitement as he pointed to it.

"Cutting barb wire in Nicaragua," grunted Knox.

The indignant Wallop confronted him an hour later with a copy of Special Order No. 25, Navy Department, in which the secretary of the navy paid tribute to the most brilliant exploit of the spectacular Nicaraguan expedition.

"It took just three hundred and twenty-nine words for the secretary of the United States navy—I've counted them, and he was holding back, too—to tell about your hacking away them wire entanglements so the buck marines could rush the niggers on that hill with the triple-jointed name. And bullets by the barrelful zipping past you. Two of them got you in the arm before you cleaned up the job," he stormed on in rising wrath. "And you tell it to me in five words like you was asking for a match!"

"The sec's got a literary turn o' mind," was the laconic defense.

From that day Wallop was the shadow of Sergeant Knox, of the marines. He towered a full half foot above him, but the light that blazed in the little man's eyes—the gray eyes of the indomitable fighter—made Wallop his faithful servitor. The old-time antipathy for the uniform, based on the rantings of sand-lot socialists, gave way to ungrudging admiration.

Each day the sunset shamed the gorgeous pageantry of its predecessor and the sea shaded into deeper blue. On deck khaki succeeded blue. Down in the fireroom Wallop marked the approach of the tropics by the stifling heat that mocked at ventilators and wind sails. The forecastle fights were drawing to an end, and the process of elimination left "Black Jack" Fraser, of the marines, the practically undisputed champion of the transport. Cavalry and field artillery combed their ranks in one final effort to check his string of victories, and, having chosen their man, wagered their monthly pay on him with the optimism of men who are associated with horses in their daily life.

Wallop jumped at the chance to pick up some easy money.

"They tell me below," he confided to Knox, "that I can't get ashore at Manila unless I can show fifty 'iron men.'"

"That's to keep the beach combers out.'

"Well, I've got half the dinero in my starboard kick"—Wallop was gradually changing the slang of the ringside for the picturesque argot of the service—"and at even money I'll have the fifty. Fraser's a cinch. He's got that match lashed to the mast. He's as good a fighter, for the milling, rough-stuff kind, as I've seen in the last five years. Why, the time I put Curly Flinn to the mat in the——" And came to a tight-mouthed halt.

"So you're a handy boy with the gloves? Thought as much from your build and the way you've been sizing up these amateurs," Knox commented in his dry, word-sparing way.

Wallop drew a double eagle out of his right trousers pocket. As he looked on it his jaw crept out to its ringside challenge, and his lips tightened to the sinister slit. Wallop had not cared to look at the gold piece since the night he had snatched it up from the sawdust of Carncross' floor. His fingers tightened about the milled edges, and he threw his hand out as though in protest. The fingers flew apart, and the gold flashed out over the rail. Knox watched in dumb wonder. When he looked up from the sea Wallop had gone.

Black Jack Fraser, true to Wallop's prophecy, made short shift of the army's white hope. Gloom settled over Gatling's battery and Daly's troopers. It brought no material joy to Wallop with its presage of another month with slice bar and shovel, and at the end the inhospitable welcome of San Francisco.

It was the strategy of Sergeant Knox that dispelled the thickening gloom. A brief interview with Captain Gatling convinced that doughty artilleryman that a match between Black Jack Fraser and Wallop promised vicarious revenge. Wallop sealed the match with savage joy. Win or lose, his share of the purse would unlock the gate to Manila. He gloried in the chance to distinguish himself in the eyes of these professional fighting men; to vindicate himself before the hero of the Nicaraguan expedition.

The fight was staged at night, below decks, with cargo lights throwing their glare over the ring. Wallop's dazzling footwork tided him over the bull-like rushes of Fraser in the early rounds. It made mockery of the wicked swings that the marine cut loose when he had him apparently cornered. A quick sidestep and Fraser's glove rasped futilely over Wallop's shoulder. An elusive swerve of the body, a patter of swift-weaving feet, and he was out in the open ring. The artistry of it was a spur to the hopes of the army contingent; a sobering douche to the marine battalion—excepting Knox; a contributory effect to the strong trend of sympathy for the unknown stowaway fighting for his chance to take his place in the islands. As the rounds passed, eye and glove blended into the perfect coördination of the expert. The lust for vindication goaded his genius into full expression. Yet the sheer joy of the game held his powers in restraint.

Fraser seemed impervious to the punishment of Wallop's rapier left and savage, jabbing right. The gong sounded for the twelfth with the skill of the stowaway apparently matched by the slashing, rushing tactics of the regular. Then it pleased Wallop to unleash all in a whirlwind attack. Fraser's head rocked from catapulting hooks. A straight left split his lip. A pitiless crescendo tattoo of left, right, left, right beat him, dazed and spent, against the ropes. Only the clang of the gong saved him from defeat. Officers and men, irrespective of partisanship or sympathy, were caught in the frenzy of the battle lust. The intervention of the gong left them drained of further expression, in a feverish silence for the onrushing end of the battle.

Knox, serenely indifferent to the outraged feelings of his mates in Deering's battalion of sea soldiers, was in Wallop's corner. His gray eyes were shining as he whispered in Wallop's ear the final injunction: "Sound 'taps' over his grave this trip, son. Another typhoon like the last and he'll never get that wicked uppercut started. Lord, boy, where did you ever master it?"

The first half of the thirteenth was as fast and furious as the stormy twelfth. Wallop's gray eyes searched out the distress in Fraser's black ones; noticed for the first time the silk American flag twisted about the marine's belt. The wisp of color held his glance in a vise. A perverse impulse tempted him to crash his left below it into the pit of the stomach. He had done it before in the old days, sometimes so skillfully screened by a rain of jabs and hooks that the keenest of referees had not detected the foul.

The left glove drooped as he danced away and circled about his man. With the swiftness of thought he closed in to launch the paralyzing foul. The impulse fled as quickly as it had come. His sudden inability to carry it out gripped him with its audacious novelty. His left dropped to his side as though a club had struck it down. Fraser's right swept upward through the uncovered guard in desperate effort to pull out a losing fight. The impact of the glove on the jaw sounded like the crunching of a bone. Wallop Calhoun threw both arms out wildly, staggered

for a step or two, spun halfway about, and dropped like a log.

The stowaway came shamefaced on deck the next morning to find himself a personage. Work in the fireroom was barred him by order of the captain quartermaster. Mystified by the unexpected ending, stunned by the dramatic reversal, there was not a man on the transport who had any doubt that Black Jack Fraser was hung with horseshoes, nor one who had an inkling of the real explanation of Wallop's defeat.

On deck he basked in the open homage of the troops. And Wallop responded to it with a glow that he had not known on the night when he had sent the Vallejo Kid to the floor for the count. The vague idea that had haunted him for a fortnight took definite form. Wallop decided to follow Sergeant Knox; to serve a "hitch" in the marines, With growing optimism he cherished the hope that he was not in reality a fugitive from justice. The filched gold piece no longer corroded his pocket; he had broken his crooked ring streak at the cost of a victory.

Thanks to the arrival of the Pacific Mail liner on the same day that the transport dropped anchor in Manila Bay, Wallop came into the marines with clean hands. The liner had left San Francisco a week later than the slow-steaming transport, and the mail orderly came back laden with mail and San Francisco newspapers. A wave of municipal reform had swept over the gay city, and Wallop, as he read over the lists of arrests made in the raids on the Barbary Coast resorts, had the feeling that he was scanning the city directory. His disgust with the old life, the unclean associates, deepened until his moralizing was lost in the sight of a name pregnant in meaning to him. He had not left French Sadie for dead when he had stowed away.

The sudden transitions that are the accepted lot of the marines took him first by lighter to a navy cruiser off Cavite. The cruiser dropped him at Olongapo, sixty miles up the coast. Four months later he embarked on the U. S. S. *Gardoqui* for the barrio of Morong. Knox, raised to the dignity of a gunnery sergeant, was in charge of the little detachment.

Outwardly Morong was peaceful as a garrison under Sunday routine. The men of Morong looked up from their nets with inscrutable faces. The women, whose flimsy camisas perpetually threatened to slip off their brown shoulders, followed the march past their ragged bamboo fences and slattern shacks with dull interest. It was evident to Wallop that their arrival was as welcome as cholera or beriberi, but it was accepted with no visible resentment. Wallop knew that he and his mates had been sent there to sit tight on a lid under which the fires of intrigue and unrest were at white heat. Knox had warned them on the run down that these apathetic taos were masters of the bolo; that any one of the shacks might be an arsenal; the friendliest of the women an accomplished spy. Knox had told it to them in the succinct words of Major Deering:

"I'll be frank with you, sergeant. I'm sending you with one-fourth the men you ought to have, but my hands are tied with red tape from Manila. If you search the barrio you'll find a hundred bolos and rifles, but Manila will break you for invading the premises of peaceful natives. You can't fire a shot or clap one of them in irons unless you're attacked in force. I'll give them no peace down in Manila until they give me the leeway I need, and the admiral will back me up in it, too. Then you can run Morong on a proper military basis."

