Published
OCT. 7, 1921

THE POPULAR MAGAZINE

Volume LXI
Number 6

**FREE TRIAL**

**No Money Down**

# 13c a day soon buys an Oliver Typewriter—latest model

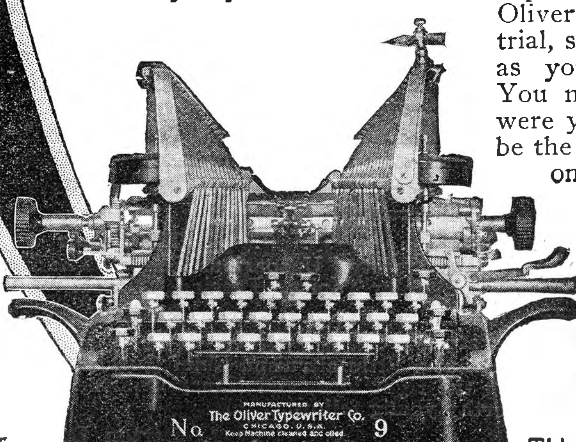
Before you realize it you have this splendid Oliver paid for. And you get to use it right away — while you pay.

To begin with, you save $36 on the price, for we now sell the $100 Oliver for $64. It is our latest and best model, the No. 9, brand new.

We are able to make this great saving for you through the economies we learned during the war. We found that it was unnecessary to have great numbers of traveling salesmen and numerous, expensive branch houses through the country. We were also able to discontinue many other superfluous sales methods.

You may buy direct from us, via coupon. We even send the Oliver for five days free trial, so that you may act as your own salesman. You may use it as if it were your own. You can be the sole judge, with no one to influence you.

Used by U. S. Steel Corporation, Pennsylvania R. R., National City Bank of New York, Encyclopedia Britannica, New York Edison Co., Otis Elevator Co., Boston Elevated Railways, and other big concerns.




**Was $100**

**Now $64**

Let us send you the Oliver for Free Trial. The coupon brings it.

If you agree that it is the finest typewriter, regardless of price, pay for it at the rate of $4 per month. We ask no partial payment in advance. You have over a year to pay. And you'll have the Oliver all that time. There is no need to wait until you have the full amount.

If, after trying it, you wish to return it, we even refund the out-going transportation charges. So the trial does not cost you a cent. Nor does it place you under obligations to buy.

Our new plan has been a tremendous success. We are selling more Olivers this way than ever before. Over 900,000 Olivers have been sold! Oliver popularity is increasing daily.

This, the Oliver 9, has all the latest improvements. It is noted for its sturdiness, speed and fine workmanship. It is handsomely finished in olive enamel and polished nickel. If any typewriter is worth $100, it is this Oliver, for which we now ask only $64, after its being priced for years at $100.

Mail the coupon for EITHER a free trial Oliver or further information. Be your own salesman and save $36. This is your great opportunity.

**The OLIVER Typewriter Company**
**737 Oliver Typewriter Building, Chicago, Illinois**

This coupon brings you a Free Trial Oliver without your paying in advance. Decide yourself. Save $36.

Or this coupon brings further information. Check which you wish.

***Canadian Price, $82***

**THE OLIVER TYPEWRITER COMPANY,**
**737 Oliver Typewriter Bldg., Chicago, Ill.**

☐ Ship me a new Oliver Nine for five days free inspection. If I keep it I will pay $64 at the rate of $4 per month. The title to remain in you until fully paid for.

My shipping point is ..............................

This does not place me under any obligation to buy. If I choose to return the Oliver, I will ship it back at your expense at the end of five days.

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

**Name** ..............................

**Street Address** ..............................

**City** .................... **State** ....................

**Occupation or Business** ..............................

**FRANCIS LYNDE will have a complete novel, "B. Typhosus Takes a Hand," in the next issue. Among other contributors are Wallace Irwin, Knibbs, Cullen, Hoefer and Sinclair.**

TWICE-A-MONTH

# The Popular Magazine

Vol. LXI. No. 6 — October 7, 1921

## CONTENTS

**The Day of Uniting.** A Complete Novel, . . **Edgar Wallace** . . . 1
After what the great scientific Maggerson started in the life of the highly unscientific Jimmy Blake—to say nothing of what he did to the British government, it is hard to think of mathematics as necessarily dry.

**Six Rounds.** A Short Story, . . . . . . **A. M. Chisholm** . . . 62
In the movies, as elsewhere, he who tries to do two things at once is liable to be undone.

**A Strategist in Citrusia.** A Short Story, . . **Clarence L. Cullen** . . 83
B. J. Bingley throws a smoke screen in a smokeless industry.

**The Hidden Places.** A Four-Part Story—Part I., **Bertrand W. Sinclair** . . 92
A World-War veteran faces life with a great handicap, meets one who suffers from a greater—and dreams a dream.

**The Pirouette Stroke.** A Story of Galloping Town, **Charles Neville Buck** . . 118
On the polo field, too, one man's meat may be another's poison.

**The Girl in Tears.** A Short Story, . . . . **William Slavens McNutt** . 128
McFall tries a little night-errantry.

**Caught in the Net.** Editorials, . . . . . . **The Editor** . . . . 139
Gold! Dyes and National Safety. Uproarious Roads. The High Cost of Being a Crook. Popular Topics. Precious Potash.

**"First Down, Kentucky!"** . . . . . . **Ralph D. Paine** . . . 145
A Five-Part Story—Part IV.
"Bo" McMurray tries out a little altruism, Chief Quartermaster Brennan passes along the right idea, and Nancy Overton decides it is right to aid a worthy young fellow.

**The Exploiters.** Verse, . . . . . . . **Berton Braley** . . . 165

**The Goat.** A Short Story, . . . . . . . **W. R. Hoefer** . . . . 167
The baseball writer on the *News* didn't believe all that he saw written.

**Sparks From the Capital** . . . . . . **James Hay, Jr.** . . . 178

**The Bridegrooms of the Orisquibo.** A Short Story, **Theodore Goodridge Roberts** . . . . 179
Marlow finds a little advice not hard to take in the Orisquibo country, after all.

**A Chat With You** . . . . . . . . . . . . . . 191

Twice-a-month publication issued by Street & Smith Corporation, 79-89 Seventh Avenue, New York. ORMOND G. SMITH, President; GEORGE C. SMITH, Treasurer; GEORGE C. SMITH, JR., Secretary;  Entered as Second-class Matter, September 20, 1909, at the Post Office at New York, N. Y., under Act of Congress of March 3, 1879. Canadian Subscription, $4.72. Foreign, $5.44.
WARNING—Do not subscribe through agents unknown to you. Complaints are daily made by persons who have been thus victimized.
IMPORTANT—Authors, agents, and publishers are requested to note that this firm does not hold itself responsible for loss of unsolicited manuscripts while at this office or in transit; and that it cannot undertake to hold uncalled-for manuscripts for a longer period than six months. If the return of manuscript is expected, postage should be inclosed.

YEARLY SUBSCRIPTION $4.00 — SINGLE COPIES 25 Cents

**The news stands will have the next POPULAR October 20th**

# I Teach Piano a Funny Way

DR. QUINN AT HIS PIANO From the famous sketch by Schneider, exhibited at the St. Louis Exposition

**So people told me when I first started in 1891. But now after over twenty-five years of steady growth, I have far more students than were ever before taught by one man. I am able to make them players of the piano or organ in half the usual time and at quarter the usual cost.**

To persons who have not previously heard of my method, this may seem a pretty bold statement. But I will gladly convince you of its accuracy by referring you to any number of my graduates in any part of the world. There isn't a State in the Union that doesn't contain many players of the piano or organ who obtained their training from me **by mail.**

Investigate by writing for my 64-page free booklet, "How to Learn Piano or Organ."

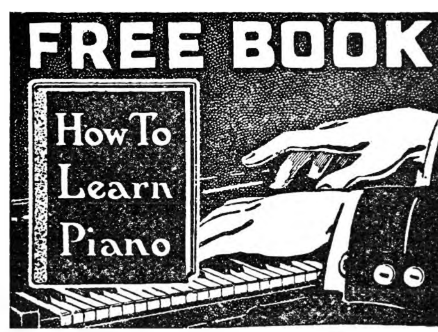
My way of teaching piano or organ is **entirely different** from all others. Out of every four hours of study one hour is spent **entirely away from the keyboard,** learning something about Harmony and the Laws of Music. This is an awful shock to most teachers of the "old school," who still think that learning piano is solely a problem of "finger gymanstics" When you **do** go to the keyboard, you can accomplish **twice as much,** because you **understand what you are doing.** Within four lessons **I** enable you to play an interesting piece, not only in the original key, but in other keys as well.

I make use of every possible scientific help—many of which are **entirely unknown** to the average teacher. My patented invention, the COLOROTONE, sweeps away playing difficulties that have troubled students for generations. By its use, Transposition—usually a "night-mare" to students—becomes easy and fascinating. With my fifth lesson I introduce another important and exclusive invention, QUINN-DEX. Quinn-dex is a simple, hand-operated moving-picture device, which enables you to see, right before your eyes, every movement of my hands at the keyboard. **You actually see the fingers move.** Instead of having to reproduce your teacher's finger movements from MEMORY - which cannot be always accurate --you have the correct models before you during every minute of practice. The COLOROTONE and QUINN-DEX save you months of wasted effort. They can be obtained **only from me** and there is nothing else anywhere even remotely like them.

Men and women who have failed by other methods have quickly and easily attained success when studying with me. In all **essential** ways you are in closer touch with me than if you were studying by the oral method—yet my lessons cost you only 43 cents each—and they include all the many recent developments in scientific teaching. For the student of moderate means, this method of studying is **far superior** to all others; and even for the wealthiest student, there is nothing **better at any** price. You may be certain that your progress is at all times in accord with the best musical thought of the present day, **and this makes all the difference in the world.**

My Course is endorsed by distinguished musicians, who would not recommend any Course that did not maintain the highest musical standards. It is for beginners, or experienced players, old or young. You advance as rapidly or as slowly as you wish. All necessary music is supplied without extra charge. A diploma is granted. Write today, without cost or obligation, for 61-page free booklet, "How to Learn Piano or Organ."

**Marcus Lucius Quinn Conservatory of Music**
**Studio AF30**
**598 Columbia Road, Boston 25, Mass.**




**FREE BOOK COUPON**

**QUINN CONSERVATORY, Studio AF30**
**598 Columbia Road, Boston 25, Mass.**

Please send me, without cost or obligation, your free booklet, "How to Learn Piano or Organ," and full particulars of your Course and special reduced Tuition offer.

Name ..................................

Address ..................................

..................................

# Classified Advertising

## Agents and Help Wanted

WE START YOU IN BUSINESS, furnishing everything; men and women $30 to $100 weekly operating our "Specialty Candy Factories" anywhere. Booklet free. Ragsdale Co., Box 98, East Orange, N. J.

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

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

RAILWAY TRAFFIC INSPECTORS earn from $110 to $200 per month and expenses. Travel if desired. Unlimited advancement. No age limit. We train you. Positions furnished under guarantee. Write for Booklet CM 28, Standard Business Training Institute, Buffalo, N. Y.

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

MEN WANTED for Detective Work. Experience unnecessary. Write J. Ganor, former U. S. Gov't Detective, 120, St. Louis.

DETECTIVES EARN BIG MONEY. Travel. Great Demand. Fascinating work. Experience unnecessary. Particulars free. Write, American Detective System, 1968 Broadway, N. Y.

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

MAKE $314 MONTHLY selling patented vest-pocket windshield cleaner; Firins made this first month; one rub keeps entire windshield clear 24 hours; chemical-felt; enameled mountings; guaranteed one year; sells $1. Security Mfg. Co., Dept. 359, Toledo, Ohio.

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

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

RAILWAY Mail Clerks wanted. Commence $110 month. Sample examination questions free. Franklin Institute, Dept. P 2, Rochester, N. Y.

AGENTS—90c an hour to advertise and distribute samples to consumer. Write quick for territory and particulars. Albert Mills, Gen. Mgr., 5173 American Bldg., Cincinnati, Ohio.

## Help Wanted—Female

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

WANTED Women. Become Dress Designers. $35 week. Learn while earning. Sample Lessons free. Franklin Institute, Dept. P 560, Rochester, N. Y.

## Automobiles

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

## Short Stories and Photoplays

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

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

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

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

AMBITIOUS WRITERS send today for Free Copy, America's leading magazine for writers of Photoplays, Stories, Poems, Songs. Instructive, helpful. Writer's Digest, 605 Butler Bldg., Cincinnati.

PHOTOPLAYS wanted. Big prices paid. Great demand. We show you how. Get free particulars. Rex Publishers, Box 175—P 27, Chicago.

$50—$100 weekly writing Moving Picture Plays. Get free book; valuable information; prize offer. Photo Playwright College, Box 278 XY 32, Chicago.

PHOTOPLAYS, MAGAZINE STORIES, etc., wanted. Criticism free; sell on Commission. Submit Manuscripts, or, if a beginner, write for Free Plot Chart and Details. Harvard Company, 460, San Francisco.

## Patents and Lawyers

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

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

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

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

PATENTS SECURED. Prompt Service. Avoid dangerous delays. Send for our "Record of Invention" form and Free Book telling How to Obtain a Patent. Send sketch or model for examination. Preliminary advice without charge. Highest references. Write Today. J. L. Jackson & Co., 135 Ouray Bldg., Washington, D. C.

## Stammering

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

## Trade Schools

EARN $2,000 yearly painting autos. Complete, practical course by mail. Details Free. National School Auto Painting, Box 55, Allentown, Pa.

## Songs, Poems, etc.

YOU Write the Words for a Song. We'll compose the music free and publish same. Send Song-Poem to-day. B. Lenox Co., 271 W. 125th St., New York.

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

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

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

WRITE THE WORDS FOR A SONG—We write music, copyright and endeavor to promote popularity and outright sale. Bell Studios, 1490 Broadway, Dept. 707, New York.

WRITE the words for a Song. We write music and guarantee to secure publication. Submit poems on any subject. Broadway Studios, 159C Fitzgerald Building, New York.

WRITE THE WORDS FOR A SONG. We will compose music, secure copyright, and print. Submit poems, on any subject. Seton Music Company, 920 S. Michigan Ave., Room 109, Chicago, Illinois.

SONG WRITERS—send for my free pamphlet "Song Writers Secrets." Ethwell Hanson, Room 610, 3810 Broadway, Chicago.

SONG-POEMS WANTED. Send poems for free examination and acceptance. Begin to make your talent pay. Get acquainted with our plan to effect quick royalties or outright sale. We furnish music, copyright same, under common sense contract. Booklet "Making Songs Pay" Free. Music Publishers Service, Dept. 17, 1431 Broadway, N. Y. C.

SONG-WRITER'S BOOKLET FREE—A wonderful instructive booklet, "The Song-Writer's Guide," sent absolutely free. Submit your latest poems. We write music, print, and secure copyright. The Metropolitan Studios, Room 210, 914 South Michigan Avenue, Chicago.

## Personal

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

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

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

## Shorthand

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

## Farm Lands

GOOD HARDWOOD LANDS, Michigan, well located; 20, 40, 80 acre tracts $15 to $30 per acre. Small payment down, balance long time. We help you. Send for book Free. Swigart Land Co., X-1265, First Nat'l Bank Bldg., Chicago.

# They Laughed at My Idea—

## But It Increased My Pay $8000 a Year

They told me it couldn't be done—that it was a "fool stunt." But I made up my mind to try—and I was amazed to find how easy it was. Almost before I knew it I found myself in the big money class.

### By WARREN HARTLE

"HARTLE, you're all wrong. Take my advice and stay where you are."

"But, listen, Jim—"

"Nothing doing. You can't convince me that you can learn how to sell. If you had a Selling personality, or if you had the 'gift of gab' it might be different. But you haven't. I don't want to discourage you, but you know yourself that you were never cut out to be a Salesman. You'd just be wasting your time trying to learn. *It's a fool stunt, that's all.*"

Such was my running mate's answer when I told him that I intended to learn the Selling game. True, I didn't know the first thing about Selling, and it didn't seem as if I was cut out for it. Clerking in the railway mail service *was* far removed from selling goods, and I didn't blame Jim for trying to discourage me.

Yet I had heard of a new and easy method of learning Salesmanship that was accomplishing wonders. This amazing method disclosed the very secrets of Selling that were used by the most successful Salesmen in the country. Men who previously knew nothing about Selling were getting results that were actually astonishing.

Why, even one of my brother railroad workers, E. C. Kisler, of Rockford, Ill., who had never sold a thing in all his life, was now earning almost $100 a week as a Salesman. And then there was another fellow—a fireman—who had learned these secrets and was now making $10,000 a year! If these fellows could make good, I felt that I could too, so I determined at least to try.

### *My First Selling Job*

From the day I began to study these wonderful secrets of Selling in my spare time, I was filled with new hope—new ambition. It seemed like no time before I had mastered them. It was then that I was informed that my first Selling job was waiting for me.

While I had always felt that these wonderful secrets would eventually make a successful Salesman out of me, I never dreamed that my success would come so soon. At the end of my first week I received a letter from my Sales Manager congratulating me on my success. I had made a record for my territory!

Each month my sales kept increasing and raises in salary seemed to follow one on the heels of another.

### *Into the $10,000 a Year Class*

Still, I take no great credit for my sudden rise in the Selling game. What I have done anyone else can do. For instance, there is George Kearns of Oklahoma City. Kearns had never made more than $15 a week. Today he is averaging over $200 a week. Then there is P. W. Broedel of Woodhaven, N. Y., who after six months on the road was making $92 a week.

C. W. Birmingham of Dayton, Ohio, was a clerk making $800 a year. Today he is a Sales Manager and is earning $6,500 a year. J. L. Debonis was earning $15 a week as a clerk. Now he makes as high as $100 a day!

If you wish to get out of the rut and get a *real* job my advice to you is—learn these Secrets of Successful Selling. They are now revealed in full to every ambitious man by the National Salesmen's Training Association.

They require only your leisure moments in your own home, without interfering with your present work. And just as soon as you are qualified and ready you are given free access to the N. S. T. A. Employment Service, which puts you in touch with many fine Sales positions.

### *A Great Book on Selling Sent Free*

I am authorized to state that a wonderful Book on Salesmanship will be sent absolutely free to those sending in the attached coupon. This valuable Book tells you all about the N. S. T. A. method of Salesmanship Training and Free Employment Service. In addition you will read of the big opportunities now open for YOU in the Selling game. This amazing Book is entirely free. Simply tear out and mail the attached coupon and it will be sent you at once.

**NATIONAL SALESMEN'S TRAINING ASSOCIATION**
**Dept. 4-R CHICAGO, ILL.**

**NATIONAL SALESMEN'S TRAINING ASS'N,**
**Dept. 4-R. Chicago, Ill.**

Send me Free Proof that you can make me a Star Salesman and tell me how you will help me land a Selling job. Also list showing lines of business with openings for Salesmen. This does not obligate me in any way.

Name..................................................

Street..................................................

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


*This is an actual photograph of Roscoe Arbuckle's hand holding an OMAR.*

© 1921, A. T. Co.

# Good nature is evident in the way Roscoe "Fatty" Arbuckle holds his **OMAR**

Omar**Omar** spells **Aroma**
Omar**Omar** *is* **Aroma**
**Aroma** makes a cigarette;
They've told you that for years
Smoke Omar for **Aroma.**

Thirteen kinds of choice Turkish and six kinds of selected Domestic tobaccos are blended to give Omar its delicate and distinctive **Aroma.**

*They always go together—*
**Nuts and Raisins**
**Weber and Fields**
**Mocha and Java**
***and***
**OMAR and AROMA.**

Guaranteed by
The American Tobacco Co.
INCORPORATED

—which means that if you don't like OMAR CIGARETTES you can get your money back from the dealer

# THE POPULAR MAGAZINE

VOL. LXI. OCTOBER 7, 1921. No. 6.

# The Day of Uniting

By Edgar Wallace

*Author of "Number Six and the Borgia," "The Daffodil Enigma," Etc.*

**What was the dread news which the great mathematician, Maggerson, so terrifiedly brought to the British prime minister at Downing Street, that day? Subsequent acts of the government leaders were certainly inexplicable enough—even to the point of tragedy. No one can keep you guessing about such a mystery longer than Mr. Wallace, and nobody knows better how to season suspense with such amusement as Mr. Ferdie Ponter supplied to a worried world as naturally as breathing. When you finish this tale, you will agree that you have had all that any one story can hold.**

***(A Complete Novel)***

## PROLOGUE.

BY the side of a printer's steel table, a young man was working busily with tweezers and awl. A page of type neatly bound about with twine was the subject of his attention, and, although his hand was shaky and he was, for reasons of expediency, working with only one of the two hundred lights which illuminated the "book room" of Ponters, he made no mistake. Once he raised his head and listened. There was no other sound than the clickety-clack of the linotypes on the floor below, where the night shift was "setting up" a Sunday newspaper, and as a background to this clatter, the low rumble of the presses in the basement.

He wiped his streaming forehead and, bending lower over the page, worked with incredible rapidity. He was a man of twenty-three or twenty-four. His face was a little puffy, and his eyes were dull. Tom Elmers liked his cups a little too well, and since that day when Delia Sennett had told him in her quiet, earnest way, that she had other plans than those he suggested with such vehemence, he had not attempted to check the craving.

Again he raised his head and listened, putting one hand up to the key of the hanging light, in readiness to switch it out, but there was no sound of footsteps on the stone corridor without and he resumed his work.

So engrossed was he, that when the interruption came he was not aware of another presence in the room, and yet he should have remembered that when Joe Sennett was on night work he invariably wore felt slippers, and should have known that the swing door was practically noiseless in operation.

Old Joe Sennett, master printer to the firm of Ponters, Limited, stood with his back to the door looking in amazement at the solitary workman. Then he came softly across the floor, and stood at the other's elbow.

"What are you doing?" asked Sennett suddenly, and the man dropped his awl with a little cry and looked round.

"I didn't hear you come in," he gasped.

"What are you doing?" asked Sennett again, fixing those china-blue eyes of his upon the young man.

"I remembered those corrections I had to make. I didn't get them down until just before we knocked off, and they were worrying me, Mr. Sennett."

"So you came back on Saturday night to

do them?" said the other dryly. "Well, you're a model workman, Tom."

The man gathered up his tools, and slipped them into his waistcoat pocket.

"A model workman," repeated the other. "I'd like to know why you came back, Tom."

"I've told you, haven't I?" growled Elmers, as he put on his coat.

Joe Sennett looked at him suspiciously.

"All right," he said, "you can clear out now, and don't do it again. If you haven't time to finish your work, leave it."

Near the entrance was a yellow-painted iron door marked "Private." It was toward this that Joe went. He stopped to switch on three pilot lights that gave the room sufficient illumination to allow him to move without risk of damage and then, taking a key from his pocket, he inserted it. The light pressure he exercised was sufficient to send the door ajar. He turned in a flash.

"Have you been to this room?" he asked sternly.

"No, Mr. Sennett."

Joe pushed open the door and switched on another light. He was in a small case room, which was also equipped with a hand press. It was the holy of holies of Ponters' vast establishment, for in that chamber two trustworthy compositors, one of whom was Joe Sennett, set up those secret documents which the government, from time to time, found it necessary to print and circulate.

"Who opened the door?"

"I don't know, Mr. Sennett."

Joe walked into the room and looked around. Then he turned.

"If I thought it was you, Tom, do you know what I'd do with you?"

"What's the use of threatening me?" said the young man sullenly. "I've had enough trouble with you already. Delia's put you against me."

"I don't want you to mention Delia's name to me, Tom," said Joe Sennett sharply. He lifted a warning finger. "You're going the right way to get into bad trouble, Tom Elmers. For the sake of your father, who was a friend of mine, I'd like to save you from your own folly, but you're one of the clever kind that'll never be saved."

"I don't want any saving, either," growled Elmers, and the old man shook his head.

"You're keeping bad company. I saw you in High Street the other night with that man Palythorpe."

"Well, what about it?" asked the other defiantly. "He's a gentleman, is Mr. Palythorpe. He could buy up you and me a hundred times over. And he's a newspaper proprietor, too."

Joe chuckled in spite of his annoyance.

"Mr. Palythorpe is an ex-convict who served ten years for blackmailing Mr. Chapelle's daughter. You know that. If you don't, you ought to."

Tom shuffled uneasily. He had been somewhat disconcerted to learn that his friendship with a man of doubtful antecedents was so well known.

"He was innocent," he said a little lamely, feeling that he must justify himself at any rate.

"Dartmoor is full of people who are innocent," said Joe. "Now, Tom, you're not a bad boy," he said in a more kindly voice, "but you've got to keep away from that sort of trash. He could give you a job, I dare say. He's running a paper now, isn't he? But it's not the kind of job that's going to get you anywhere, except into the cell which he has just left."

He jerked his head in sign of dismissal, and Tom, without a word, pushed through the swing doors and disappeared.

Old Joe paced the length of the big room—it occupied the whole of a floor, and "room" was a ridiculously inadequate description—his hands behind his back, speculating upon the reason for Tom Elmers' sudden industry. His own impression was that the surprise of Elmers was simulated, and that he had heard the master printer coming and had busied himself with a page of type in order to hide his real occupation. Joe looked carefully at every case, as he passed, switching on the local lights for the purpose of his scrutiny.

Ponters were the biggest printers in the kingdom, and from their book room went forth a good proportion of the educational works which were published every year. Here men of all nations worked. French, German, Japanese, and Chinese, for the publishing business of Ponters had a world-wide clientele.

He finished his inspection and went back to what was known as the secret pressroom, and settled himself down for the night to put into print a very important memorandum which had been issued that morning by the first lord of the admiralty.

But the thought of Tom and his visit constantly intruded. It was true that Palythorpe was an undesirable acquaintance for any honest man. He had been the proprietor of a scurrilous little sheet, which enjoyed a semiprivate circulation—it was sent out to its subscribers in envelopes—and he had utilized the paper for the collection of information which might be and was extremely useful and profitable to him. The paper was called *Spice,* and it purported to deal in a flippant manner with the doings of high society, enjoying in consequence a circulation in certain basement kitchens of Mayfair.

Because he offered generous payment for news about the doings of society people, Mr. Palythorpe had gathered about him a staff of correspondents ranging from valets to tweeny maids who sent him, in addition to such items as were put into print, news that he could not publish, but could embody in letters written under an assumed name; and which, being addressed to the subjects of these paragraphs, might produce results which were at once lucrative and satisfactory.

Family scandals, the pitiful little tragedies which break and mar the lives of ordinary men and women, indiscreet letters left about by their careless recipients, these were the marketable commodities which gained for Mr. Palythorpe a handsome income, and might have continued, had he not made the mistake of attempting to blackmail a foolish girl, whose father was the cleverest lawyer of the day. A bad companion for the susceptible Tom Elmers.

"Palythorpe and Tom between them are going to give me trouble," said Joe aloud.

But his prophecy was only realized in part. Mr. Palythorpe himself had small responsibility for the events which sent four men to their graves, and made the hair of Jimmy Blake go white, not in a night, but in one stormy afternoon on Salisbury Plain.

## CHAPTER I.

To Jimmy Blake, mathematics were as the Greek of Socrates to the unlearned senator. As for the calculi, they would have filled him with awe and wonder, if he had had any idea of their functions.

When, in the days of his extreme youth, Jimmy had been asked to prove that a circle was equal in area to a triangle whose base was equal to the circumference, and whose height was equal to the radius of the circle, Jimmy magnanimously accepted his master's word that it was so, and passed on to something more human. Though by some extraordinary means he scraped through school with a certificate and emerged from Oxford with a sort of degree, his mathematical paper would have caused Archimedes to turn in his grave.

It was his fate to live in the closest contact with the scientific mind. Jimmy Blake was a rich man and by some accounted eccentric, though the beginning and end of his eccentricity was to be found in his dislike for work and his choice of Blackheath as a desirable residential quarter. He had inherited from his father a beautiful old Georgian house facing the heath, which an enterprising auctioneer would have truthfully described as "standing in extensive and parklike grounds."

Such an agent might have gone on to rhapsodize over the old-world gardens of Blake's Priory, the comfort of the accommodation, the Adam decorations, and when he had exhausted its æsthetic and sylvan charms, his utilitarian mind would probably have descended to such mundane advantages as the central heating, electric installation, and the character of the soil.