A fortnight passed with no overt

break by the natives; no slackening of vigilance by the garrison. When the storm broke late one afternoon Knox and his men were not caught napping. Millares' ladrones were swept back to the hill trails by a steel-tipped ring of fire that leaped out from the barracks. Under cover of the steady volleys Wallop dashed out, and shack after shack burst into flames as he bent before them and then raced on with his torch and can of oil.

"A good job, Wallop," was Knox's verdict. "We'll have a clear field of fire and no snipers to bother us if they come back in another rush."

They came back, in an overpowering horde that spelled annihilation. Erratic as their fire was it found its chance victims, and their bolos decimated the survivors. Knox dropped with a bullet in his tigh. Wallop stooped over him, and while he put the last wrench on a tourniquet a bullet furrowed his cheek and covered it with a red mask. It changed him on the instant from a steady-firing automaton into an implacable fiend; the joy of his first skirmish into a corroding hate. All the forgotten profanity of the Barbary Coast poured from his lips, and single-handed he charged into the leaders of Millares' band, smashing with the butt of his Springfield until the stock splintered and the natives fled in terror of the crazed giant in khaki. Then he swaggered back, heedless of the bullets that kicked up the dust about him.

"We've got to get out to the river," snapped Knox, his voice weak from the loss of blood, but surcharged with indomitable resolve.

Wallop tossed away the wreck of his rifle, stooped, and slung the little man over his shoulder as he had been taught in first-aid drill. Rifles cracked from the fringe of the jungles and bullets whipped evilly, but his loping stride carried them through in safety to the banks of the river.

"They've had enough for a time, for I know the breed," Knox gasped, "and we can stand them off until dark. Think of it, Wallop, only the two of us left out of twenty! The major will understand, though, won't he, Wallop? Turn up to the right here fifty yards and you'll find a banca hauled up behind a big bowlder. I've spotted every one within a mile. Here we are."

Wallop laid him gently in the waist of the boat, took his automatic pistol, filled the extra magazine clips, and laid them at his feet, and waited grimly for the first brown face to peer around the bend in the trail. A half hour slipped by with the drag of an eternity. Every creaking in the jungle, every leap of a fish in the river, every swoop of the bats flying to their evening retreat played on his nerves like knife on the flesh. Dusk came, with its promise of escape, and Knox was delirious with pain and the recurrence of his Nicaraguan fever.

"Yes, major, we left the flag flying," he babbled in his thin, weak voice; "I forgot it. Yes, sir, I know we should have brought it back with us. You'll parade me before the command and cut the chevrons off my sleeves? And the rosette? You're dead right, sir; I forgot it. What was I doing to forget the colors? Why, major, old man, I was playing checkers with Wallop; he's the best checker player in the bunch, and he threw a gold piece out of the window and it hit Millares in the face. Millares had no right to——"

The thin voice broke into a silly laugh, and Wallop winced. They'd rip off Knox's chevrons and break him before the battalion, would they? And the flag was flying on the nipa barracks back there, a plaything for Millares to trample underfoot, to defile with betel-nut juice when he spat on it? His face went hard as flint, and he stormed back up the trail, cursing the Philippines with the fervor of sincerity.

Millares' men were gathered about the dying fire of a shack just beyond the barracks. The sickish odor of bino was in the air. The barefooted warriors were lauding each other in the poverty of the Tagal language when an awesome apparition, distorted by the fitful flames, rushed on them. Seven shots cracked with the savage bark of the automatic, and at each flash of the smokeless charge a face grim with hate and caked with blood leaped out of the dusk. The empty automatic crashed into Millares' terror-stricken face, and a giant in khaki swung his arms like flails, pounding, smashing in the fleeing pack.

Without a halt the apparition dashed on into the barracks. A few of the more venturesome crept from hiding in time to see it reappear. By the patron saint of Morong they swore that from under its arm, as it floated down the river trail, a field of blazing stars lighted its way, and behind flowed thin streams of crimson blood.

Again the venturesome ones, still hushed by the memory of that supernatural figure, crept back to the jungle fringe the next day. The last echo of the *Gardoqui's* six-pounders had died away. Boatload after boatload of marines had landed on the beach of Morong. Up past the blackened shacks they came and formed in hollow square about the nipa barracks, and the black muzzles of fieldpieces faced the jungle.

Bugles and drums woke the echoes of the hills with their flourishes and ruffles, and a square of bayonets leaped up and caught the sun. A giant figure in khaki weaved the halyards through his hands, and a flag with a field of stars and crimson stripes crept up above the hollow square, the flashing bayonets, and on up in stately measure to the top of the flagpole. The men at the jungle's rim scowled and showed their betel-blackened teeth at the alien flag, but none of them knew that the giant in khaki was the awesome figure that had floated down the river trail with a field of blazing stars lighting its way and thin streams of crimson blood trailing in its wake.

Sergeant Wallop Calhoun made the halyards fast to the cleat at the base of the flagpole.

"There was nothing phony about that fight, Sergeant Calhoun," he chuckled.

RECEIVING THE AMBASSADOR

SOME time ago, when the relations between Japan and the United States were somewhat strained because of the Japanese immigration situation, Viscount Chinda, the Japanese ambassador, had notified the state department that he would call there at a certain time to deliver to Mr. Bryan, the secretary of state, Japan's note of remonstrance on the subject. Everybody was on tenterhooks to see that the Japanese diplomat was received in the height of form and according to all the rules and dictates of diplomacy.

An experienced messenger, whose years of service had taught him how ambassadors should be welcomed and led into the office of the secretary of state, was on the lookout for Viscount Chinda, and finally began to conduct him toward Mr. Bryan's office.

At that moment all the elaborate ceremonial and diplomatic usage was knocked into a cocked hat. When the messenger, accompanied by the ambassador, was within six yards of Mr. Bryan's door, one of the clerks in Mr. Bryan's office threw open the door and called out to the messenger:

"Hi, there! Has the Jap showed up yet?"

A Regular Fellow

By Wilbur Hall

Author of "The Blue Roan of Providence," "To Cancel Half a Line," Etc.

Concerning a head bookkeeper who—we quote from the shipping clerk—"plays tennis and drinks tea and sings 'God help the King,' and doesn't know a base hit from a waiver." Not a "regular fellow" this bookkeeper-tennis player, but one worth knowing, as it turned out. A story for the tennis "fans."

HERBERT KEITH SWITHERTON was not a "regular fellow." The office force at Crane Company's surmised as much when he was assigned to his high stool by the head bookkeeper; when he had been there three months they accepted the verdict as final.

"Herbie's folks made a mistake, when they had him a boy," Bill Snell, the general manager's chief clerk, put it. "He ought to have been a hairdresser. For the love of Pete, look at him—wrist watch, handkerchief in his sleeve, horn-rimmed eyeglasses tied to him with black-and-white baby ribbon, and his brains rattling around in his head like dry seeds in a gourd! Say, I'll bet if you turned him upside down and shook him he'd spill poetry all over the floor. No, Herbie ain't a regular fellow—he got his clothes at a tailor's instead of the New York Cloak & Suit House, that's all."

"He'd be more human," suggested Frank Stewart, the shipping clerk, "if he didn't part his hair both ways from the jack. He says to me: 'I play tennis a bit, don't y'know, but I cawn't get up to this beastly baseball, my word!'"

"The poor simp!" Sue Prisk, the telephone operator, commiserated. "Wonder he wouldn't fall into an encycelpedia and get some sense."

Bill Snell was ruminating. "Did you say he plays tennis, Frank?"

"Claims he does. Plays tennis and drinks tea and sings 'God Help the King,' and doesn't know a base hit from a waiver."

The light of inspiration burned in the eyes of the manager's clerk. He walked back to where, at a long desk, sat the object of their scoffing interest, his head bent over a ledger. Switherton was a slight English youth, with a face so red that it made his blond mustache look like the froth on a cream gin fizz. His ears were prominent, his neck long, and incased in a painfully high collar, his clothes were tight fitting, his pockets had flaps, his trousers were much too short, and his shoes were thick-soled and square-toed British boots. He looked up as Snell approached, glanced at his wrist watch, and slid down stiffly from his high stool.

The chief clerk leaned on the desk and watched while the bookkeeper adjusted his heavy London straw hat and picked up his rattan cane. These were two more tacks in the speedway of the impatient office force. "Say, Herbie,"

Snell began, winking at his fellows by the cashier's cage, "I was talking to the G. M. about you this morning, and I told him you played tennis. That's right, eh?"

"Oh, I play a bit—Sundays, y'know, and what not."

"That's what I thought. Well, now, see here, why don't you make a hit with Mr. Rowe in this tournament, wherever it is, in July? I guess you're wise that the old man is a regular nut over tennis, aren't you? Offers prizes and puts up cups and all that."

"My word, Snell; you don't mean to say he is the E. A. Rowe who gave the challenge cup this year?"