Within these grounds there had once been a veritable priory. At some period of the seventeenth century when Greenwich and Blackheath were fashionable rendezvous for the elite and fashion of Elizabeth's court, and when the stately palace by the river saw Raleigh and Leicester, and the grand gentlemen and dames of society strolling on the grassy slopes of the Royal Park, a Major Blake had acquired the property and had erected a pleasure house for himself and his friends. The house no longer existed, but the gardens he had planned still sent forth their ancient fragrance.

To Jimmy the priory was home and, though he maintained a modest flat at the back of Park Lane, he spent very little of his time there. The glories of Elizabeth's Greenwich had departed definitely and completely and were one with the Court of Jamshid. Aged pensioners shuffled along the marble halls where the bucks of the Virgin Queen had pranced and prinked and a heavy-footed Drake had stalked with news of victories on the Spanish Main. Incidentally Jimmy came from a long line of adventurers and could trace his descent from an uncle of the great Blake.

"It is a standing wonder to me, Jimmy," said Van Roon one night, "why a man like you, with the blood of filibusters in your veins, should be content to loaf through life behind the steering wheel of a Rolls, having no other objective than the satisfaction of your unscientific curiosity."

"No curiosity is unscientific," said Jimmy lazily. "I'm surprised at you, Jerry! Didn't Huxley or one of those Johnnies say——"

Van Roon groaned. His was the scientific mind, against which Jimmy's intelligence was forever rubbing. Gerald van Roon was Jimmy's cousin, a brilliant genius to whom the world was a great laboratory, alternating with a small bedroom, with the furnishing of which he had never become acquainted, because he had not remained in the room long enough.

A tall, angular man with large, bony hands, a big, bulging forehead, two small, deep-set eyes which even his immense and powerful spectacles did not magnify, Gerald van Roon seemed the least suitable of companions for a man of Jimmy's tastes. He was exact, precise, orderly, had no human interests and absolutely no tastes in common with his happy-go-lucky cousin. And yet to the surprise of all who knew them, they lived together in the greatest harmony. Gerald amused Jimmy in one way and impressed him in another. The man's high principles, his almost fanatical passion for the truth which is, after all, the basic layer of the scientific mind, his childlike innocence in all worldly matters, his contempt for commerce and the rewards which commercial success brings, his extraordinary idealism—all these were very endearing qualities, which appealed strongly to the younger man.

"You're a funny devil," said Jimmy throwing his napkin in a heap on the table. Gerald van Roon rolled his precisely and fitted the napkin ring exactly over the center of the roll. "I suppose you're going to that stink shop of yours?"

"I'm going to the laboratory," said Gerald with a faint smile.

"Good Lord!" said Jimmy, shaking his head in wonder. "On a gorgeous day like this! Come with me to the sea, Jerry. I've got the old roller at the door, and in an hour and a half we'll be on the Sussex downs sniffing the beautiful ozone and watching the baa lambs frisk and gambol."

"Come to my lab, and I'll make you some ozone in two seconds," said Gerald, getting up from the table and fumbling for his pipe.

Jimmy groaned. His companion was at the door when he turned, his hand upon the handle.

"Jimmy, would you like to meet the prime minister?" he asked.

"Good Lord, no," said Jimmy, astonished. "Why do you want me to meet the prime minister?"

"I don't really want you to meet him," said Gerald, "but I thought you would enjoy the experience. Chapelle is very strong for science, and he is really an excellent mathematician."

"I gathered that from his last budget," said Jimmy grimly, for the prime minister was also chancellor of the exchequer.

He saw the puzzled look on Van Roon's face.

"A budget," he explained politely, "is an apology made by a responsible minister in the House of Commons for the robberies he intends to commit in the ensuing year. But what about his mathematical qualities? I have no wish to meet mathematicians. Don't you think the scientific atmosphere in which I live is sufficiently thick without introducing a new brand of fog?"

"It doesn't matter," said Gerald, opening the door. "Only he's giving a luncheon to a few interesting people."

"Including yourself?"

"Including myself," said Gerald gravely. "It is a luncheon party to meet Maggerson. He's coming back from America, but I suppose you know that?"

"Maggerson?" said Jimmy. "Who is Maggerson?"

If an actor were asked, "Who was Henry Irving?" or a doctor, "Who was Lister?" the questions would produce exactly the same tragic look of incredulity as dawned upon the ungainly face of Gerald van Roon.

"Who is Maggerson?" he repeated. "You're joking, Jimmy."

"I'm not," said Jimmy stoutly.

"You'll ask who Leibnitz was next!"

"Oh, I know all about him," said Jimmy confidently. "He was a German socialist who was executed——"

"Leibnitz," interrupted the other severely, "was the greatest mathematician Germany has produced. He was a contemporary of Newton and together they produced the calculus."

"Good luck to 'em," said Jimmy. "And

when they produced it, what did they do with it? Anyway, what is a calculus? Isn't that a sort of multiplication table?"

Then Jimmy heard about Maggerson and the calculus he had discovered or invented or adopted—he was not certain which. It was the calculus which was accepted by all authorities and which had superseded Leibnitz and Newton's and Lagrange's and was known as "Maggerson's Calculus of Variation."

"Is it a book?" asked Jimmy at last, "because, dear old thing, I'll buy it and read it up. I don't want to meet Mr. Maggerson without being able to tell him how his little story ends."

Whereupon Gerald van Roon, realizing that he was up against an unreceptive mind, wandered from the room making gestures of despair.

There were lots of things that Jimmy had learned at school and at the university which he had contrived successfully to forget. It was his proud boast that the only definite fact about English literature which remained with him was that Chaucer drank beer at the Tabard Inn. Jimmy had drunk beer at the same inn, though it had been slightly renovated since the days of the Canterbury Pilgrims. It is equally true that he had not only forgotten all that he ever knew about mathematics, but that even the algebraical signs were as foolishly uninformative to him as they had been when he had first met them in a preparatory school.

On the road to Eastbourne he fell in with another young man who was driving a big Italia car to the common danger of the public. They met after the young man had passed him in a cloud of dust furiously hooting for passage room. They might not have come into contact with one another at all, but ahead was a police trap into which the furious driver fell.

Jimmy slowed his car when his experienced eyes detected a member of the Sussex constabulary concealed in the hedge and, coming up with the offender, he recognized in him the gilded son of John Ponter, printer to the king's most excellent majesty.

"Hello, Jimmy," said Ferdinand. " 'Lo! Yes?" this to the constable who was taking laborious particulars in a small notebook. "I live at Carlton House Mansions. Can't this thing be settled out of court, cheery old fellow?"

"It can't, sir," said the representative of the law with some firmness. "You were going fifty-five miles an hour on that road and we've been having accidents here."

"Am I the first accident you've had today?" asked Ferdie Ponter, and the constable grinned.

"Stop at the Chequers Inn. It's about a mile along the road," yelled Ferdie as Blake went on. Jimmy waved his hand affirmatively.

At the Chequers they parked their cars and went into the stuffy little bar to drink beer.

"I shall lose my license this time," said Ferdie gloomily.

"Better lose your license than lose your young life," said Jimmy. "Where are you going in such a devil of a hurry, anyway?"

"I'm lunching with a little girl at Eastbourne," said Ferdie, and then of a sudden, Jimmy struck the zinc bar against which he was leaning.

"Ferdie, your people do a tremendous lot of scientific printing, don't they?"

"I believe so," said Ferdie. "I never go into the beastly works unless I can't help it. We've an awfully clever foreman, a man named Sennett."

"Sennett," repeated Jimmy thoughtfully. "Is he an oldish gentleman, rather like Mark Twain in appearance?"

"I never met Mark Twain," confessed Ferdinand, gulping at his beer.

"I know the old boy. He comes to see Gerald with proofs of books and things."

"That's the chap. We print and publish all Van Roon's books, and devilish dry they are," said Ferdie. "Another tankard of nut-brown ale, good dame," this to the brass-haired lady behind the counter.

"Ferdie, what is a calculus?"

"What?" said the puzzled Ferdinand.

"What is a calculus? I've got an idea I know," said Jimmy, "but I can't exactly place the fellow. I'm going to meet a man who's rather a whale on the subject."

"Calculus? I seem to remember something about it," said Ferdinand, scratching his nose. "Isn't that the stuff they used to teach us at school? A sort of thing for calculating distances and speeds, revolutions and things? You're not going in for that sort of tommyrot, are you?"

"No, only I'm meeting this fellow Maggerson."

"Oh, Maggerson? We print him, too," said the honorary printer. "A wild-looking

Johnny like Paderewski, though I don't think he plays the piano. As a matter of fact, we make a lot of money out of him."

He wiped his mouth with a silk handkerchief and strode out of the bar and Jimmy, paying the score, followed. And there and then might have ended his feeble interest in the calculus of Mr. Walter Maggerson, but for the fact that when he got back to Blackheath in time to change for dinner he discovered that Van Roon had two visitors. Steele, his valet, who was the information bureau of Blake's Priory, supplied the intelligence.

"Mr. van Roon's compliments, sir, and will you not dress for dinner to-night because he has two people whom he must ask to stay and they are not dressed."

"Certainly, Moses," said Jimmy. "Put out the suit I wear when I'm not dressed. Who are the gentlemen?"

"There's a gentleman and a lady, sir. Well, she's not exactly a lady," he added, "a young girl, if I might describe her so."

"If she looks like a young girl, she probably is, Moses, so there is no great danger of your overstating the case," said Jimmy.

A few minutes later Gerald came into his dressing room.

"Do you mind if I ask two people to stay to dinner to-night, Jimmy?" he demanded.

"Of course not," said Jimmy, a little surprised, for his cousin did not usually apologize for his invitations.

"The fact is," Gerald hesitated, "something has gone wrong with that book of mine, and Ponters, the printers, have sent down their foreman. You remember him—old Sennett!"

"Sennett?" said Jimmy in surprise. "I was talking about him to-day. What has happened?"

"I hardly know," said Gerald, "but apparently some scamp at the works, out of sheer mischief, has been interpolating all sorts of ridiculous sentences and statements in the scientific works which Ponters publish. They have only recently discovered this, and one of the first books that seems to have been tampered with was my book on 'The Distribution of Living Forms.' "

"What's that about?" asked Jimmy, interested. "It sounds like a textbook on beauty choruses to me."

"Do you mind if they stay?" asked the other, ignoring the flippancy.

"Not a bit. Of course, I don't mind. What is the girl like?"

"The girl?" Jerry rubbed his chin absently. "Oh, she's—er—a girl. She has rather a perfect jaw. I was very much struck by her jaw."

"Is she pretty? I suppose I needn't ask that if you were very much struck by her jaw," said Jimmy.

"Pretty?" Gerald looked out of the window. "I suppose she may be considered pretty. She isn't malformed in any way."

"You're inhuman," said Jimmy hopelessly. "Get out before you corrupt Moses!"

"The fact is"—Gerald was obviously nervous—"I might have to keep Mr. Sennett here till quite late going through these proofs. Would you mind driving the girl home? Of course, we could telephone for a taxi, but her father is rather nervous about her, and I think somebody should accompany her."

Jimmy smiled.

"Anything in the sacred cause of science," he said solemnly.

## CHAPTER II.

Jimmy Blake was twenty-seven, above medium height, lean of build and of the athletic type which keen tennis produces and which the war hardened and aged a little. There were lines in his thin, brown face which men of twenty-seven do not usually carry, but Jimmy had spent three years behind the controls of a fighting plane and the wings of the Dark Angel had brushed his cheek a dozen times and had departed. The reaction from the hard realities of war had not found expression in a way which is painfully usual. He had fled from the rigors of war to the lazy, go-as-you-please life which a wealthy man could afford. He was a wholesome, normal youth with a wholesome normal respect for his fellows, be they men or women, but he was the stuff from which confirmed bachelors are made and the prospect of spending an evening with the daughter of a master printer neither alarmed nor pleased him.

He went down to dinner when the gong sounded and found the party already at the table, which was Gerald's way. He recognized immediately the white-haired, white-mustached printer, and then he turned his eyes to the girl who sat at Gerald's right hand. And here he had his first pleasant shock. Remembering Sennett's age, he expected a woman of thirty-five and pictured her a little stout and a little awkward.

But this girl could not have been more than twenty-two. She was petite and dainty and dressed with delightful simplicity—the kind of dress that every man admires and so few women have the courage to wear. Her face was delicately molded. The eyes were a deep blue, almost violet, and when they looked up at him gravely, inquiringly, he experienced a queer and not unpleasant thrill.

"This is Mr. Blake," introduced Gerald. "This is Miss Sennett, Jimmy. You know her father."

Jimmy shook hands with both and sat down slowly. He could not take his eyes from the girl's face. She fascinated him, though why he could not understand, for he had met many beautiful women, women more stately and more impressive than she, and they had left him cold. She neither flushed nor grew embarrassed under a stare which she might reasonably have regarded as offensive, and Jimmy, recognizing his lapse of manners, turned his attention to the father.

"I was with young Ponter to-day," said Jimmy.

Mr. Sennett did not seem impressed and the young man gathered that the heir to Ponters' publishing house was not regarded as an admirable member of society.

Jimmy could never recall what they talked about, Delia and he. Her name was Bedelia and she had been christened in the days when Bedelia was really a pretty name and before it had been promoted by the ragtime song writer to its present-day notoriety.

Gerald and Sennett were, of course, absorbed in the book. Old Sennett was, like most printers, a brilliantly knowledgeable man, for the printing trade represents the aristocracy of intellect. He was interesting, too, in another way. He told stories of work done in the locked room where government minutes are printed and which only he and another man occupied in the dark days of the war, when the cabinet secrets he "set" might have been sold to the enemy for fabulous sums.

Gerald and the old man went off to Van Roon's study.

"Now I'm afraid you're going to be bored," said Jimmy as he showed her to the drawing-room. "I can't play or sing or do anything clever—I can't even give you a selection on the Maggerson calculus!"

Delia Sennett smiled.

"He's a very wonderful man, Mr. Blake," she said, and he stared at her.

"Don't tell me you're a mathematician, too," he gasped and she laughed. She had a sweet, low, musical laugh which was music to Jimmy's ears.

"I know nothing about it," said Delia, "and I've been scared to death lest you were as clever as Mr. van Roon. He's a relation of yours, isn't he?"

Jimmy nodded.