"Sure, Mike; he's the bird! He eats tennis. Now, here's your chance to bring home the bacon. Manager Rowe, of Crane Company, gives the cup, Bookeeper Switherton, of Crane Company, wins it. Kind of bad, eh?"

"But I'm quite off my game, old chap," Switherton said doubtfully. He had been trying for three months to attain friendly relations with the others in the office, and instead had been only their butt—a sort of continuous vaudeville performance for them. Now he was too grateful to question Snell's sincerity. "It would give me no end of pleasure to enter, but I'd jolly well have to play up unless I drew byes clear into the semifinals. Thanks awf'ly for mentioning it, Snell. I'll see if I can arrange my vacation—— I'm off to lunch now."

"And he's going to enter," Snell gasped to the others, when Switherton was gone. "And he's going to win the cup! What the deuce is 'drawing byes clear into the semifinals'? I don't know. But that's what he's going to do. Suffering soldiers at the front, he fell for it like a Dutchman getting a job at a brewery!"

"But suppose he'd win?" queried cross-eyed Miss Wilson, the stenographer, who was serious-minded.

"Win?" echoed Frank Stewart. "That win? Why, he's got as much chance as I have to get a raise. No. All he'll do will be to mess around in his wrist watch and drink tea and patronize the G. M., and make himself generally obnoxious——"

Bill Snell interrupted: "And then the old man'll find out that this sweet young thing is a bookkeeper for Crane's, and he'll throw a fit. Can you arrange Herbie's vacation for the first week in July, Heard?"

"Like a mice," said the head bookkeeper. And he did.

On the afternoon of July 3d, while Bill Snell and Frank Stewart were discussing details of their plan to "cop a couple of Janes and go to Venice for the Fourth," Sue Prisk interrupted them from the telephone exchange acidly: "You'd better can that stuff and get busy. Here comes the high boss."

The men turned to see General Manager Rowe striding across toward his chief clerk. Snell straightened up, his face a sort of color. "Yes, sir?" he said expectantly.

Mr. Rowe addressed the office in general: "I thought perhaps you people would like to drop in on the tennis tournament to-morrow, and so I've arranged to have seats reserved for you. You'll be free to come and go as you please, you know. I thought you'd prefer that. The big matches are at ten and four."

The wave of surprise and consternation that swept around the hot room could scarcely have passed unnoticed, and General Manager Rowe was a noticing man.

"Thank you, sir," Bill Snell, as the employee closest to the great personage, was stammering. "We're not—not hep to tennis down here. Awf'ly good of you, but——"

"Why, I supposed——" the manager

was puzzled, and showed it. "I supposed you would be interested in young Switherton's——"

"Switherton?" somebody gasped.

"Yes—the bookkeeper. He's runner-up."

"Now, what in blazes is that?" the head bookkeeper asked, sotto voce.

Snell was still spokesman for this amazed and disgruntled staff. "Switherton?" he asked. "Herbie?"

"I don't know—possibly. H. K. Switherton. He's the surprise of the tournament—beat O'Laughlin and Lundy yesterday, and faces young Strange in the morning. Then, if he wins, he plays the challenge match with Fitch, of Pasadena, in the afternoon. You don't mean to say you haven't heard?"

"Well—why, no, sir. You see——" Bill Snell devoutly committed the fortunes of H. K. Switherton to Tophet. "You see, Mr. Rowe, we're not very wise to tennis, as I say. But, of course"—he gulped—"if Switherton's going to play in the—the what do ye call it—and you're good enough to have places for us, why, we'd be only too glad to—and thank you, sir——"

"I hope Bill chokes to death," Miss Francis, the cashier, whispered to Wheaton, the sales manager, and Wheaton spluttered.

But Mr. Rowe was handing an envelope to Snell. "Good enough! And here are the reservations. I hope you all have a pleasant holiday. I'll be there all day to-morrow—I'm rather partial to tennis—and if there's anything I can do—— Good night!" Thus the amazing man as he walked out.

Behind him there was confusion and anger and wailing. The whole crew fell on Bill Snell.

Frank Stewart wagged his head and began: "Well, now you see what's come of your humorous idea of getting Herbie to play tennis, don't you? Oh, don't interrupt! It *was* your scheme, you know. You're the village cut-up who framed it. Don't forget that. And why the thundering blazes didn't you speak up when there was time, and tell the old man to go to the Orphans' Home with his tennis tickets? Tennis—faugh!"

Snell retorted instantly: "Tell him? Sure, why didn't I? Why didn't I tell him to go jump off the First Street bridge? It's because I've got a job, as it happens, and it also happens that I need that job in my business. If there was so much telling to do why didn't some of you lion tamers horn in?"

"Tennis—tennis!" The gayly gowned Miss Francis dropped her head on her arms at the cashier's wicket, and groaned. "What is tennis—a fish or a new kind of dance? And it's at Long Beach—Long Beach, do you get that?"

Wheaton cast his eyes upward and rolled them. "And think of our own sweet little Herbie—*in* his wrist watch —*with* his handkerchief in his sleeve—*and* a cup of tea in one hand—flitting from tennis ball to tennis ball over the bright-green lawn—putting the pins down *in* both alleys—making *a* high run of eleven—sacrificing the runner, *and* taking the pot—or is it a cup?—with three trays *and* a pair of queens! Snell, aren't you proud? Aren't you happy? Aren't you full of joy? You planned it—you dealt this mess—don't let's forget that! Heaven help the working classes!"

"Aw, cut it!" Bill Snell growled angrily. "You fellows said——"

"Oh, sure," Dave Marks interpolated. "Sure, we did it. Blame it on us, now. Well, we're in for all day—that's a cinch!"

"Yes," Sue Prisk agreed, ramming home a telephone plug, and kicking the side of her switchboard, "of course we'll have to go. Darn the luck!"

"You're a little wonder at guessing, Sue," said Frank Stewart. "We certainly will have to go. 'I'll be there to

give you pointers,' says the G. M. And he will. And we'll be there to take 'em. Runner-up, did the old man say? Well, if I see Herbie before ten o'clock to-morrow I'll be runner-up, and when I catch him, Herbie'll just have time to sing: 'Oh, break the news to mother, for I'm not coming home!' "

H. K. Switherton, the young prodigy out of the local English colony, won the finals in the tournament from Walter Strange on the morning of July 4th, 6—3, 4—6, 6—1, 6—2. Strange began with a rush, but the ability of his opponent to cover the court and to keep going indefinitely at a mile-a-minute clip wore down the more brilliant player. "It's no use trying to lob over him," Strange said to Finch, the champion, when they were discussing the new man's game between sets. "You simply can't get into the back courts at all with the ball unless you volley. And his shots are rotten hard ones to volley—let me leave that with you as a tip."

The crowded stands gave Switherton a real ovation as he took the final game in the fourth set, and the new discovery took off the handkerchief that had been bound tightly around his head during the play, and bowed. He had the Englishman's ability to forget the audience completely in a match, and he had given the hundreds there no attention until now. Consequently he started, and grinned a little sheepishly, when his eye rested on the second row up, in the center section.

Sue Prisk, the telephone operator, and the haughty and impeccable Miss Francis, the cashier, were smiling at him, almost approvingly, he thought. The others in the group that gave him his start were men—fellow bookkeepers, shipping clerks, auditors, salesmen, and so on. And these sat heavily, their eyes glinting coldly, as they looked at Switherton in silence, or glanced apprehensively over to where A. E. Rowe, donor of the challenge cup, and incidentally their own high boss, sat, magnificent and ruddy with enthusiasm, beaming on a world of first-class tennis. There was such a contrast between the faces of the general manager and the fans, and those of the morose hoplites from Crane Company's office, that H. K. Switherton groaned, and hurried to the clubhouse to dress.

"My word, what rotters!" he said despairingly, when he was able to get away from the congratulations of the other players. "They blazin' well know I can play tennis after that match, y'know, but they treat me like a bloomin' cad just the same. The bally asses!"

Those so denominated were rising to strike for the beach, half minded to risk the displeasure of the general manager and spend the rest of the day as far as possible from the hot and glaring tennis courts. But as they stood up in their places they were met by the beaming Mr. Rowe, who shook hands down the line cordially. "By George!" he cried delightedly. "Now, this is what I call 'esprit de corps'! We stand or fall together at Crane Company's, eh? Oh, this is fine—all here! And isn't Switherton playing a cracking game?"

The heavy-hearted men from Crane Company groaned in spirit, but their faces expressed what might have passed for enthusiasm. "Some game!" they chorused, even though no one of them had known, until Miss Wilson asked a communicative neighbor, who had won.

"He'll have a grueling match this afternoon," the general manager was saying. He had a feeling that these were guests of his, and should be given some consideration. So he said generously: "Tell you what I'll do: I don't suppose all of you follow tennis closely? No, that's true, I remember. Well, suppose I come up here this afternoon for part of the match and tell you any-

thing I can about it. I fancy you'll enjoy it more if you get the best points of the play, eh?"

"Thank you, sir," they said; and: "How sweet of you, Mr. Rowe!" and so on. And when he went they prayed down on him the vengeance of a just Heaven—on him and Herbie Switherton. "Now we *are* stuck!" Bill Snell cried. "We've got to hang around this afternoon if it takes an arm. Lord! Lord!"

They came back, every dutiful one of them, and were in their places, hot and disgusted, with the G. M. sitting behind them ready to expound, when Switherton and the champion, Hugh Fitch, shook hands, amid applause, and tossed for courts and serve.

The five sets that followed have gone down in the tennis bibliography of the Pacific coast, and their detailed story may be found there. The crowds, overflowing the stands and spreading all about the courts in a deep fringe, were scarcely still for a moment during the long two hours of play. One brilliant shot followed another, first by Finch, then by Switherton. The champion was at his best, but Switherton, persistent, steady, calculating, and quick as lightning, met every attack with a counter, and made the young star on the other side of the net outshine himself to keep the game in hand.

Finch won the first set, 6—3. Then Switherton, growing familiar with his opponent's game, began playing cross-court shots that were accurate as rifle practice and as deadly as the work of a Gatling gun. The second set went to deuce. Switherton lost his serve, and the twelfth game Finch won, taking the second set. But no one made the mistake of thinking that the match was over. Switherton was steadying down, and, if anything, Finch had been playing a better game than he knew. So the experts said, and waited for the finish.

Switherton won the next two sets. At the end of the fourth, when the two men changed courts and gathered the balls to serve the opening of the fifth and deciding series, the crowds held their breath. Even in the second row of the center section there was an awakening interest. Coached by the general manager, who was hoarse from his running fire of information to his office force and from parenthetical cries of approbation for one or the other of the players, Bill Snell and Frank Stewart, and Heard and Wheaton and the rest were beginning to catch the infection. It wasn't baseball, they admitted, but it was not a bad game, if one couldn't have his choice. And the three women were quite won over to tennis.

The deciding set moved rapidly at first—Switherton taking three games and Finch one so hastily that the crowds gasped. Aces were frequent. Rallies were short, sharp, hard fought, and ended usually by one of those cross-court shots from the net that marked the game of this new man Switherton. The fifth game was longer. Switherton had a fashion of running in on his shots, and Finch, having abandoned lobbing as useless—since Switherton seemed blessed with winged feet in returning to catch a high one—was now attempting passing shots and volleying. But he found, as Walter Strange had done, that the young Englishman's returns were difficult ones to volley.

The fifth game went to deuce, Switherton serving. It was vantage in, deuce, vantage in, deuce, vantage out, deuce—— Both men were playing the best they knew. The balls whizzed as they went. Occasionally a high lob rose, but mostly it was smash! smash! Lawford! volley! cut! smash! and then a cross-court shot, or a ball into the net, or Switherton passed as he came running in to the net—and another point made. Then: "Game!" cried the um-

pire. "The games are 1—4, Mr. Finch serving."

"Oh, played, indeed!" cried the stands. "Pretty tennis, Switherton! Well played, Finch!"

Finch, the panting champion, won his own serve. Then he took another game. Then Switherton. Then Finch—— It is Finch's serve, and the games are 4—5. If Switherton can take it, the set and the match are over. But Finch, with his back to the wall, takes a sudden spurt. He makes three aces with his tremendous, crashing serve into the very corners of the service court, volleys Switherton's return of the fourth ball on to the broad white back line. But Switherton returns it, by a miracle, and starts in for the net. Finch leaps high and catches the ball, with a cut that drops it almost in the net. It is just over. Switherton tears up with a rush—reaches the ball, cuts it over—but strikes the net and falls. He has lost the point—and a love game. At that, he has played brilliant tennis, and he gets a hand.

It is a deuce set—as the wise ones had been predicting—five games all. Each wins his own serve—six all. Then again—and seven games all.

Switherton comes up to serve the fifteenth game. Once more he wins. The play is so rapid that the crowds are calling to each other again and again for the score. Finch, the champion, is on the defensive at last. Switherton is steady as a clock. He has forgotten the stands. His breath comes deep, for he has better wind than Finch. They are playing tennis that will be a byword among the fans, and they know it. Switherton realizes, also, that his cross-court shots and his infallibility must win for him, if he wins. That he is determined to do.

Finch takes up the balls at the beginning of the sixteenth game with the score 7—8. The points go fifteen-love, thirty-love, thirty-fifteen—forty-fifteen—Switherton has overshot a side line. "Oh, tried, indeed!"—forty-thirty—Finch's second return goes into the net—and deuce!

"Steady, Switherton!" cries General Manager Rowe, forgetting that he gave the cup, and that Switherton is a bookkeeper at Crane Company's! But what are cups and bookkeepers now?

"Pretty work, Mr. Finch!"

Finch sends his first serve outside, and serves the second offering too gently. A cross-court shot as the champion runs in—and it is "ad'-out." Then deuce! Then advantage-in. Then deuce—and Switherton's advantage.

Now the stands are up and tense. Finch's face pales. He is worried. Switherton stands quietly, waiting, his racket across his knees. He catches the swift serve with a lob into the back court. Finch returns it to a corner, but Switherton is back there, waiting. He sends up a high lob again. Finch flashes about—just makes it—is too late to volley—and lobs to save himself. Up and up goes the ball. It seems to hang for a minute in the fresh breeze of the higher air. "Look, the wind!" cry the stands. Sure enough the wind, which is at Switherton's back, has caught the white sphere. Switherton runs in. The ball comes down close to the net and Switherton swings—and misses. There is a groan.

But his miss was clean, and the ball strikes and bounds. Without stopping in his motion, Switherton pirouettes about, and—racket high—catches the ball with a smashing volley, and sends it across the court, on Finch's unready backhand, down to the side line with a force that seems to burn the asphalt court, and off—high and higher—and over the side nets. And it is Switherton's point, game, set—and match!

The old champion and the new were dressing together in the clubhouse.

Switherton stood before the long mirror under the high windows, which were open, and adjusted his tie. Then he pulled out his watch and began to fasten its leather band about his left wrist.

"It was your cross-court shot that got me, after all," Finch was saying good-humoredly. "It's a wonder. And that last one——"

Outside, many feet shuffled on the sanded walk—the crowds were filing by from the courts and toward the beach. A voice that Switherton knew too well floated in to him. It was Bill Snell talking:

"Oh, that's all right! But next Monday he'll come back from his vacation all swelled up like a poisoned pup——"

"With his wrist watch on," this was Frank Stewart.

"And his cane!" The voice of Sue Prisk.

"And his violet-perfumed hanky in his little sleeve!" From Sam Wheat, a bookkeeper.

"And"—Snell continued, as they went their way—"and he'll smooth down his yellow mustache, and he'll say: 'My word, I've a mind to chuck the bally job, don't you know, and go out and have a cup of tea—my hat!'"

Their intolerant laughter smote on Switherton's ear. He gave perfunctory and absent-minded thanks to the defeated champion, and walked out—and disappeared. That night, Armstrong, of the *Examiner,* called his city editor: "We can't find him anywhere. Yes. Oh, yes, we've tried that! All right; I may be able to fake a picture. Well, I can't help it. My opinion is that he's jumped off the end of the wharf. Good-by!"

Monday morning came, and with it the office force to the big red brick of Crane Company. Herbert Keith Switherton, bookkeeper, and also tennis champion of Southern California, was late. He was due back from his vacation. They watched for him. Snell and Frank Stewart were prepared with little witticisms.

The double doors swung, and in came a strange figure. It was a man in a twenty-dollar hand-me-down suit, an ill-fitting soft hat, an impossible silver watch chain crossing a bulgy vest, a pair of shoes badly in want of polishing, and with ungloved hands starting from sleeves that were all too short. The newcomer pulled off his hat. If his hair had ever been combed it showed no signs of such attentions.

"Morning!" said this amazing personage, and took a handkerchief from a hip pocket and wiped a beaded forehead.

Bill Snell gasped. Then he walked across and put out his hand. "Say, Bert," he said, with obvious embarrassment, "we saw you pulverize that big guy from Pasadena the Fourth. Tennis—well, it ain't so worse, is it? Boy, you were sure there with the fine shooting! Shake!"

Miss Francis, the modish cashier, adjusted the big comb under her left ear dexterously, and pushed forward through the circle of breathless clerks. "You bet!" she cried, displaying her best Mona Lisa. "Bill and me both. Say, Mr. Switherton—you're a regular fellow! Get me!"

The Worm and the Elephant

By Frank Condon

Author of "Antiques and Altercations," "The Man Who Left New York," Etc.

This is no fable—except for the title. It is a bit of realism from that considerably overrated city of New York. A humble reporter is the "worm." You will have no difficulty in identifying the "elephant." "How to keep the New Yorkers in New York" is the theme of the story. There is humor in it, and some pathos.

ON the broad, breeze-cooled veranda of the Lake View House, above the placid waters of Omokee, in the Adirondacks, Learoyd, the *Typhoon's* proprietor, blew a petulant cloud of smoke from a fifty-cent cigar and growled. Opposite him, in a roomy wicker chair, Grainey, the paper's manager, balanced an iced drink on his knee.