"His mother was my mother's sister. She married a Dutch scientist, or, rather, a scientist with a Dutch name," he explained. "Jerry and I have lived together in this house since we were kids and you're quite right about his being clever. You were equally discerning when you discovered I was not."

"I didn't think you were very keen on scientific subjects," she corrected.

"And I'm not," said Jimmy. "Are you?"

She shook her head. He tried to keep the conversation on the personal note, but he observed she was uneasy and glanced at her watch.

"By Jove!" he said, suddenly jumping up. "I promised to see you home. Are you in any hurry?"

"I want to be home before ten," she said. "I have a lesson to give at eight o'clock, to-morrow morning."

She smiled at his look of astonishment.

"I am a teacher of languages," she said; "perhaps I don't look as intelligent as that?"

He protested.

"That is why I am interested in Mr. van Roon," she went on. "Dutch and German are my two best languages. It was awfully disappointing to discover that he was so English."

Jimmy chuckled.

"That's where you fall down in your analysis, Miss Sennett," he said. "Jerry talks English, but thinks Dutch! The most terrible thing he does is to make all his notes in shorthand—and in Dutch! How does that strike you for a complicated procedure?"

"Do you know Mr. Maggerson?" she asked a little while later, after he had telephoned to the garage for the car and she was making preparations to depart.

"I'm the only man in the world who doesn't," said Jimmy. "It is queer how greatness can exist right under your nose without your being aware of the fact. Do you know him?"

She shook her head.

"Daddy knows him well," she said.

"What is wrong with Jerry's proofs?" he asked, and for a moment she was silent. He thought she did not know, but she undeceived him.

"He has been the victim of a very mean and contemptible action directed against my father," she said with unexpected vigor. "Father is responsible that every book which goes out of Ponters' is typographically accurate. Daddy's firm prints all the big, scientific books, including Mr. Maggerson's, and daddy has got a bad enemy, a man whom he helped and who has no reason to hate him—oh, it was mean, mean!"

Jimmy speculated as to the character of the meanness and who was the unfortunate man who had called the flush to Bedelia's face and that bright, hard look to her eyes. She went to the study to say good night to her father and Jimmy waited on the porch. Presently the car came purring down the drive and stopped before him.

"It's all right, Jones," said Jimmy, as the chauffeur got down. "I shan't want you. I'm taking the car to London, and I shall be away about half an hour."

The chauffeur had disappeared when Delia Sennett came out.

"What a beautiful car!" she said. "Are you going to drive?"

Jimmy was on the point of answering when an interruption occurred. He had become suddenly conscious that there was a man standing in the drive. The red rear light illuminated dimly for a second, the pattern of a trouser and then the light from the open door illuminated the stranger, and at the sight of him Delia shrank back with a little cry. The man was young and poorly dressed. His puffed, unshaven face was set in a horrible grin, and Jimmy realized that he had been drinking.

"Hello, Delia, darling!" chuckled the stranger. "Is this your new young man?"

She did not reply.

"What are you doing here?" asked Jimmy sternly.

"What am I doing? I'm looking after my girl, that's what I'm doing!" said the man, with a hiccup.

He lurched forward and put out an unsteady hand to grab the girl's arm, but Jimmy had made a quick and an accurate guess. This was the "mean man." He knew it instinctively and, gripping the stranger's arm, pushed him back.

"Let me go!" roared the man, and struggled to free himself.

There was a quick step in the passage, and old Joe Sennett came out into the night, peering out in his short-sighted way.

"I thought I heard you. What are you doing here, Tom Elmers?"

"I'm looking after Delia, that's what I'm doing. Let go of me, will you!" snarled Elmers, struggling to free himself from the grip on his arm.

"Who is this man, Mr. Sennett?"

"He's a worthless blackguard!" Old Joe's voice trembled with anger. "He's the hound who's tried his best to ruin me! I'll deal with him!"

"Go back, Mr. Sennett," said Jimmy quietly. "Now, look here, Elmers, are you going to stop this nonsense? You've no right here and nobody wants you."

The girl had been a silent spectator, but now she came from the shadows.

"Mr. Elmers, I think you ought to go," she said. "You have done enough mischief already."

Suddenly, with a wrench, Tom Elmers broke away from Jimmy's restraining hand and with a cry that was like a wild beast's sprang at her. Before he could touch her, her father had leaped at him and flung him back against the car with such violence that he slipped down on to the running board and sat gasping and breathless, staring up at the old man.

"Now get out," said Joe, "and don't let me ever see you near me or mine again, or I'll kill you!"

The shock seemed to have sobered the man and he got up slowly and, with his head on his chest and his grimy hands thrust into his pockets, lurched into the darkness and out of sight. Jimmy stood looking after him and wondered. That this was the girl's lover or ever had been, was a preposterous suggestion and one which, for some reason, he resented.

"I think we'll go back and have some very strong coffee!" he said. "Miss Sennett, you look just as white as a sheet."

The incident had the effect of spoiling

what he thought would be a pleasant tete-à-tete drive, for old Sennett changed his plans and decided that he would work no more that night, but the change of arrangements gave Jimmy an opportunity of learning the inward meaning of this extraordinary scene.

"Tom Elmers is a printer," said Joe, when they were sitting back in the drawing-room. "I knew his father and took the boy into the office for the old man's sake. A very clever boy, too, I'll say that for him, one of the cleverest mathematical compositors I know. There aren't many men who can 'set' problems. It requires a special training and a special knowledge of typography. We use an extraordinarily small 'face' of type for that work. Tom did his job very well. He used to come to our house fairly frequently. Then he started in to make love to Delia. and that's where his visits to our house ended. The boy was headstrong, willful, and vicious, too, Mr. Blake," he added, looking Jimmy in the eye. "I didn't mind his threats, but when I found him monkeying with type in order to get me into trouble, I discharged him from the works.

"We print several important trade newspapers, and one day just as we were going to press with one I found that somebody had altered a paragraph so that it libeled the biggest advertiser in the paper! I traced that paragraph back to Tom. He'd handled it, and he'd altered it after proofs were passed—I gave him half an hour to get out, but before he had gone, I know, as Mr. van Roon knows, that he must have spent hours fooling with type that was ready to go to the foundry, resetting whole pages so that the stuff read stupidly or scurrilously."

So that was the story, and Jimmy, for some extraordinary reason, was relieved. He was almost gay as he drove them on the way to Ambrose Street, Camberwell, where they lived and the girl who sat by his side on the journey was so far affected by his good spirits that she was cheerful when he left her. Indeed, the only man who was not cheerful that evening was Gerald van Roon.

"I wish to Heaven you hadn't abducted my printer," he grumbled. "Those infernal proofs have got to be gone through, and Sennett had promised to stay until they were finished."

"What do you think of her?" asked Jimmy, and Gerald frowned.

"Think of her?" he repeated, puzzled. "Oh, you mean the girl?" He let his queer head fall on one side and looked at Jimmy—he was a head taller than his cousin. "Yes," he said thoughtfully, "a nice girl. I like her father very much."

"Her father!" snorted Jimmy, and went to bed.

## CHAPTER III.

The news took Jimmy's breath away.

"Me?" he said incredulously. "Are you sure, Jerry?"

Gerald had come into his bedroom with a bundle of letters in his hand and, sitting on the edge of the bed, had read one of these.

"But I don't know the prime minister," protested Jimmy. "The only cabinet minister I know is Stope-Kendrick, and him only slightly."

Gerald van Roon looked uncomfortable.

"Well, the truth is, Jimmy," he said, "I asked for this invitation for you. I thought you would like it."

Jimmy laughed.

"You silly old owl," he said. "Of course, I like it. I'll be charmed to lunch with the prime minister. I shall have something to boast about to my dissolute friends. What is the occasion?"

"He is giving a lunch to Maggerson. Maggerson and he are very great friends," explained Gerald, pacing up and down the room. "In fact, if John Chapelle hadn't gone in for politics he would have been a very passable scientist. They were at school together, Chapelle and Maggerson, and I should imagine it is a sort of luncheon party in his honor. Maggerson has been nine months in the United States and in Mexico, and apparently he has been going in for biological study. He's an extraordinary all-round man. I've got a letter here from Schaffer. Do you read German?"

Jimmy shook his head. "I would scorn to——" he began, and then remembered that there was a little girl who did speak and read German and, therefore, a knowledge of the German language was a very admirable accomplishment and not to be scoffed at. "Who is Schaffer?" he asked.

"I suppose if you didn't know Maggerson you couldn't be expected to know Schaffer," said Gerald patiently. "Schaffer, of Leipzig, is also, curiously enough, a great mathematician and a great biologist. He tells me in this letter that Maggerson is bringing from Mexico a new species of plant that he thinks solves one of the greatest problems which has ever confronted science, namely the link between the organic and the inorganic."

"Oh, yes," said Jimmy politely. "The missing link——"

Gerald made a gesture of despair.

"I think there is nothing quite so pathetic as your attempt to be interested in intelligent subjects," he said. "Anyway, this plant has extraordinary properties and he has brought a specimen for Schaffer, and old Schaffer is wild with excitement. What I can't understand is this," and he began reading rapidly in German.

"Splendid!" said Jimmy, when he had finished. "What is it, a poem?"

To his surprise Gerald seemed oblivious of the fact that his cousin did not understand the language. He walked to the window and looked out, shook his head, and turned to Jimmy.

"Extraordinary," he said, "amazing! And, of course, it is impossible!"

"Oh, yes," agreed Jimmy. "Monstrous—I don't know what it is all about, but I'm sure Schaffer is wrong."

"Anyway Maggerson will be able to tell us."

"So long as he tells you and doesn't tell me," said Jimmy, flinging his legs out of bed. "And Jerry, old boy, I've got to confess to you that I'm not interested in vegetables, even organic vegetables, and if I met Schaffer in the street, I shouldn't know him, and if I knew him, I shouldn't take my hat off to him; and I'm going to be bored to death, but I'll go to the lunch for the same reason as I would go to an execution or a wedding—for the thrill and sensation of it."

Jimmy could not remember having in his life entered that primmest of prim thoroughfares, Downing Street. The premier's house impressed him as being ridiculously small and unimposing. His first impression of the interior was of the big, cheerless hall from whence led two passages. But the drawing-room was bright and homelike, and the prime minister, a thin, æsthetic-looking man with a mane of white hair, was not half as stiff and formal as Jimmy had expected.

"You're the unscientific James Blake, aren't you?" he said with a smile which put a hundred little creases into the corners of his eyes.

"I think I'm the most unscientific Blake that has ever happened, sir," said Jimmy.

"You seem to survive the atmosphere very well," smiled the prime minister. "How do you do, Van Roon? You have not seen Maggerson since he has been back?"

"No, sir," said Jerry. He nodded to a little man with a gray-lined face.

"Do you know everybody here?" asked the prime minister.

"No, sir," confessed Jimmy. "The fact is, I only know the fellows one meets at Ciro's and the embassy."

"I don't think you'll meet anybody here who is a member," said the prime minister dryly. "You should know Lord Harry Weltman."

A tall, hard-looking man offered his hand and Jimmy experienced a little shiver of excitement, for the minister of defense was not only the richest man in the country, but was reputedly the real master of the cabinet.

"And Stope-Kendrick I think you have met."

The grave, little man came forward and Jimmy, remembering how they had met, grinned within himself. Stope-Kendrick was the home secretary, and Jimmy and he had met under exciting circumstances. Stope-Kendrick had driven his car from a concealed lane, on to the main road, and Jimmy, careering along at fifty miles an hour in his Rolls had neatly sliced a wheel from that gentleman's car.

Other men came in and were introduced. A large, genial cleric, with a stout, rubicund face, proved to be the Lord Bishop of Fleet, and Jimmy guessed that the common interests these men had was the love of science and especially of mathematics. Jimmy met a famous banker and a famous sailor who came over from the admiralty in a hurry, with his necktie twisted under his ear. But Maggerson did not come. One o'clock struck and ten minutes passed and a quarter of an hour and the premier was getting restless.

"He's such an absent-minded beggar," Jimmy heard him say, "that he's as likely as not to turn into the British Museum and forget all about this lunch, or he may be wandering up and down Whitehall trying to locate Downing Street with a penny map. Maggerson would never ask a policeman—he's infinitely too clever to do a simple thing like that."

"Do you think"—it was Stope-Kendrick

who spoke—"that we ought to send a messenger to look for him?"

"I telephoned to his house half an hour ago and his housekeeper said that she could get no reply from his rooms, so he had probably left."

"I'll go, sir," said Jimmy, feeling the least important member of the party. The fact that he had never met or seen Mr. Maggerson and was the last person in the world who should be sent in search of him seemed immaterial. Jimmy was being crushed under a sense of his unimportance and was glad to make his escape.

He went through the hall down the steps into Downing Street and was halfway toward Whitehall when a man turned the corner at a run and came pounding toward him. Jimmy instantly recognized him from the sketchy description which Van Roon had drawn on their way to town. He was a big, heavy, stout man with long hair and a large, womanish face, but what made Jimmy stop and stare open-mouthed at the apparition was his extraordinary attire. He was wearing an old brown velvet smoking coat, beneath which the jacket of his pajamas showed. A pair of soiled gray trousers were buckled round the waist with a belt, and two gaudy carpet slippers completed his attire.

His hair was untidy, floating as he ran. The pajamas jacket was open at the neck and showed a woolen undershirt. He was breathing heavily as though he had run a considerable distance, and the fact that he had attracted attention in the street was evident when in pursuit of him came two policemen and a small crowd of curious onlookers.

"Mr. Maggerson?" gasped Jimmy.

"Out of my way!" he roared, and thrusting the young man aside, dashed up the steps of No. 10 Downing Street, pushed the door open, and flew across the hall with Jimmy in pursuit.

He evidently knew his way. He flung wide the door of the drawing-room and staggered in. A dead silence greeted his arrival. Jimmy, in the doorway, saw the prime minister's face lengthen in his astonishment and then Maggerson spoke in a strangled voice.

"Chapelle!" he gasped. "My God! Chapelle, you must do something—something—you must stop. The Terror——"

And then he collapsed into the arms of Lord Harry Weltman.

## CHAPTER IV.

Jimmy drove Gerald van Roon back to Blackheath, and neither of them spoke until they were in Jerry's study.

"I think we'll have some lunch," said Jimmy. "I've just realized that I've gone grubless since breakfast time."