"Last year," Learoyd muttered, "we lost twenty thousand a day in circulation, and how much in advertising?"

"After the hot weather began," Grainey replied thoughtfully, "the advertising receipts fell off something like six or seven thousand dollars a day. We put on an extra soliciting staff, but it did no good. You can't keep business up in New York when the heat comes."

Learoyd sank deeper into his chair and wafted a few heartfelt curses toward the far-off metropolis that gave him his rich living. At the very moment, hundreds of men were toiling in the city, bringing out the various editions of the *Typhoon,* and Grainey had only appeared the previous morning at Lake Omokee, in answer to a fevered order from his employer.

Lake Omokee is more than eight hundred feet above sea level, and the Lake View House charges thirty cents for a cup of coffee and two dollars for a small steak. The servants are clad in blue-and-gold livery, and if you are extremely wealthy, you can stop there without feeling it.

Close-cropped green lawns slope away on all sides from the exclusive hotel. Graveled driveways approach it, and all about are sun gardens and beautiful arbors. A spring bubbles in front of the main entrance and throws a spraying shower into the air from the mouth of a gilded Cupid. Off in the distance, and far below, the rested eye beholds shimmering Omokee, and on the very hottest nights the sleeping rooms in the Lake View House are as cool as a devil's dream of paradise.

Hither every summer come the favored ones of the city. They arrive in automobiles, bringing many trunks for their women. All in white, they saunter through the shaded paths or lounge amid leafy bowers or play croquet, which is a nonperspiring game, while subservient menials bring mint juleps or other drinks containing plenty of ice.

Out of many places, Learoyd, whose experience was vast, had chosen Lake Omokee. It was nine hours from New York, and into his bedroom ran private

wires connecting with the *Typhoon* offices in New York. Now and then he went to the city and messed among his employees for a brief time, frightening those who feared to lose their jobs.

Learoyd was tall, broad, and fat. Grainey was short and fat and eternally threatened with apoplexy. They were both well-fed, luxury-loving men, the difference being that Learoyd always had money and Grainey had been forced to wrest his from the city.

"This year," Learoyd continued, "I don't intend to lose that six or seven thousand a day in the advertising department. There's no need to lose it. And, further, there's no need to lose that twenty thousand circulation each day. The trouble is, too many people leave New York simply because the calendar says it is summer. We will keep them in New York where they belong."

"How?" Grainey inquired, with mild curiosity, sipping his drink.

"This is what I've been thinking of," answered the owner of the *Typhoon,* and for the next half hour the two men talked and argued.

Learoyd naturally had his way, and Grainey agreed, in the end, that the plan was an excellent one. He had been holding his managership for years by following those tactics.

And so, in the course of time, New Yorkers addicted to reading the morning *Typhoon* awoke one day in the middle of June to learn that New York City is the best summer resort in America, without exception. The *Typhoon* sometimes associated itself with what it called propagandas. This was one of them; and, with its usual thoroughgoing enthusiasm, the *Typhoon* not only stated that New York City was the finest and coolest summer resort in the country, but it went at the business of proving that statement.

Sid Clarke was the reporter to whom the "summer-resort" assignment was turned over, and Sid was a good, hard-working, conscientious, and underpaid reporter.

The *Typhoon* invited letters from its readers in proof of the theory that one need never leave the great and only New York in order to enjoy life during the heated term, and any one who knows something of that curious breed, the demon letter writers, will believe that Clarke's desk was littered each morning with communications from individuals who imagined they were throwing off sparks of patriotism with each stroke of their pens.

Enthusiastic bookkeepers, truckmen, dry-goods clerks, soda-water dispensers, dressmakers, insurance agents, policemen, laundry girls, elevator runners, grocery keepers, and a host of others, including Pro Bono Publico, Constant Reader, Fair Play, and the regular stand-bys, wrote to the *Typhoon* to support the contention that ocean beaches were delusions and mountain peaks snares. Why should one desire to wander from Manhattan Island during the months of June, July, and August when it was a recognized fact that the city was cooler than the seacoast and far more delightful than the mountains? Those lucky persons who called themselves New Yorkers and spent their lives in flats were blessed by the gods, if they only knew it.

Sid Clarke put it all in the *Typhoon's* department called the Public Forum, and when the letter writers lagged a bit he wrote letters himself. He scoured the metropolis for convincing proof that New York was a combination of Bar Harbor, Coney Island, Newport, Revere Beach, and Peak's Island, where all the breezes that blew were cooling, and a man in the act of wiping away perspiration must be some insane individual temporarily loose from his keeper.

Day after day Clarke interviewed new arrivals at the hotels on Broadway, and, no matter what they actually said,

when the interview appeared in the *Typhoon,* it indicated their ecstatic pleasure with New York and their unshaken belief that Manhattan was the finest summer resort they had ever encountered.

Unimportant little clothing merchants from Toledo and points West vouchsafed such opinions. They would also have stated, for the pleasure of seeing their interview in a New York journal, that their grandmother closely resembled a monkey.

A Mr. Clayward, of Pittsburg, Massachusetts, president of the local board of trade, said, in part:

"Everybody in our party is well pleased with New York City. It is one of the coolest spots we ever visited, and the fact that we left the Berkshire Hills to come home shows what we think of the city as a summer resort. Everything that one could want is to be found in Manhattan. The hotels are unusually cool, and the lobbies are as comfortable as any ocean beach. A steady breeze blows here, making the homes of the inhabitants comfortable and attractive. Any one who lives in New York is lucky, and he would be foolish to go elsewhere seeking relief from the hot weather, because right at home he is in the midst of a first-class summer resort."

Mr. Clayward said much more to the same effect, and then he packed up and returned to the Berkshires with his party.

Up at the Lake View House at Omokee, Learoyd followed the summer-resort propaganda with considerable satisfaction, and Grainey was highly enthusiastic about it. They determined to publish an entire special edition, pointing out the varied beauties of the city and its desirability as a summer home.

In the meantime, June drifted along toward July, and the weather began to unroll its sleeves for the purpose of administering some genuine solstice stuff. Sid Clarke was working harder and harder. Besides manufacturing the daily-resort copy, he was working on features for the great special edition. Every morning at two o'clock he arrived at his little home on Washington Heights carrying a first edition in his pocket, and every morning his wife, Marianna, opened the door and welcomed him affectionately.

"You shouldn't wait up for me," Sid had told her a thousand times.

"I couldn't sleep with you wandering somewhere around the town," was her invariable reply.

The Clarke flat was small, and its windows faced a series of similar windows in a flat across a court. Sid had frequently sighed for a more roomy home, but for financial reasons he was forced to put up with the four rooms, rear, on the third floor. Marianna was a quiet little woman, not overly strong, and, to add to Sid's worries, the baby was beginning to have its teeth in an extremely fussy manner.

Sometimes Sid wondered whether Marianna and the baby were getting along as well as they should in the choked-in apartment, but wondering accomplished nothing, and Sid was usually too weary from the day's work to enjoy the luxury of worry.

In the meantime, the weather was getting hotter every day, and as July grew older on the calendar Sid's Marianna became whiter and a trifle more drawn, and the baby began to develop the strange, hot-weather maladies of infancy. The doctor came and dosed mother and child impartially.

One broiling night, the *Typhoon's* city editor handed a telegram to Sid. It was from Learoyd, up at Lake Omokee, and read:

Excellent work on New York as a summer resort. Keep it up.

Sid smiled somewhat grimly and thought of Marianna and the baby.

That day the doctor had told him something disturbing about his family.

The official weather-bureau thermometers were now pointing daily to ninety-one, ninety-two, and ninety-three degrees, and on the sunny side of Broadway the tube sprinted up to one hundred and ten. Horses were dropping on the steaming asphalt, and the city gasped for breath. About the temperature the *Typhoon* could not lie, although Learoyd would have done so had it been possible. He would have put the mercury at sixty-one instead of ninety-one, but there were too many other papers printing the truth and too many incorruptible thermometers in town.

Nevertheless, in the news columns of the *Typhoon,* New York was still the queen of summer resorts. Sid Clarke interviewed the mayor on the subject, and, as it was a nonpolitical talk, which could do no harm, the city's chief magistrate uncorked the vials of his eloquence, and one grew perceptibly cooler reading his statement in next morning's paper. In the next column curiously was the story of Mrs. Clancy's death. With her two small children, she had perished in a small, stuffy tenement home, and the coroner said death had been caused by the terrific heat.

Cobblestein & Finkleman, the well-known department-store proprietors, said, in the *Typhoon:*

> There is no place that can surpass New York City as a summer resort. We do not find it necessary to take vacations, and neither do our employees, because we know that going away from the city is a wicked waste of money. People are better off who remain here in New York, because, as we have said, it is the best summer resort of all.