"Do you think he was mad?" asked the troubled Gerald.

"Overworked," said Jimmy practically. "Let that be a warning to you, Jerry. Go to bed early and take plenty of exercise and you'll live to a ripe old age. Sit up all night and spend the gorgeous days of summer in your evil-smelling laboratory, and I shall be pestered by reporters to give an account of your life and the cause of your unexpected demise."

"But Maggerson!" said Gerald wonderingly. "The greatest brain in the world! Didn't you see him, Jimmy, whimpering like a little child—it was awful!"

"Did you see his slippers?" asked Jimmy. "They were awful, if you like! Oh, Mrs. Smith, get us some food, will you? We're starving. Anything, cold meat, cheese, pickles, but get it quick!"

When the housekeeper had fluttered out, Jimmy found a cigar and lit it.

"My dear Gerald, there's nothing to get worried about," he said. "Your friend Maggerson has been overdoing it. The same sort of thing happens to an athlete when he overtrains. He gets stale and flabby, and there's no reason why we shouldn't witness the same phenomenon where brains are concerned. Besides, if people go monkeying about with strange and mysterious plants that——"

Gerald turned quickly.

"The plant?" he said softly. "I wonder—what did he mean by The Terror? It could have had nothing to do with the plant."

"Perhaps he's going to poison the country and dry up the earth," said Jimmy. "I read an awfully good story in one of the magazines about a thing like that happening. By Jove! Suppose he's brought an uncanny vegetable—a sort of upas cabbage that throws a blight where its shadow falls!"

"Don't be ridiculous, Jimmy!" snapped Van Roon. "The legend of the upas tree is purely imaginary. The upas tree is the 'antiaris toxicaria,' the gum of which——"

"I'll take your word for it," said Jimmy. "God bless you, Mrs. Smith, that beef looks fine! If there's one thing I enjoy more than another," Jimmy went on, as he placed a slice of red beef between two pieces of bread, "it is lunching with the prime minister of England. The least he could have done was to invite us in to dispose of the baked meats."

"How can you jest," said Gerald van Roon angrily. "Could one eat with the greatest mind in England dying in another room?"

"Not a bit of it," said Jimmy practically; "that wasn't death, it was hysteria. Perhaps old Maggerson has got himself tangled up in a love affair," he speculated outrageously, as he poured forth the beer. "These old devils do that kind of thing. I saw the same symptoms with young Freddy Parker after he had an interview with a chorus girl's mother. The poor boy was positively wilting when he came to John Stuart's flat, and we had to bring him round with absinth cocktails."

By the time he had finished talking Gerald van Roon had stalked majestically from the room. Yet for all his cheerfulness Jimmy had been impressed by what he had witnessed. He had helped carry the unconscious Maggerson into the premier's study, and, if the truth be told, his was the only head cool enough to apply the exact treatment required. He had seen too many men stricken with that superhysteria which is called shell shock to have any doubt as to what was the matter with Mr. Maggerson.

As to the cause, he could only conjecture. Being young and healthy and bubbling with life, the loss of his lunch was almost as important a matter as the loss which the world of science would sustain by the removal of its brightest ornament. The only other worry in his mind was whether this happening would interfere with Jerry's proof correction, for Mr. Sennett had made an appointment to call that evening, and Jimmy by judicious and artful questioning had discovered that Delia Sennett was coming with him.

It was an unusual experience for him to look forward to meeting a woman, and yet beyond any doubt the most anticipated event of the day was her arrival. Mr. Sennett had evidently heard of the misfortune which had overtaken the great mathematician, and Jimmy was to discover that to this old printer, too, Walter Maggerson was something of an idol. Before they had come Gerald had talked about postponing the consultation.

"I don't feel up to proof reading to-night," he said. "This business has rather upset me."

"Rubbish!" said Jimmy loudly. "You ought to be ashamed of yourself, being affected by these purely—er—emotional happenings. Be scientific, old top!"

Gerald looked at him suspiciously.

"You haven't taken such a violent interest in science before," he said.

"I'm picking it up," replied Jimmy glibly. "I'm going to sit down to poor old Maggerson's calculus and read it from cover to cover."

Jerry laughed in spite of his trouble.

"You dear idiot," he said, "imagine reading a complicated time-table from cover to cover or a multiplication table, or the precepts of Confucius in the original language!"

"Anyway, Maggerson's better. I've telephoned an inquiry," said Jimmy. "He will be well enough to leave Downing Street by to-night."

"That's good news!" said Jerry gratefully.

And so Sennett and his daughter came and, after Jimmy had hustled the old man into his cousin's library, he took the girl round the garden and there learned that the news of Mr. Maggerson's fit was common property.

"They live in a world of their own, these scientists," she said, "and I feel horribly out of it. Daddy is in that world, and your cousin, and I was afraid that you were, too."

"Look upon me as Lucifer," said Jimmy. "I'm banished every time I try to get back into it."

She looked at him with a glint of amusement in her eyes.

"You're not——" she hesitated.

"Clever's the word you're trying to bowdlerize," said Jimmy.

"No, I'm not."

"I think these scientific gentlemen are most admirable, and I don't know how we should get on without them, because undoubtedly they are responsible for my car and the various aeroplanes which carried me through the war and wireless telegraphy and all that sort of stuff; but I feel that I am doing science the best turn possible when I make the most use of its inventions." He pulled out his watch. "We've got an hour and a half before dinner. What do you say to a run through the garden of England to Sevenoaks and back?"

"I'll ask father," she said.

"What is the good of asking your father; he's walking hand in hand with Jerry through the Stone Age and maybe you'll interrupt them just at the very minute when he's dissecting an ichthyosaurus or something equally ghastly."

"All right, I'll go."

A quarter of an hour later they were flying along a white ribbon of road between hedges white with the frothy blossom of hawthorn.

"How did your lesson go?" asked Jimmy, by way of making conversation.

"My lesson? Oh, the early-morning one. Did you remember?"

"Apparently," said Jimmy. "I think I'll take lessons in German."

"You're the kind of pupil that never makes progress and, besides, I only teach women," she said.

"I know that," he lied, "but when I said I'd take German, I was thinking of Mrs. Smith, my housekeeper. She's frightfully keen on learning languages——"

But her laughter arrested his invention.

It was a quarter of an hour after dinner time when the car came rolling up the drive and he lifted her out, though she could have dispensed with his assistance, being also young and active. He looked forward to having her for the rest of the evening, but at dinner Gerald told him that his work was finished, and, although he drove the old printer and his daughter back to Camberwell by the most circuitous route, he came back to the house to face a long and lonely evening at a ridiculously early hour.

## CHAPTER V.

There had been a witness to the early departure of Delia and her father. Mr. Elmers had lain upon the grassy heath, immediately opposite to the priory and in full view, wondering in his thick way just how he could satisfy his employer's remarkable curiosity. He had been given a commission in regard to which he had consciously failed, and, indeed, recognizing its difficulty, had not attempted to execute. He was in the process of creating a well-tailored lie when Delia had gone home.

He waited until the dusk fell, then he rose and walked slowly toward his place of appointment, which was a little bar on the Charlton Road. The barmaid was on the point of telling him that the private saloon was not reserved for tramps, when the middle-aged gentleman, who had been sitting in the lounge the greater part of the evening, nodded to the newcomer; and since this gentleman had been very generous in his expenditure, and had stricken awe into the two barmaids' souls by ordering an expensive wine, which had to be searched for in the cellar, she restrained the caustic remark which was on the tip of her tongue.

The generous guest was plump and jovial of countenance; he was well dressed and well jeweled, and the barmaid, a keen student of human affairs, had found it extremely difficult to place him. He was too soft a man for a bookmaker, too genial and abstemious for one of the local gentry. He had a large and peculiar smile—one of those pouting smiles which gave the impression that he was amused at something quite different from the apparent cause of mirth.

"Ah, Tom, my boy," he said. He had a deep, rich voice, had Mr. Palythorpe, a voice vibrant with good nature and tolerance. Tom Elmers blinked at the light, and rubbed his hand across his unshaven chin.

"I think I'll have a little spirits, Mr. Palythorpe," he said.

Mr. Palythorpe nodded to the barmaid and, sitting down in the Windsor chair he had occupied for two hours, flicked a speck of fluff from his well-creased trousers, and beamed benevolently at the youth as he tossed down his whisky.

"Have another and bring your glass over here."

Mr. Palythorpe tapped the table by his side.

"Well?" he asked, when Tom Elmers was seated. "Did you see your young lady as you expected?"

The attitude of Tom Elmers toward the man was that of a servant toward his master, struggling to assert himself against the suggestion of inferiority.

"Yes, I saw her," he said.

"Did you get a chance of speaking with her?"

"No, I didn't, Mr. Palythorpe," said the man apologetically. "There was another fellow there, and old Joe—damn him."

"Ssh!" said Mr. Palythorpe reprovingly.

"Is there any chance of your seeing her, to-morrow?"

"A fine chance I shall have!" said Elmers discouragingly.

"Didn't you hear anything at the house? Now don't sulk!"

The last words were in quite a different tone, and Mr. Elmers sat up.

"I listened," he said, "but I could only just hear the voices and nothing more."

He had "listened" from a distance of a hundred yards, but this Mr. Palythorpe did not know.

"You don't know what happened to-day, then? What was she doing at Blackheath? She was here yesterday!"

Tom grinned.

"I think I know," he said with a little chuckle. "Van Roon has had some trouble with his proofs."

"Well?" said the other patiently.

"Old Sennett went down to see him and took Miss Sennett. He always takes her everywhere he goes, nowadays, since the rumpus I had with him."

Mr. Palythorpe was very patient indeed. He leaned back in his chair and surveyed the other without favor, but his tone was geniality itself.

"You told me this afternoon that you knew one of the guests at the prime minister's luncheon and you said that you were at his house, last night. As you knew him so——"

"By sight," protested Tom. "I had only seen him at the works."

"As you knew him, I brought you down here to see him on some excuse or other," said Mr. Palythorpe insistently. "You also told me that Sennett—that was his name, wasn't it?—and the young lady that you're fond of might visit that house and that it would be a much easier job for you to find out what happened at the prime minister's to-day. Instead of doing as I told you, which was to go into Greenwich or Blackheath village and get a shave, you went drinking."

"I've only had about two," protested Tom; "and, besides, what could I find out?"

"You could discover what was the trouble at the luncheon party which the prime minister gave to Maggerson," said Mr. Palythorpe. His voice was low and very gentle, but as he leaned forward to bring his face closer to the man's, it changed. "Do you expect me to go on paying you wages for nothing?" he asked harshly. "Do you think I brought you here in order to provide you with drinks?"

"You know what my job is," said Tom sulkily. "I'm a compositor. You said you'd give me a job on your paper; you did not say anything about wanting me to spy on customers."

Mr. Palythorpe got up, never taking his eyes from his companion.

"I don't think you and I understand one another," he said. "You had better come to my place, where I can talk."

At the foot of Blackheath Hill they found a taxicab. They drove to the West End of London. Mr. Palythorpe had a pleasant little flat near Half Moon Street, and, although he was well aware that he was under police observation, that surveillance, which would have been fatal to any other man's peace of mind, did not disturb Mr. Palythorpe at all.

In his handsome little sitting room Mr. Palythorpe grew frank and communicative.

The Right Honorable John Stamford Chapelle, prime minister of England, had many enemies, as was natural by reason of his position. But political enmity and private hate have little in common. Mr. Palythorpe's dislike of the great political leader was purely personal. In the days when Chapelle had been a private member and a prominent figure in the courts, Mr. Palythorpe had discovered some very damaging facts about his pretty but somewhat flighty daughter, who was married to a rich stockbroker, and Mr. Palythorpe had utilized his knowledge in the usual way.

An anonymous letter had been sent to the girl demanding payment for a certain indiscreet diary which had been filched by a servant under notice, and sent by the pilferer to Mr. Palythorpe's office. The girl in her alarm went to her father, and that was the undoing of Palythorpe, for Mr. Chapelle had gone to work, despite his daughter's prayers and entreaties, knowing, as he did, that a blackmailer cannot be satisfied, and had scientifically trapped Mr. Palythorpe—not only trapped him, but had conducted the case against him with such skill, that an unsympathetic judge had sent this soft man to the rigors and restrictions of Dartmoor Prison for ten years, seven and a half years of which this genial gentleman, with the pouting smile, spent in planning revenge. He had come out of jail and had inaugurated a new paper, placing a figurehead in charge.

He did not tell Tom Elmers all this. All that he thought it was necessary to explain was that he had a very excellent reason for desiring the prime minister's discomfort.

"You understand, Elmers, that I am giving you a good salary. When you couldn't get work anywhere else——"

"I'm the best mathematical compositor in the country," boasted Tom Elmers, his voice a little unsteady.

"Wonderful!" said the other sarcastically, "and you're the best judge of cheap whisky in the country, too."

"I didn't drink till she turned me down," said Tom surlily.

"She lost a good husband," said the sarcastic Mr. Palythorpe. "Now don't interrupt me. I am giving you a good salary, and you're not earning it. You told me you'd get me into touch with the prime minister's friends."

"So I can," said Tom Elmers arrogantly. "I tell you all these scientific fellows know him. Why, I've spent days with Mr. Maggerson, correcting his proofs, and I know Mr. van Roon, and they're friends of Mr. Chapelle."

Palythorpe rubbed his chin.

"I suppose there's no chance of your getting back to Ponters'?" he asked. "If I had only known then what I know now, I shouldn't have worried about trying to get official secrets."

"There's no ghost of a chance," said Tom savagely. "Old Joe hates me. He wouldn't have me within half a mile of him."

"What have you done?" asked the other curiously. "Did you steal something?"

"No," was the short reply.

"You must have done some fool thing. Were you drunk?"

"No; I tell you I didn't drink until she turned me down."

"Oh, the girl, of course." Mr. Palythorpe nodded. "I suppose you started courting her, eh? But that wouldn't make him chuck you out of the office. What was the reason?"

"Oh, nothing," replied Tom; and then, "What do you want to find out about Mr. Chapelle?" he asked suddenly.

Palythorpe did not immediately reply. When he did, it was parabolically.

"Every man has some secret in his life which he doesn't want made public. The best and the greatest of them have that, Elmers. I haven't been in this game for years without knowing that the perfect man doesn't exist. Why, there are twenty people in London, men who hold big positions, whom I could ruin, if I took the risk! But I don't want to take the risk, there's nothing to it. But give me something about Chapelle, something that's going to hurt him like hell, and I'll print it, if I serve twenty years for the job!"

"I see, you want some scandal," said Tom.

"I not only want scandal, but I think I've got it. There was something queer happened in Downing Street to-day."

Palythorpe was talking as much to himself as to his companion.

"I have a housemaid inside No. 10 Downing Street who keeps me well informed of what happens," he said with a certain amount of pride. "And something *has* happened which the prime minister is trying to hush. We've got to find what it was."

## CHAPTER VI.

Usually Jimmy Blake found no difficulty in amusing himself between dinner and bedtime, but to-night time dragged. He wandered disconsolately into Jerry's study and stood watching him enviously, for it was Gerald van Roon's complaint that there were only twenty-four hours in the day and that he had to waste seven of these in sleep.

"What are you doing, Jerry?" he asked complainingly.

"I'm doing an article for the *Scientific Englishman*," said Gerald, looking up, by no means pleased at the interruption.

"What about?" asked Jimmy, seating himself uninvited and lighting a cigarette.

Gerald van Roon pushed his chair back from the table with an air of resignation.

"It is in relation to a controversy which has recently arisen in scientific circles as to whether the scientist should take the public into his confidence in moments of national emergency."

"What do you think?"

"I believe that the public should know," said Gerald. "The controversy arose as to the scare of last spring that the wheat and root harvest would fail owing to the presence of some microorganism which had made a mysterious appearance. It looked as though the world was going to be starved of bread and roots. The thing was kept dark and happily the danger did not materialize, but I say that the public should have been told."

"What a queer old fish you are, Jerry! Put down your pen and come out and be human. I'm bored stiff, and I've half a mind to go up to London and see a revue. It doesn't start until nine o'clock, and we should only miss half an hour of it."

"I'm not interested in revues or theaters and nobody knows that better than you, Jimmy," said the other irritably. "Besides, I must finish this article to-night."

Jimmy rose with a sigh and loafed back to his own den. He tried to read, but his mind was not upon the page. The phrase "falling in love" is more or less a figure of speech to denote an unusual attraction and interest in a person of the opposite sex, plus an extraordinary sense of loss when they have temporarily gone out of one's life. Delia, from the first moment he saw her, was attractive to him. There was something about her which was ineffably sweet and feminine. She was serene without being complacent, efficient but not terrifyingly so. There was not a scrap of affectation in her make-up.

Jimmy wondered how she spent her evenings. Did she ever go to theaters or dinners? He had not even suggested he should meet her. He could do nothing surreptitious or furtive, and he was conscious that anything in the nature of a clandestine meeting would be repugnant to her as it was to him.

She lived in a tiny house which was one of fifty other tiny houses in a drab suburban street. She had no mother, she had told him. She and her father lived alone, a woman coming in in the daytime to do the housework. What a life for a girl—a girl like Delia! He strolled restlessly into the drawing-room and sat down opposite to the chair where, an hour before, she had rested her deep, grave eyes on his as he recounted an air adventure which had all but ended in his finish. He could picture her every movement, the quick movement of her pink hands, the sudden uplift of her eyebrows, the softening of her look when he spoke of his friend who had been shot down and had died in Jimmy's arms.

He got up quickly and, cursing himself for an idiot, went back to his study. This time he did make some attempt to write letters, and working up an interest in the subject, he was fully occupied when the door of the study opened and Gerald appeared. At the sight of him Jimmy stared.

"Where the dickens are you going?" he asked, for Gerald was dressed and was wearing a light raincoat. What interested the other more than his attire, was the seriousness of his cousin's face.

"I've got to go out, Jimmy," said Van Roon. "I don't know how long I shall be away, but please don't wait up for me. I have a key."

"Where are you going?"

Gerald shook his head.

"I'm afraid I can't tell you. I've been asked to keep the matter confidential, and I'm afraid I must keep my movements a secret."

"Has it anything to do with Maggerson?"

Gerald hesitated.

"I can't even tell you that," he said briefly. "Don't ask me, old boy, and don't sit up for me! I tell you this, that I haven't the slightest idea what the business is all about."

"It sounds like a conspiracy to me," smiled Jimmy. "Well, so long. Keep away from the drink!"

He sat a little longer at his desk, but he did not work. Presently he rose and, going in search of his butler, found him locking up.

"Who was it came for Mr. van Roon?" asked Jimmy.

"I don't know, sir. To tell you the truth, Mr. Blake, I was sitting under the porch having a quiet pipe before I went to bed, a habit of mine, sir, for thirty years, as you well know."

"Don't tell me the story of your life, Stephens," said Jimmy. "Who came for Mr. van Roon?"

"Well, sir, I saw two people coming up the drive. They must have seen the glow of my pipe, because they stopped, and then one of them came on. 'Is this Mr. van Roon's house?' this gentleman asked, and he was a gentleman by his tone. 'Begging your pardon, sir, this is Mr. Blake's house, but Mr. van Roon lives here,' says I."

Jimmy chuckled at the distinction.

" 'I've a letter for him which is very urgent,' said the gentleman, and all the time he kept about half a dozen paces from me. 'Wil you come and get it?' says he. I thought it was very strange, his not coming up to the front door, but I went down the drive and took it from his hand."

"Did you recognize him?" asked Jimmy.

The butler shook his head.

"No, sir, he had his coat collar turned up. It's raining, I suppose you know, and I didn't catch sight of so much as the tip of his nose. I took the letter in to Mr. van Roon and he opened it and read it and he seemed a bit surprised. That is all I know, sir."

"Did you let Mr. van Roon out?"

"No, sir, he let himself out. I've got an idea that the gentlemen were waiting for him."

"That's queer," said Jimmy. "All right, Stephens, lock up. Good night."

And Jimmy went back to his study which was a big room on the ground floor, communicating by French windows with the lawn and the tennis court.

He looked at his watch. It was a quarter to twelve. His curiosity was piqued. Who on earth were these mysterious individuals with their "coat collars turned up" and presumably their hats pulled over their eyes like melodramatic plotters? That was not Gerald van Roon's line at all. He dealt in simple things, or simple they were to him, like bugs and reaction tests and uninteresting bits of stone, and masses of calculations. There was no romance in his soul, or woman in his life, and people did not call him out at midnight to discuss the atomic theory or the differential calculus.

Jimmy found a pack of cards and spent an unprofitable hour playing patience. At one o'clock he went to the front door, opened it, and looked out. A thin drizzle of rain was falling, but behind the clouds was a hint of a moon. Save for the drip, drip of rain there was no sound. He thought he had heard the wheels of a taxicab, but it was on the other side of the heath on the road running parallel with the boundary wall of Greenwich Park.

He threw his cigarette away and went back to his study again. Two o'clock came, but there was no sign of Gerald. For some extraordinary reason his absence was getting on Jimmy's nerves, though it was not an unusual thing for one or the other to be out at night, and to worry was stark lunacy. He shuffled his cards and began dealing "sevens."

He stopped suddenly, a card in his hand and listened. He had heard something, and now he heard it again—a "tap, tap" on the study window. The sound was muffled by the curtains and the shutters which covered the French casement, but unmistakably it came from the study window. Perhaps Jerry had forgotten his key after all. He got up quickly, went out into the hall and opened the door.

"Is that you, Jerry?" he asked.

He saw a slight figure coming toward him, the figure of a woman.

"Who is that?" he asked.

"It is Delia Sennett," said a soft voice and Jimmy's jaw dropped.

"Delia!" he said, hardly believing his ears. "Good heavens! Whatever are you doing out at this time of night? Come in!"

She was clad in a long mackintosh, shiningly wet, and he helped her off with it. There was only a momentary glint of amusement in her eyes as she looked up to him and he saw that she was deeply troubled.

"Come into the study," he said. "This is the most extraordinary happening! Where is your father?"

"He left me just as your door opened," she said.

Jimmy could only sit and stare at her when she told her story.

"About an hour ago, perhaps a little more, after daddy and I had gone to bed," she said, "somebody knocked at the door, and father went down and answered it. I thought at first it was Tom Elmers, and I was frightened because Tom has made threats against father which he may, in his madness, carry out. Daddy was a long time gone, and I got out of bed, put on my dressing gown, and went halfway down the stairs, when he heard me and ordered me to stay where I was. Then he came up and told me that he'd been called out on very important business. I think I should have agreed to staying in the house alone, but he wouldn't hear of it. He went downstairs again, and I heard him talking to somebody at the door. Who it was, he would not say.

"'Delia,' he said, when he came back, 'I'll take you to Mr. van Roon's house and leave you there. Perhaps the housekeeper will look after you. I shall be out all night.' It had been raining when I went to bed, and I did not want to go out, but he insisted. He said whatever happened he couldn't leave me in the house alone. That was nothing new. Ever since—Mr. Elmers was so unpleasant, father has refused night duty.

So I dressed, came down, and found a taxicab waiting. The man who came for father had disappeared. We drove till we came to the end of the heath—this Blackheath—and then we got down. I thought I saw a car waiting at the side of the road, and I have an idea that the car had come on before us. From there we walked to the priory, and that is all I know."

"You don't know where your father's gone?"

"I haven't the slightest idea," said the girl.

"Has he gone back to London?"

"He may have." She shook her head in a hopeless fashion and then they both laughed.

"Jerry isn't in yet; I'm expecting him every minute. He's had a mysterious summons, too."

Before Jimmy went upstairs to rouse Mrs. Smith he told Delia what had happened earlier in the evening. Mrs. Smith, like the good old soul she was, came bustling down in her preposterous dressing gown and fussed around Delia like an old hen round a derelict chick, and in half an hour they had sent their charge off to bed and Jimmy continued his vigil.

Four o'clock came and brought no word from Jerry. Dawn had broken when Jimmy stepped again into the garden. The rain had ceased, the clouds were dispersing, and there was a promise of a fine day. He walked down the drive to the road and stood smoking. He looked along the road and across the shadowy heath. The only sign of life was the movement of a big, white motor car which was coming from the direction of Woolwich on the park side of the heath. Instead of passing along toward the Deptford road, it stopped, turned, and then remained stationary.

Jimmy was interested, and wondered what was the meaning of the maneuver. Then he saw a cyclist skimming across the heath path and only knew it was a cyclist by the rapidity with which it moved. Near at hand it proved to be a policeman. Jimmy shouted a "good morning," and the policeman stopped and jumped down.

"I suppose you haven't anybody missing from this house, sir?" he asked.

"No," said Gerald, and then remembering with a start, "My cousin hasn't come home yet, but I am expecting him any moment."

"Oh, a lady?" said the policeman, turning to mount.

"No, a gentleman. Mr. van Roon."

The policeman turned.

"What sort of a man was he in appearance, sir?"

"He is rather tall," said Jimmy.

"How was he dressed?" asked the policeman quickly.

"In a black coat and vest and gray trousers," said Jerry, in alarm. "Why, what has happened?"

"A gentleman has been killed on the heath —if he's not dead now, he will be soon. They're just taking him to the Herbert Hospital. He wore gray trousers and a black coat. Did your cousin wear horn-rimmed spectacles?"

Jimmy's heart sank.

"Yes," he said huskily.

"Well, that's the man," said the policeman. "He's been shot to pieces, and I doubt if he'll live till he gets to the hospital."

"Good God!" gasped Jimmy and went white. "Just come in here, constable."

Quickly he led the way into the house, and the policeman followed. Jimmy took up a photograph of Gerald from his study table and handed it to the constable. The man nodded.

"Yes, sir, that's the gentleman," he said quietly.

Jimmy bit his lip. Gerald! A man without an enemy in the world. It seemed incredible!

"Do you mind going up to the second floor, knocking on every door and telling the servants what has happened?" he said. "I'll get my car out of the garage. The Herbert?" he said. "That's the military hospital?"

"Yes, sir. We had to get a military ambulance for him."

Jimmy ran to the garage and soon the big Rolls was flying across the heath. By this time the ambulance had disappeared. Later he saw it waiting empty outside the principal entrance of Herbert Hospital. In the entrance hall of the building were two policemen. They were talking to a military doctor and turned at Jimmy's appearance.

"You think you know him, sir, do you?"

"I'm afraid I do," said Jimmy breathlessly. "Is he still living?"

The doctor nodded.

"That is as much as I can say," he said.

"He is in the surgery. I have left him on the stretcher—we dare not move him."

Jimmy followed the officer through a door and there, lying on the floor on the brown canvas stretcher, his face white and his lips queerly blue, was Gerald van Roon!

Jimmy choked a sob and knelt down by the side of the dying man. Jerry must have sensed the nearness of his friend, for he opened his eyes and his lips twisted in a little smile. He tried to speak, and Jimmy bent his head down until his ear was against the cold lips.

"I was a fool—I didn't realize—Schaffer's letter—forgot all about it—show it to them, Jimmy——"

And here his voice ceased suddenly.

Gerald van Roon was dead.

## CHAPTER VII.

Jimmy drove back to the house, his heart like lead. He went straight to his study, locked the door and, throwing himself down on the sofa, wept as he never thought it possible for a grown man to weep. He had loved Jerry.

Presently he got up with an aching head and going to his room, took a cold shower. Moses brought him a cup of strong tea and made no comment upon his appearance. Jimmy now realized that, as the household knew of the tragedy, it would be difficult to keep the news from the girl. On the whole, after consideration, he thought she had better know.

He was at breakfast when she came down and, as she passed him to her place, she laid her hand for a moment on his shoulder, and there was something so eloquent in that expression of sympathy that Jimmy nearly broke down again.

"I've been blubbing like a kid all the morning. What do you think of that for a grown man?" he asked with self-contempt.

"I should have expected you to," she said quietly, and then he remembered her own little worry.

"Your father hasn't returned yet?"

"No, but I have had a note from him. It came down from London by messenger. He has been at work at his office most of the night, and he said he would fetch me this evening."

"He couldn't stay here, I suppose?" asked Jimmy. "It's rather far from his office, but he could go up by car every morning and we could fetch him every night."

She was silent, knowing that it was a woman's presence he needed, and that woman, she.

"I'll ask him when he comes, to-night," she said.