Cobblestein & Finkleman lived in adjoining houses at Rockaway Beach, with the surf thundering fifty yards from their verandas; but their employees resided principally on the East Side of Manhattan, in small, cheap, stuffy flats and tenements.

And so the campaign continued merrily on. Up at the Lake View House at Omokee, Learoyd read the *Typhoon* and observed with satisfaction that a great deal of white space was being daily devoted to the summer-resort movement. Grainey announced to his boss that the advertising had fallen off but slightly, and that the usual summer circulation slump was not nearly as great as usual.

"That was a good move of mine," Learoyd remarked, turning to the manager. "Who's handling the work?"

"Nobody of importance. One of the ordinary reporters—Clarke's his name."

Down in New York, the parks had been thrown open to the public at night, and thousands of fretful, uncomfortable men and women stretched themselves upon the grass, guarded by policemen and gasped for air. The breeze that moved across the lawns was warm, even after midnight. On the tenth day of July, the police reported seventy heat prostrations and fifteen deaths.

Following an annual custom, Grainey looked over the editorial staff of the *Typhoon* and concluded that it was overloaded. In summertime, New York papers generally reduce their forces, and Grainey followed the custom, in spite of the good showing in the circulation and advertising departments.

Thirty reporters and three editors went overboard, and Sid Clarke would have been among them except for the fact that he was handling Learoyd's pet summer scheme and was thoroughly familiar with its many ramifications.

One of the results of the shortening of staff was that Sid was forced to help out the marine department, in addition to his regular work, which had become plenty heavy for one reporter.

Furthermore, to add to the tribulations of Learoyd, who had settled himself for a comfortable summer at Omokee, the *Typhoon's* printers became dis-

satisfied and registered a complaint, and all the other mechanical departments sympathized with the printers and offered them moral support. Grainey fumed and cursed and eventually was forced to pay a flying visit to the Lake View House to lay things before the chief.

Temporarily the printing troubles were bridged over, and amicable relations seemed restored between Learoyd and his men. The *Typhoon's* affairs went on as usual. Each morning the sun climbed over the roofs of the buildings on Broadway redder, hotter, and more malevolent than ever. Sid Clarke went about like a tireless machine. He canvassed stores, shops, factories, mills, and the offices of great corporations, whose heads were in Europe or Canada, and everywhere he obtained opinions favoring New York as a beautiful summer resort, lacking in nothing.

When a steamer arrived from Europe, Sid was at the dock, and returning tourists explained to him, following his skillful questions, that Switzerland was a nice, cool place in summer, but for real, genuine, perpetual summer enjoyment give them New York. In his great, abiding industry, Sid had a talk with a professor in Columbia University, and that learned dignitary told the *Typhoon* man that poor people were fools to seek the sea beaches and to spend their money riding on steamers and railway trains. Home was the place for them in hot weather. Let them eat lettuce salad, ice cream, and light foods and avoid intoxicants, and they would find the metropolis the best and finest, et cetera, et cetera, ad infinitum.

Then came the hottest spell of a long, hot summer. The *Typhoon* editorial staff was preparing the final copy for the big special summer-resort edition, and Sid had been working day and night at the bureau of vital statistics in an effort to prove, by birth and death returns, that the city was actually far healthier in summer than in winter. He had collected a mass of figures that would effectually prove Learoyd's daily statement in the *Typhoon,* except to a suffering individual in some office building; some faint, white-faced stenographer, or some East Side mother with a brood of whining children at her heels.

The printers' troubles suddenly flared up, and the press-room men joined them, and in desperation Grainey telegraphed to Learoyd at Lake Omokee saying that things were rapidly approaching a crisis and that it would be better for all concerned if the *Typhoon's* owner were on the ground to take personal charge of the trouble.

Learoyd received the wire and swore. But, three hours later, his big gray motor car purred before the Lake View House, and servants were packing it with his luggage.

"I'll be back in a day or two," he informed the hotel manager. "Keep my rooms for me."

Then he started for New York.

The day had been sultry and oppressive in the city. At noon Sid telephoned up to Marianna, and learned that the baby had taken a turn for the worse, and Doctor Dailey seemed to be very grave. Marianna was frantic. Sid hung up the receiver and went back to his task of copying statistics and writing deductions from them. He had been working since early morning, and when he finally left the great stone building near City Hall Park, his head felt queer and his feet acted most peculiarly.

He crossed the park slowly, and once or twice rubbed his eyes with his handkerchief.

"I certainly feel queer," he muttered. "I don't remember ever having felt this way before. This must be the hottest day we've had."

He glanced up at the clock atop the Tribune Building, and was gravely con-

cerned to observe that it swayed somewhat.

"They better have that clock fixed," he reflected. "No sense having a clock that moves around like that."

He came to Broadway, on his way to the elevated, and started to cross. Somebody shouted, but Sid paid no attention. There were many people shouting, and then the front of a motor car slid up from somewhere and bumped him. Sid toppled over and lay with his head against the curb.

"He ain't hurt much," a policeman said, bending over. "I saw that accident. The man fell before the car touched him."

An ambulance gong clanged in the distance, and the machine rushed up and stopped. The white-garbed surgeon leaped lightly from his seat and examined Sid. After a few moments, he spoke:

"No outward injuries that I can see."

"I tell you the man fell over before the car hit him at all," repeated the policeman.

"My name," said the big, fat man in the machine, standing up where the crowd could see him, "is Learoyd, of the *Typhoon*. We scarcely touched this man with the fender. Take him to a hospital. If there is any subsequent trouble, you can find me at the *Typhoon* office. Go ahead, Joe."

"That's Learoyd," the crowd said admiringly, staring after the departing machine.

At the hospital, the surgeon of the ambulance conferred with the house physician.

"This is no accident," the house man said. "This chap simply bowled over from the heat. He would have gone down whether a car hit him or not."

"I thought as much," replied the ambulance surgeon, and Sid Clarke was put in a little white cot.

When he regained consciousness a few hours later, his first thought was of Marianna and the baby. An obliging nurse telephoned, breaking the news as gently as possible, and Sid's wife answered that she would come to the hospital at once. In the meantime, Sid, very pallid and still, lay upon his cot, staring at the hospital ceiling and thinking of many things. On a chair at the head of his cot hung his coat, and when he glanced at it he saw the bulky protuberance in the side made by the figures he had been collecting for the special summer-resort number.

"So it was Mr. Learoyd's machine struck me?" he said, later on, to one of the men nurses.

The nurse nodded.

"He didn't really knock you over, because you were gone from the heat, anyhow. But Learoyd might have had the decency to bring you here in his car. They tell me you're a *Typhoon* reporter?"

"I am," Sid replied, "but Learoyd couldn't waste time on me. There's a bad strike up at the shop. No doubt that's why he's in town."

Again he gazed reflectively at the ceiling, and awaited the arrival of Marianna and the baby.

They came finally, accompanied by Doctor Dailey. Marianna sat on the foot of Sid's bed and cried, and Doctor Dailey examined the patient and swore softly.

"They've been trying to kill you with work, Sid," he said, "and I've known it for a long time; but, with your wife and the boy sick, I thought telling you would only make trouble. This weather and the extra work have knocked you out, and you're mighty lucky to escape as easily as you are going to. But there's one thing sure: you can't go back to work on the *Typhoon*."

"You make me laugh," Sid answered. "I can do that better than we can starve."

"No," continued Doctor Dailey, "you

won't starve. I have a plan for you and the wife and baby. In spite of this town being a great summer resort, it has nearly killed you and your baby, and it's time for you all to quit. Unfortunately I have to remain in this wonderful summer resort until cold weather, but I have a sort of shack bungalow in the mountains that is going to waste this summer, and you're going to take Marianna and the boy and go up there from this hospital. There's no argument about it, because you've got to do it or die. The bungalow isn't any beauty, but it has four rooms and it's furnished and you can make a living writing pieces for the papers about the summer visitors."

"Where is it?" Sid asked, a faint glimmer of interest in his eyes.

"It's high up, and when you get stronger you can fish and walk and loaf around all summer. The bungalow is about a quarter of a mile from the Lake View House at Lake Omokee, in the Adirondacks."

"Oh, my Lord!" Sid gasped, lying back on the pillows.

"Shall we go, Sid?" Marianna asked wistfully.

"Sure, we'll go, if Doc Dailey says so. We'll close up the flat and never come back there."

"You can get your groceries at a little shop near by," continued Doctor Dailey, "and you'll be under only a trifling expense. You and the boy and wife will grow strong together, and I'm mighty glad to be able to let you have the place."

"Thanks, doc," Sid said, reaching forth a shaky hand.

At the *Typhoon* office, things were in a desperate state. Learoyd had been in town a week, and still the striking men refused to listen to reason. Nightly he sat up until after midnight, in his rarely used office at the top of the Typhoon Building, and there Grainey conferred with him and listened to his profanity.

"I tell you," Learoyd stormed, "another week of this cursed weather will kill me. I'm not used to it. You can handle this trouble as well as I can."

Grainey grinned.

"It looks as though the printers would go back, and if they do, the strike is over. I would wait a few days more, Mr. Learoyd," the manager said. "This is the most critical stage now."