A little after breakfast a detective called at the house and then Jimmy learned the details of the tragedy, which were very few. A constable on patrol duty had seen a man lying on the heath in the early light of dawn and, going toward him, was horrified to discover that he was bleeding from four or five wounds. He had been shot at close range by an automatic pistol, in the hands of somebody who was not used to the employment of firearms, said the detective, and gave reasons for his conclusion. The body had been found at the point where Blake had seen the ambulance, about fifty yards from the postern gate of the Warden's Lodge.

It was when he accompanied the detective to Gerald's study that he realized how useful the girl might be if she could give the time to the service. The desk and innumerable pigeonholes were littered with sheets and scraps of closely written memoranda, and when these came to be examined, Gerald found that they were written in Dutch. There was, too, a great deal of correspondence in French and German, for poor old Gerald had been in touch with the leading scientists of both countries.

Schaffer's letter! Jimmy remembered the last words of the dying man, which he had almost believed, were spoken in delirium.

"I was a fool, I ought to have shown them Schaffer's letter!"

After the detective had left, he began a search of the desk. There were several letters in German. Some were signed with names, some with initials. Jimmy went in search of the girl and found her in his study. He told her what had happened at the hospital.

"I thought the poor old chap wasn't right in his head, and I didn't attach much notice to what he said; but he distinctly said, 'Schaffer's letter,' and he asked me to show it to them. Who 'them' are—Heaven knows!"

"It was in German, you say?" she said as she accompanied him back to Gerald's room.

He sat watching her as she went quickly and systematically through the papers which covered the big writing table. At the end of her search she shook her head.

"There are several letters from Germans here," she said, "but there is nothing from Schaffer. Do you remember where he lived?"

"In Leipzig, I think."

"There is only one letter from Leipzig and that is from a Doctor Bohn. Perhaps it is in his room."

Jimmy went up to his cousin's room and conducted a careful search, but there was no sign of correspondence. In the fireplace were ashes and these Jimmy brought to the light. The writing was still visible, a queer black glaze upon a duller black, and he carried the portions of the ashes he could retrieve to the study.

"This is from Mr. Schaffer." She pointed to a scrawl at the end of the burned paper. "But it's almost impossible to read, except this little bit."

She carried the shovel on which he had laid the ashes, to the big window of the study.

"I can read something:

"I cannot believe that the Herr Maggerson could have made so——"

"But that is all I can read," she said disappointedly. "I wish I could have read more of it for you."

"Poor old Jerry must have burned it," said Jimmy, "and then forgot he burned it! I wonder what it was all about?"

Delia had an appointment in London that morning, but resolutely refused to accept the use of the car.

"I can go by train," she said, "and I can come back to-night, can't I?"

"You've got to come back," he said almost brusquely. "I want you to tackle this correspondence of Jerry's, and give me a translation of all the foreign letters. Will you accept that as a commission? And as to your staying here, Delia—well, I'll see your father."

He walked with her to the station and returned, but not to the house. He made his way toward the place where the body had been found, and he had no difficulty in locating the exact spot, for two detectives were taking measurements under the eyes of a small crowd.

The afternoon papers made a feature of the murder. Gerald van Roon had a European reputation; the terrible nature of his end, the mystery which surrounded it, and the absence of all clews gave the case an additional importance.

Reporters came to the priory, but Jimmy, acting on the advice of the police, said nothing about the curious circumstances which attended Gerald's going out on the previous night. When he had got rid of them he went to his room to think. He connected the summons to Gerald with the equally inexplicable summons to Joe Sennett. When Sennett came that evening, preceding his daughter by half an hour, he had little or nothing to tell.

"The only thing I can tell you is this, Mr. Blake," he said. "I was called out on government service. We print all the confidential circulars for the ministries and it was not unusual, especially during the war, for me to be turned out of bed in the early hours to set up and 'pull'—that is to say print with a hand press—secret documents."

"Do you set them up yourself?"

"Either myself or one other man, invariably," said the printer.

"What were those instructions?" Jimmy knew it was a foolish question before he had finished the sentence.

"Well, I can hardly disclose that," smiled the other, "but I'll tell you this much, Mr. Blake, that they were for the military and seemed to me to be sufficiently important to justify arousing an elderly and respectable printer from his bed."

"Where did you go for your instructions, last night?" persisted Jimmy, and Joe Sennett's face became blank.

"That is another of the questions I can't answer, Mr. Blake. I'm very sorry. I can only tell you that I had to go to a certain house, interview a member of the government who gave me a certain document, written by his own hand, and that I prepared three hundred copies by this morning—as Mr. van Roon will tell you."

Jimmy's eyes opened wide.

"Mr. van Roon?" he said incredulously. "Haven't you heard? Haven't you seen the papers?"

"No, sir," said the startled old man. "Has anything happened?"

"Mr. van Roon was murdered in the early hours of this morning, and his body was found near the Warden's Lodge," said Jimmy slowly.

The effect upon Joe Sennett was remarkable. He turned white and fell back against the paneled wall of the study.

"Near the Warden's Lodge?" he said in a hollow voice. "Murder! Impossible! He was alive at three o'clock. I saw him!"

Jimmy uttered a cry.

"You saw him at three! Where?" he demanded, but Joe's lips were set.

"That I cannot tell you, sir," he said, "but when I saw him he was in good company."

There was a silence.

"Mr. Sennett, you will have to tell the police that," said Jimmy quietly, and the old man nodded. "But can't you tell me some more?"

"I'm afraid I can't, sir," said Joe in a low voice. "I was fond of Mr. van Roon, and I'd do anything in the world to bring his murderers to justice, but I saw him in circumstances where my lips are sealed."

Jimmy nodded.

"I won't worry you any more about it," he said sadly. "If you promise to see the police and tell them all you know, I must be satisfied."

And then by way of turning the conversation Jimmy made his suggestion that Sennett and his daughter should stay at the house. To his surprise, Joe accepted almost without hesitation.

"If you don't mind putting us up, and I shan't be in your way, I shall be glad, sir, and I shall be more glad for Delia's sake, too. If I'm liable to be called out in the middle of the night, and I think that this won't be the only time I shall be away from home, I should be worried about the girl."

She came in soon after and learned of his decision. She went to bed early and Jimmy, who was beginning to feel the reaction of the day, dozed in his chair. The night was a little chilly and the fire had gone out when he woke with a shiver. It was twelve o'clock, twenty-four hours from the time Gerald van Roon had left the house, never to return.

Jimmy was wide awake now and less inclined for bed than ever. He found Stephens, the butler, smoking his pipe in the porch, a nightcap pipe which, as he had truly said, was the habit of half a lifetime.

"I'm going for a stroll across the heath," said Jimmy shortly. "Wait up till I come back."

The man was concerned.

"Do you think it's wise to go out at night, sir?"

"Don't be silly, Stephens," snapped Jimmy. "Bring me a walking stick."

It had clouded up again and the night was dark. Something led him irresistibly to the spot where Gerald had been found. In the darkness it was difficult to locate the exact position, and he stood as near as he could guess and tried to reconstruct the crime. He was fifty yards from the roadway, a little more than that distance from the dark wall which hid the Warden's Lodge. The detective had told him casually in conversation, that morning, that the Warden's Lodge was untenanted and had been so for fifteen years.

Jimmy heard the whir of an engine, saw a pair of motor-car lights coming along the park road. It stopped a quarter of a mile from him, and he heard the slam of a door. Then the car turned about and went back the way it had come. Who had alighted so far from a house, he wondered? He heard a brisk footstep coming along the road, and it occurred to him that the pedestrian, whoever he might be, would, if he had some knowledge of the tragedy that had occurred the night before, be considerably alarmed to see a figure standing in the place where the body was found. It was out of consideration for the walker's feelings rather than for any other reason that he sat down on the grass.

Nearer came the man and, when opposite Jimmy, stopped and turned—toward the postern door of the Warden's Lodge! Jimmy heard a key grate in the lock, the snap of the wards, and the door opened and closed softly. One of the park wardens, he told himself, at first. But a park keeper would not come in a car, nor dismiss it a quarter of a mile from his destination!

Jimmy waited. Again came the drone of a motor, this time it was unmistakably a taxi. This vehicle also stopped, a little farther away than had the first car, and again Jimmy heard the bang of a door and saw the taxi turn and its red tail lights vanishing over the hill.

The second man walked much slower than the first and he carried a walking stick. In the still night Jimmy heard the tap of it as he came nearer. He walked more in the shadow of the wall than had the other, and the watcher did not see him until he was against the postern door. Again a key was inserted, again came the snap of the lock.

Almost on the heels of the second man came a third. This time the car stopped at about the same place as the first had come to a standstill and then continued on its way, flashing past Jimmy in the direction of Woolwich.

Whether it was empty or not he could not see, but after a while he heard the third man's feet on the road and the same thing occurred as before. This man also passed through the postern gate, locking the door behind him.

A fourth man arrived on a cycle. Jimmy saw the light far away and then it appeared to be suddenly extinguished. It looked as though the man had stopped for the purpose of blowing it out. At any rate, the machine came on noiselessly and invisibly and the first intimation Jimmy received of the stranger's arrival was when he jumped from the bicycle and trundled it across the path to the gate. He, too, passed through and was the last arrival Jimmy saw, although he waited until the church clocks were striking two.

He walked across to the priory with his head swimming. Stephens was waiting for him at the entrance of the drive.

"Make me some coffee or tea or something," said Jimmy, but when Stephens came back with a steaming cup, he found Jimmy curled up on the sofa fast asleep and, finding he could not rouse his master, loosened his collar, took off his boots and, covering him with a rug, left him, in return for which service he was heartily cursed the next morning by a stiff and weary Jimmy, since when he woke up, Delia had gone to town.

After he had bathed and changed he went across the heath to make a closer inspection of the Warden's Lodge.

The Warden's Lodge stood back from the road and all view of the house was entirely obstructed by a wall, a continuation of the main wall of Greenwich Park. Entrance to the house and its grounds was obtained through a heavy postern gate, painted sage green. The lodge was government property, and in earlier days had housed a royal "ranger" but was now, apparently, empty. Crossing the roadway after inspecting the gate, Jimmy had to walk a considerable distance over the heath before he could as much as catch a glimpse of the lodge proper, and then the only view presented was a corner of a parapeted and presumably flat roof and a portion of a chimney. The rest was hidden behind four leafy chestnut trees.

On the top of the wall was a chevaux-de-frise of steel spikes, mounted on a rod which probably revolved at a touch. The other entrance to the lodge was from Greenwich Park, upon which its grounds impinged and this could only be reached through the park gates, a few hundred yards farther along.

Jimmy was baffled. In the first place the lodge was royal property and, although neglected and untenanted, would be all the time under the observation of the park keepers and officials. Obviously, it could not be in the occupation of unauthorized persons for any length of time. And yet it was being used almost openly by a mysterious party of men, each of whom possessed a key which opened the green gate.

Stephens had gone to Woolwich to the hospital to make the final arrangements for Gerald's funeral and this last ordeal and service Jimmy rendered to his cousin that afternoon. He and a dozen men, most of whom were elderly professors, were the chief mourners at that melancholy function. Maggerson he did not expect, nor was there any message of any kind from him or from the prime minister.

Jimmy got back to the house about five o'clock, very sick at heart, and found that Delia had not returned. There was an evening paper lying on his study table and, opening it, he looked for news about the murder. There was a column of matter, but nothing that he did not already know. A tramp had been arrested at Charlton, but had accounted for his movements on the night of the outrage.

What seemed strange to Jimmy was the fact that the police had not been again to the house. He had written a note making reference to Schaffer's letter and his cousin's last words, and he had anticipated the early arrival of the police officers, but they seemed satisfied with the possibility he had suggested, that Gerald might have been delirious at the moment he spoke. The house was strangely empty and Jimmy was as unhappy as he could be. He loafed upstairs to his room and then remembered that Gerald had had a little workroom, a tiny observatory he had built at a time when he was preparing a series of lectures on the moon's rotation.

The priory had a flat roof, and upon this, on Gerald's instructions, there had been built a small hut of galvanized iron. It was empty with the exception of a table, a chair, three or four sheets of dusty paper, and a large telescope on a tripod, which poor Jerry had used for his lunar observations.

"By Jove!" said Jimmy.

It was not any discovery he had made in the hut which had startled him to this exclamation, but the fact that from one of the three windows of the hut he had a fairly clear view of a part of the warden's house. From here, the view dodged two trees and showed at least three windows and a length of parapet of this mysterious lodge. He decided to go down for his glasses and then his eyes lit on the telescope. He dragged the tripod forward and, sitting down at the eyepiece, he focused the instrument upon the house. Such was its high magnification that it brought the lodge so close that Jimmy had the illusion that by putting out his hand he could touch the windows.

He got up and cleaned the lenses which were dusty, then came back and carefully scrutinized as much of the building as was visible. One of the windows was open at the top. He wished it were open at the bottom, for in the present state of the light he could not see through the reflecting surfaces of the glass.

He was looking at the window when he saw something that made him jump. Through the silvery reflection, loomed a face. At first it was blurred and indistinct, but as it approached the glass every line and curve of the face was visible. It was the face of Maggerson, the mathematician! He was haggard, untidy, his hair was all awry and a stray lock fell over his forehead, giving him a comically dissolute appearance; but it was Maggerson—staring almost into Jimmy's eyes. Only for a second did it show, and then it vanished as suddenly as it had appeared.

## CHAPTER VIII.

Jimmy Blake had known sympathy in his life, but he had never appreciated nor experienced the beautiful quality of tenderness which a woman can give to the sorely hurt. Delia's understanding was shown in a score of ways, even her silences had a soothing value. She had the gift of changing the direction of a conversation so that it was turned before the participants realized in what unhappy direction it had been heading. She was cheerful, in her sweet, quizzical way, and Jimmy had found himself challenged to flippant retort—on the day he had buried Gerald van Roon! She could give the whole of one day that week, she told him, to the examination of Gerald's papers.

"Do you remember what was in the Schaffer letter? You said that poor Mr. van Roon had read a portion of it to you."

"The portion he read was in German. Poor old boy, he was very absent-minded—he even forgot that he had burned it!" smiled Jimmy. "But he did tell me that Schaffer said something about Maggerson bringing back a queer plant from New Mexico, or Mexico, I'm not sure which."

"What kind of plant?"

"It was a plant which established the connection between something or other," said Jimmy vaguely. "Oh, yes, I remember—between the organic and the inorganic."