"Nobody has any right to keep me in this blistering, boiling city," Learoyd grunted, striding back and forth. "I made my plans for the summer, and here a lot of miserable printers drag me back to town and keep me here. I'm not built for hot weather, Grainey. I need fresh air, and I can't get it here. Another night like last night and I'm done."

"This is the greatest summer resort in——"

"Shut up!" Learoyd roared, and Grainey ceased joking.

"And another thing," the manager continued, "we're in the very devil of a fix on that special edition. Clarke's disappeared."

"Who's Clarke?" Learoyd demanded sullenly, still pacing about the stuffy room.

"He is, or was, a *Typhoon* reporter —the man in charge of the summer-resort campaign. You may remember the man your machine knocked over at City Hall Park the afternoon you arrived."

"Was that one of our men?" Learoyd asked. "That's queer. What's he got to do with our being in a fix on the special?"

"Not a thing—except that he had been working for three days on vital statistics and that's what the special is built around. When he went to the hospital, he had all the stuff with him, or at least he has never sent it in and we

can't get to press without it; there isn't time to dig it all out again."

"Where is Clarke?" Learoyd asked, pausing.

"Wait a minute!" Grainey answered, reaching for an office phone. There was a wait while he summoned the *Typhoon's* city editor.

"Found Clarke yet?" he asked. There was a pause, while the man at the other end of the wire talked. Grainey's face underwent half a dozen shades of expression. Finally he put back the receiver and stared at Learoyd.

"Where do you suppose that fellow is?" he said at length.

"How the devil do I know!" Learoyd stormed. "That's what we want to find out and find out quick."

"Well, he's up at Lake Omokee," Grainey answered, grinning. "Health broke down and he's gone to recuperate."

Learoyd sat down and glared at his manager. It seemed a joke. Here he was, the head of the paper, stewing in the hot city, and a cheap reporter went to Lake Omokee. It was ironic.

"Get him on the phone," he growled. "We want those figures, and then we want his resignation."

And so it happened an hour or so later that Sid Clarke was summoned from the comfortable depths of a morris chair on Doc Dailey's bungalow veranda to answer a long-distance call from Mr. Learoyd, of the *Morning Typhoon.* Sid leisurely put down a glass of lemonade and surveyed Marianna, who stood in the door, already showing in her cheeks the good effect of mountain air.

"Shall I answer him?" Sid asked her.

"Surely," she advised. "It will do no harm."

So Sid Clarke went to the phone and listened to Mr. Learoyd.

"Are you still working for the *Typhoon?*" the proprietor began coldly.

"And if you are, isn't it customary to give notice of vacations?"

"I haven't resigned," Sid answered, "but I have a vague notion that I am no longer connected with the paper. Is that all you called me up about?"

"It is not!" Learoyd bellowed. "We're getting ready the special, showing New York to be the finest summer resort in America, and we can't go to press?"

"Why not?" Sid asked politely.

"Because you've got those vital statistics," Learoyd roared on, regardless of tact. "You're keeping them when we need them. Is that any way to treat the paper?"

"When you hit me with your machine the other day and left me lying in the gutter, was that any way to treat an employee?" Sid inquired calmly. "When you worked me to death all summer, proving I was living in a summer resort, and thrusting sickness upon my wife and boy because you underpaid me, was that a good way to treat me? Somehow your conversation reminds me of water on a tin basin, Mr. Learoyd, and I'm glad to be able to tell you so."

"But we've got to prove the summer-resort theory," Learoyd shouted. "Prove it! We haven't time to put a man on the figures before press time, and we can't prove it without the statistics you collected."

"From where I sit, up here on Lake Omokee," Sid murmured gently, "you don't have to prove it. I admit it, you —you fat swine!"

He replaced the receiver, and a smile of utter contentment settled upon his face. Marianna filled the glass with fresh, cool lemonade.

Down in his office, in the greatest summer resort in America, Learoyd, of the *Typhoon,* wiped the drops of perspiration from his red face, and swore dreadful oaths into a harmless, innocent, and insensate telephone receiver.

Bargain Day in the Cordova

By John R. S. Spears

Working up business in a town that once produced more copper than any other in the Cordova Desert or even in the Southwest. How the tenderfoot victim fared when he announced himself as an amateur geologist and expressed a desire to prospect over the desert and maybe invest a little money.

THE moment the gent stepped off the southbound train I sized him up as a tenderfoot who might be persuaded to believe he wanted something; and what I aim to do here is to tell how far I was right.

I was driving for Vaya & Vengo, the livery-stable firm at Zapateria, on the Montana & Mexico Air Line Railway. All well-informed readers have heard about Zapateria, but for the benefit of others I may say that it was in those days known only as the mining town that produced more copper than any other in the Cordova Desert, or even in the great Southwest. As a driver, it was naturally a part of my business to meet the passenger trains with a slick little bus and work up trade for the firm on the way from the depot to the hotels. That is how I earned my wages, but for a side line I served as agent for Mr. Mortimer Rushton, a live wire in real estate, mine stock, or anything else in the buy-and-sell line. To get business for him, I sized up the chappies from the train, and whenever they looked as if they might invest a dollar I steered them up against Mr. Rushton; and I never failed to get a good rake-off from every jack pot.

Well, now, as the gent I mentioned on the send-off stepped down from the train, I liked his looks. And when I asked him if he had a choice among our two hotels, he replied that he'd "go—er—to the cleaner of the two," it sounded like music.

"You're from little old New York, sir, I fancy," said I. "So am I, and I know that the farther you get from that burg the worse ye are off. It's a long time, sir, since a tourist from New York lit down at Zapateria, and Mr. Rushton, the secretary of the Board of Trade, will be glad to entertain you. He's from the East, too; born in Iowa, sir."

Well, now, he fell for it dead easy, and Rushton had him out to inspect our mine outfit that afternoon. So I naturally dropped down to Rushton's office at the first opportunity thereafter.

"The gentleman's name is Hatch—Fenwick Thurston Hatch," said Rushton, "and he says he's an amateur geologist who has come this far from the Great White Way because he wants to learn the real thing—go prospecting over the desert with some one who knows how and will have the patience to show him how, see? How does that look to you?"

I wanted to shake hands with myself, and I said so.

"Why, sir, he's thinking that he'll

pick up a valuable prospect at bargain rates," I exclaimed. "Of course, he may be telling the truth about wanting to learn, but it's a bargain counter in the end that he's after. Am I right?"

"That's whatever," he answers; "and we'll steer him against that porphyry prospect over beyond the Double Springs Ranch. We'll give him a look at the ranch first of all. Old Burgess wants to sell out and go where the bunch grass is thicker. If our sucker don't bite on the porphyry bait, he may make it cattle instead. You're to drive, of course, so I must warn you that the gentleman is noted for his candor. He began this conversation by saying he was a tenderfoot and that all he knew about metal in the ground had been learned from the books. Now you know a candid man likes candor—he dotes on it—and you are to keep it in mind. When you drive across the ranch, point out a few undesirable features after you've told how the bunch grass finishes the shorthorn fit to top the market. I'm going to put on Budd Meriwether as guide, of course, because he owns the porphyry, and, what's more, he knows more about geology than any prospector in the camp. You two can settle into the collar together better than any team I know; but let me tell you, above all things humor the gentleman's whims. Learn what kind of croppings he wants to examine, and then take him right there, of course; but go by the way of the ranch, or the porphyry prospect, or both, as your judgment indicates. I'll suggest that he drive for the first week or so, instead of hoofing it behind burros.

"I'll say he'd better get used to the desert hardships gradually, and if he has the dough, see, he'll fall for it. Then you'll drive the buckboard and make camp for the outfit while he and Bill pound the croppings. Get him to the porphyry, and when he sees how that ledge assays, we'll cinch a sale or I'm no judge of tenderfoot nature.

"But don't you forget the candor dodge. When he sees the free-milling proposition, you just mention the lack of fuel, and the cost of hauling coal from Zapateria, unless, of course, as you must say, there really is coal under that cropping of black shale in Nigger Gulch, as many have supposed. Then you'll take him to Nigger Gulch, if he will go, and then make note of the fact that it is only a mile from the porphyry —on the next section, in fact, and it is a railroad section, at that."

First and last, I've had a whole lot of experience dealing with guys who wanted to get prospect holes off the bargain counter; but I never had just such a game as I did when I was stacking the cards for Mr. Fenwick Thurston Hatch. First we had a look at the ranch, and more especially at the springs. Mr. Hatch looked at the water flowing away in the stone-lined ditch to the little alfalfa patch beside the ranch house, and then he said:

"Comes from limestone, don't it? I've read that lime water was the best kind for irrigating legumes—keeps the soil sweet."

"Too bad there's so little of the water," I said, remembering that I was to do the candor act, "but I should think a charge of dynamite might develop a stronger flow. Anyway, if old Burgess would line his ditch with concrete he'd have water for ten acres."

"That's right!" Hatch exclaimed. "These people here don't seem to understand economy."

Then we went prospecting. Of course, I had the team and camp to attend to, but I saw the work of the gent aplenty. Such industry was a joy to the innocent spectator. It looked as if the view of the Double Springs had got him set on finding another such water prospect, for whenever he saw a limestone cropping, away he'd go for a

look at it. Budd told him there was no use looking for water anywhere except where a clump of mesquite grew, but the gent didn't seem to remember what was said until we got to our porphyry prospect. Then, as he looked through a glass at a piece of the ledge and saw dull yellow specks in it, he said:

"That's beautiful. Did you say the rock is real quartz? Yes? I thought it was, from the looks of it. It's just like specimens we had at school. And here's a big vein of it, eh? It would be a valuable mine, if only there was water here, eh?"

Now the fact is, I was primed for the lack of fuel, but I'd never thought about water, and I was certainly wondering what I'd say when Budd chipped in.

"It isn't so much the lack of water as of fuel," he said. "It's only three and a half miles to Double Springs, and the ledge would soon pay for a pipe line if there was any coal in the region."

That was a great relief, for Budd had by that remark stacked the cards for a sale of the ranch as well as of the prospect, always supposing the tenderfoot could be made to think he might find coal in Nigger Gulch. So I said, with candid emphasis:

"Budd is right, sir. It's the lack of fuel that leaves this free-milling proposition lying idle. More than one prospector has figured on building a branch line from Zapateria to bring coal here, but no one will finance that proposition."

Then I told about the Nigger Gulch hope. When I mentioned the black shale, I noticed that he looked up suddenly and then subsided again. I thought I'd forced the pace a little too previous; but, after thinking a minute, he said:

"Shale is no indication of the presence of coal. When I was at school, old Professor Eysaman pointed out clearly the fact that while shale and slate were usually found in coal formations, there was abundance of shale deposits where no coal was found. Nevertheless, I like the idea of having a look at the shale. If we *should* locate coal, it would be a most valuable find."

Of course, the whole desert had been carefully prospected several times over; but away we went, and the industry of our tenderfoot was redoubled. First of all he examined the shale—huh! He smelled and tasted of it as well as chipped it and fingered it!

Then he made a general survey of the whole territory, going to the highest point anywhere around. When he and Budd came back, I heard them talking about the anticlines and sinclines and lenzes and no end of other geological names that were all Greek to me, but Budd said they were working out the possibility of finding coal by a scientific study of the whole formation. The gulch opened out on a wide valley between two ridges, and there were smaller ridges there, running out into the valley from each side.

Hatch and Budd agreed that all these ridges had been "made by compression." They had been squeezed up when the earth was shrinking, if I understood them aright.

"But what's that got to do with finding coal?" I asked. "Does it show that there is or isn't any here?"

They both grinned at that.

"It shows," replied Budd, "that we are likely to find other croppings of the shale elsewhere around the valley, and we may find croppings of what is below that shale. So we're to make a thorough search."

For two weeks thereafter they ranged the region, leaving me to smoke my pipe or drive to Double Springs for water or even to Zapateria for supplies. Finally they came to camp late one afternoon, and the gent said:

"We're done with this job, and we'll go back to Zapateria in the morning."

Both he and Budd were looking as if

tired out, but he didn't have any of that disgusted air you'd expect in a man who had worked for nothing, so I got Budd off to one side.

"Does it pan for coal?" I asked.

"We don't know."

"Is that straight?"

"Sure thing! We couldn't find any in the horizons below, but we could find no more than four thousand feet of them altogether."

"What kind of stuff was in those horizons, as you call them? What are horizons, anyway?"

He laughed at that, and answered:

"They're just layers of limestone and shale and sand. He was more interested in a speckled sand than anything I saw. There may be coal lower down, but we don't think there is any on this desert. The formation nowhere indicates it."

"Well, then, what has our victim got on his mind?"

"I don't know. He says he's seen all this part of the desert he wants to now, and he's aching to sleep on a bed once more."

"Did he ask any questions about the porphyry prospect?"

"None worth mention—merely wanted to know what I thought about these sedimentaries. But I can see he's had more experience in hammering rocks than he is willing to admit."

When we got back to Zapateria, I made my report, thinking the outlook for a rake-off on sales of porphyry prospects and ranch sites was poor. But Rushton was by no means downcast.

"It looks good to me," he said. "The gent is playing possum. You wait till I get him up to the bargain counter. I've a new proposition to make him."

So he had. Throwing aside the possibility of finding coal in Nigger Gulch, Rushton went at the tenderfoot with the idea of using auto trucks for hauling coal from Zapateria to the porphyry. He had it all figured out. It was so much for a dirt road to the prospect, so much for a truck, so much for operating expenses, and so much for depreciation and upkeep. If the ore didn't pinch out, this proposition was a cinch, and, with an air of the utmost candor, Rushton put it up to the tenderfoot.

I happened to be present at the time, and I noticed that when Rushton mentioned the auto truck the tenderfoot partly closed his eyes, just as he had done at the time I told him about the black shale in Nigger Gulch. Then he listened without a word until Rushton had set forth the figures in detail. Then he asked for prices on the prospect and the ranch, and added this:

"You want to put the price at your lowest figure in your first offer. I shall not dicker with you, and if you make me a second offer at a lower than the first the deal is off, see?"

There was an air about the gent that impressed Rushton. He figured on a pad for a minute. The ranch was worth, say five thousand dollars to a man who would be contented in holding a small bunch of cattle. The prospect was worth nothing unless fuel at a price of say a dollar a ton above that at Zapateria could be had, and even at that it was a prospect only because the pay streaks were thin. But Rushton added five thousand dollars more and stated his price.

"What is the railroad's price for additional land adjoining the ranch?" Hatch asked.

"Two-fifty an acre."

"Are you an authorized agent for the company?"

"Yes, sir."

"I will give you five per cent of the price for an option on the properties, that sum to apply on them if I take title within six months, or forfeited if I do not. But you are to include four railroad sections adjoining the ranch."

The papers were made out that after-

noon. For a tenderfoot he had showed an unusual air when he got ready to make the bargain. The whole business looked like small potatoes to me, for the whole forfeit was less than a thousand, and my rake-off on that, payable six months later, would buy few joys in our little desert mine camp. Naturally I made a few doleful remarks when I had opportunity, but our optimistic Rushton replied:

"Cork your tears, son. He'll not forfeit. He fell for the auto-truck proposition."

"Did he, though?" I asked.

"Sure!"

"But what does he want of them four sections of railroad land?"

"That is not so easy to answer, but it's what makes me sure he'll take the properties. We stand to rake in better than sixteen thousand dollars. Now keep your eye on the way freight until you see a carload of auto trucks sided here."

Hatch had left the camp, northbound, as soon as the papers were completed. While I waited, he came back, bringing back two men with him, and I drove them in the double buckboard at full speed to the ranch, to the porphyry, and around the valley that was a replica of Greaser's Retreat in California. They examined the anticlines and the sinclines and the horizons and they smelled and tasted the black shale in Nigger Gulch. Then we came back to Zapateria, and Hatch wired a firm in St. Louis, saying:

Forward outfit immediately.

"Now for the trucks, just as I said," remarked Rushton, when I told him about the message, and I kept my eyes on the way-freight train every day for two weeks, when two cars billed to Mr. Hatch were set off at Zapateria. The gent himself was at the station, and I offered my services in opening the doors. Grinning cheerfully, he replied:

"Sure thing, partner. I'd rather have you open them than any one I—ah—know—er. It's a cinch that you'll feel just as you did when we first met—you'll feel that you're a long way from the Bowery, my boy. If you don't, Rushton will."

I couldn't say a word, but I opened one car and found it full of timbers and planks. The other contained not two auto trucks, but more timbers and a well-drilling outfit. The sight of it made me gasp out:

"Whatever is it for? Are you drilling for more water?"

Still grinning, he replied:

"Why, yes, in a way. We think we'll strike water, but that's not what we're searching for, see? Man alive! Where's your nose? Can't you smell anything? That old outfit has brought in more lucky wells than any ever seen in Oil City. We're to sink for oil, see? I'm an amateur geologist, but a professional wildcatter. And the indications on the Double Springs Ranch are the most favorable any driller ever saw."

Well, that's about all there is of this story. They built a derrick on one of their anticlines, and when they reached the sand at two thousand seven hundred and fifty-three feet, the rush of oil and gas shot the drill through the top of the derrick. Was it cheap fuel they wanted for working that porphyry prospect?

That's whatever, and this is no more than to mention the pipe lines they laid, one to Zapateria and the other to the porphyry. Rushton says he knew all the time that the gent had cards up his sleeve, and that he sold the properties at ridiculous prices in order to bring a boom to Zapateria. It may be so. I can't prove he's wrong. But, take it from me, neither Budd nor me ever broaches the subject of a deal in porphyry prospects with a cattle ranch on the side. We let him start the conversation lest we lose our chances for more grubstakes and rake-offs.

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