"That is rather important, isn't it?" she said, interested. "Science has never discovered the link."

"That's it! I joked the old fellow about it. I called it the 'missing link,' and he was absolutely sick with me!"

She bit her lip thoughtfully.

"I wonder if that had anything to do with it," she said, speaking to herself.

"To do with Jerry's murder?" asked Jimmy astonished. "What on earth could that have to do with it?"

"He spoke about Schaffer's letter. I'm sure he knew what he was saying," said the girl. "He recognized you and remembered that he had shown you the letter in the morning."

"That is true," said Jimmy, impressed.

"Why don't you see Mr. Maggerson and ask him?" she suggested.

It was on the tip of his tongue to tell her that he had seen Maggerson less than two hours before, but he stopped himself. He wanted to know something more about the Warden's Lodge, and he had already made up his mind to undertake a second vigil that night.

After Delia had gone to bed, he strolled out without telling Stephens where he was going, and took up his position near to the spot he had occupied the night before. This time he had brought a light waterproof sheet which he laid on the ground, for the grass had been wet the previous night. It was ten minutes after twelve when the first car appeared and the happenings of the previous night were repeated almost exactly. One man came after another, and Jimmy, lying full length on the ground, focused the night glasses he had brought with him upon each in turn without, however, discovering their identity. If only the moon would show!

At two o'clock he returned to the priory determined that the next night he would force a recognition. The plan that he roughly formed was that, as soon as a car appeared and he knew that the passenger was on his way to the lodge, he would walk to meet him, and on some excuse or other turn the beam of a hand lamp on his face. Know them he would, for it was impossible to avoid associating this unknown four with Van Roon's death.

But why had Jerry said nothing which would incriminate them? All his thoughts had been of Schaffer's letter. It was queer. As he was going to bed that night Jimmy had another idea, and the next morning drove the girl up to London and, dropping her in the city, went on to Whitehall.

Stope-Kendrick was not exactly a friend of his, but they had met at the prime minister's house and he did not think that the home secretary would refuse to see him. That worthy gentleman, however, had not arrived when Jimmy called, nor was he in his office until after midday when Jimmy presented his card for the third time and was ushered into a great and gloomy room where the little man sat behind a table which further dwarfed his stature.

He was looking very ill. There were deep shadows under his eyes and his face was a pasty white. His manner, however, was vigorous and almost cheerful.

"This is an unexpected pleasure, Mr. Blake. I was so sorry to hear of Van Roon's death. You don't know how sorry I am." He shook his head and his voice trembled. "You don't know how sorry!"

Jimmy was surprised. He did not expect the minister, whose task it was to sign the death warrants which sent men to the gallows, to display such concern nor did he know that Stope-Kendrick was so close a friend of Gerald's. Stope-Kendrick secured control of his voice after a while.

"What can I do for you?" he asked.

"I've come partly about this terrible crime, sir, and partly to ask you whether you could put me in touch with Mr. Maggerson."

"That I am afraid I cannot do," said the home secretary. "Mr. Maggerson went away into the country after his collapse, and I do not think he is get-at-able. What do you want me to tell you about the crime?"

His steady, black eyes were fixed on his visitor, and there was a strange look in his face, and Jimmy, who was extraordinarily sensitive to atmosphere, was impressed by the tension of the minister's attitude.

"I can't understand, Mr. Kendrick, why the police are taking such little trouble to discover the murderer of my cousin," he said.

"It appears to you that they are taking little trouble," corrected Stope-Kendrick after a pause. "And I am afraid it always seems so to those who are interested in the solution of a mystery of this kind; but you will find that the authorities have been very active indeed. In a case like this, Mr. Blake, it is very difficult to get hold of any loose ends—there are absolutely no clews whatever."

Jimmy was thinking rapidly. Should he tell the home secretary about the four visitors to the lodge? Should he describe what he had seen through his telescope? Again he decided to maintain silence. Until he had further evidence of the nature of these meetings and the character of the men who forgathered at Blackheath, he could not frame his suspicion.

Jimmy left the home office with a curious sense of uneasiness. He lunched at his club, and there met a man who had known Gerald and they talked of the dead man for the greater part of the afternoon. Jimmy hung on to town desperately. He had no desire to go back to Blackheath at present. He realized with a sense of comic dismay that Blake's priory had only one attraction for him now, and that of a transitory character.

"Oh, by the way," he said at parting with the officer. "You fellows in the guards are generally well informed. Have there been issued any very extra special secret-and-confidential-don't-tell-anybody orders during the last two days?"

The officer laughed in his face.

"And if there had been, my son, do you imagine I should whisper them into your ear?" he demanded ironically.

"But have there?" demanded Jimmy.

"Not a day passes that we do not get

secret and confidential orders," said the diplomatic guardsman.

"Have you had any printed orders?"

The soldier looked at him sharply.

"I don't know quite what you mean," he said, his tone altering.

"I mean this. You are second in command of a guards battalion and if there had been any very secret orders issued by the government expressly to the military, you would know all about them."

"And just as assuredly, Jimmy, you would not," said the other decidedly.

Jimmy knew, from having served in the army, that "secret and confidential" instructions are "secret and confidential" in name only. Real secret orders were issued at the rarest intervals and dealt only with national crises. He was quite certain from Major Barrington's manner that some such order had been issued. What could it be about? Was the country expecting an attack from its late enemy, and had Schaffer's letter contained some great state secret?

"Oh, damn!" said Jimmy giving up the problem for the moment.

He was always giving it up for the moment, and returning insensibly and unconsciously to its consideration. By the rarest piece of good luck he caught sight of Delia standing at the corner of the Haymarket waiting for a bus. This incident was the one bright spot of the day, and he carried her off under the cold and disapproving eyes of other ladies who were waiting and in his exhilaration almost brought his Rolls into collision with a street standard.

He did not expect to find Mr. Sennett at the house, but he was there. Jimmy had insisted upon the printer using his study and Joe rose from a welter of proofs as the young man came in.

"I'm just revising poor Mr. van Roon's last proofs," he said. "I haven't had much time to give to the boy's books lately."

"Mr. Sennett," said Jimmy bluntly, "when did you see Maggerson last?"

Joe Sennett turned his eyes away.

"Oh, some time ago now," he drawled.

"Did you see him yesterday?"

"It is possible," said the other, and Jimmy knew he was evading the question. "Yes, I think he did call at the office." Then suddenly he dropped his mask of indifference and turned on the astounded Jimmy. "I wish to God I knew what they were up to and what it was all about," he said, his voice trembling with anger. "They're driving me mad with their orders to troops and their mysteries—they must have allowed this poor boy to be murdered!"

It was the outburst of a man whose nerve was going and Jimmy waited for more, but the old man recovered himself with a harsh laugh.

"I'm getting rattled," he said. "That is because I'm old, I suppose. Didn't I hear Delia come back with you, sir?"

Jimmy nodded.

"She must not know that anything is wrong," said Mr. Sennett.

"You may be sure I shall not tell her; but she'll guess," said Jimmy quietly. "She's not the kind of girl who can be easily deceived. What is wrong, Sennett?"

The old man shrugged his shoulders.

"I don't know, Mr. Blake, and I've already said too much. I'm getting a bit frightened, that is all. So is Stope-Kendrick."

"Stope-Kendrick?" said Jimmy in wide-eyed amazement "The home secretary?"

The other nodded.

"Have you seen him?" asked Jimmy incredulously.

"Yes, I've seen him." Old Joe Sennett's tone did not encourage further inquiry. "It is killing him, whatever it is," he went on. "He looks like a dead man."

"I also saw him to-day," nodded Jimmy, "and I agree with you. Is it an invasion they are scared about?"

Joe shook his head.

"I haven't the slightest idea. All I know is that certain members of the government are in terror about something."

The Terror! Jimmy remembered Maggerson's words. But what shape was The Terror taking?

"I ought not to tell you, Mr. Blake," Joe went on, "but those secret orders which I printed were to the military commanders ordering them to leave nothing undone to quell disturbances which may arise. It also gave them authority to shoot without the formality of reading the riot act. In fact, sir," he said solemnly, "the country at this moment is under a secret form of martial law which has been proclaimed without the people knowing anything about it. And in my opinion——" He hesitated.

"Yes?"

"In my opinion," he said soberly. "Mr. Van Roon was the first victim of that law."

Jimmy had plenty to think about that night. The girl was busy in Gerald's study working over his letters, and he was left alone to his thoughts. He had not shuttered or curtained the windows of his study. The French windows were open leading on to the garden for it was a glorious night. He sat reading for a while until he saw the girl crossing the lawn. She had evidently finished her work, and his first impulse was to rise and go after her. Then he felt that possibly she might wish to be alone, and so he waited, alternately deciding to go and reflecting that it was better to stay, until at last he could wait no longer.

He stepped through the door of the study on to the soft carpet of the lawn. The full moon was shining and the garden was a place of mystery and inviting shadows. The shadow of a big elm lay bluely across the tennis court, throwing a big blot of darkness on the wall. There was no sound except the querulous chirp of a sleepy bird disturbed by its restless partner and the breeze was little more than a lazy movement of air which did not so much as rustle a leaf.

He walked across the grass, stopping by the sundial to glance idly at the shadow which the stile cast upon the green plate. He stood for a while by the pedestal, his eyes ranging the grounds for some sign of Delia. Beyond the elms was a stretch of garden from whence the moonlight had drawn all color. Black, straight shadows of the hollyhocks barred the wall, and the place was fragrant with rare and delicate perfumes. Then he saw her. She was sitting on a big stone bench and he moved quicker toward her, marveling at her nerve. The air of tragedy which lay upon the house would have shaken most women. But she could go out alone and sit, strange as it was, on poor Gerald's favorite bench.

"It is very beautiful," she said softly, as he came up to her.

Jimmy thought of the garden and the lavender moonlight only as settings for her own exquisite prettiness. In this ethereal light she was wonderful to him. There was something almost unearthly in the frail modeling of her face, half turned upward toward him and the moon.

"You aren't catching cold?" he asked huskily.

"No—won't you sit down?"

He sat and for the best part of ten minutes did not speak.

"Father may have to go to town," she broke the silence at last and Jimmy started, for he had been dreaming the maddest, the most heart-racing dream. With difficulty he found his voice.

"Delia," he said, "I'm being rather selfish asking you to stay at the priory. You're too young to be flung into this tragic business—and too dear."

Apparently she did not notice the last, for she answered steadily.

"You forget that father likes being here. It was good of you to ask him."

Another pause. How could he put his dream into coherent language, he wondered desperately?

"Do you like this place?" he asked.

"The house? Oh, yes, it is glorious." She dropped her voice to little more than a whisper. "Lovely—lovely. I shall hate going back to Camberwell."

Jimmy cleared his voice as well as he could.

"Why go back?" he asked so loudly that she turned her face toward him, startled. "Why not stay? I love you very truly, Delia."

Every word seemed to be exactly the word he hadn't intended using. He was crude, he thought, in a perspiration of fear.

She did not reply. She turned away from him quickly, and he saw the hands on her lap clasp and the fingers twining one about the other.

"That is impossible, Mr. Blake." She was not looking at him, but was talking in the opposite direction. "You—you are a little worried by—by poor Mr. van Roon's death, and——" She turned her head as suddenly and faced him, and her big eyes stared at him somberly for a second, and then she laughed softly. "It is the moonlight," she said, rising, and with a simple, unaffected gesture put out her hand to him. " 'Moonlight was for fancy made,' " she quoted. "I'm going into the house, and I really think I *am* a little chilled."

"One moment, Delia." Jimmy had command of his voice and himself now. "I want to say I'm sorry if I offended you and more sorry if you think I am not sincere or that I am affected by the moon as other lunatics are."

"They're not," she said with a smile. "It is one of the popular fallacies which science has exploded. And the moon has nothing to do with the weather, either."

"Blow science!" said Jimmy. "Listen to me, Delia. I would ask you to marry me in unromantic daylight or in a snowstorm."

The smile left her face.

"And I should say 'no,'" she answered quietly, "though I am really touched and grateful to you, Mr. Blake."

"You don't think you could love me?"

She shook her head.

"I think I do not love you now," she said, "and I know that I have mapped out my life in my humble way so that it is filled, without—without——"

"Me?"

"Without any man," she said. "Do you think I'm not pleased—pleased and flattered, too?"

He was silent.

"Do you?" she persisted, shaking his arm gently. "I'm just full of gratification! I always thought women felt sorry for the man—when they said 'no,' or that they were uncomfortable in their minds. I think that can only be when there are two men who love them, and they want them both! But you're the one flower in my garden."

"But why——" he began, bewildered.

"It's lovely to know that you're loved," she said softly. "It's selfishly lovely—but it's lovely. And I like you—oh, ever so much." She drew a long sigh, and then: "Come along—Jimmy," she said, and his heart leaped at the word.

"I want you to like me," she went on, pacing by his side toward the house, "that is better than—more emotional feeling, isn't it? It's rare between men and women. I almost think I would sacrifice all my pet plans and half my principles to keep your liking."

Though the architecture of the priory was Georgian, there had been erected by some former owner a large porch supported by four slender Corinthian pillars. Here were two oaken seats on one of which Stephens, the butler, was wont to sit and smoke his evening pipe. Joe Sennett had discovered the comfort of this retreat and here they found him. The somewhat precipitate retreat of Stephens suggested that Joe had not lacked company.

"Hello, Delia," growled the old man. "Isn't it time you were in bed?"

His growl was a pleasant growl, and the girl laughed.

"I'm not going to town to-morrow, daddy. I'm staying to fix Mr. van Roon's letters, and it's such a glorious night that I hate the idea of going to bed."

She sat down on the settle by her father's side. It was very delightful for Jim, even though it meant that he must forgo for the night the plans he had made, on the night before, to confront one of the visitors to the Warden's Lodge, and discover his identity. That, however, could wait, he told himself, and possibly the four would not come on so bright a night as this.

Old Joe took out his pipe and was about to speak, when there came a terrifying diversion. It was a shriek—long and piercing and was repeated, and it came from the direction of the heath. The girl went white and gripped her father's arm.

"What was that?" she faltered.

Before he could reply the horrible cry sounded again, and it was coming nearer.

Jimmy tore up the drive, through the gates and out on to the deserted road. He saw a figure running toward him, its arms outflung. It was a man, and he was screaming pitifully like a frightened child. Jim went out to meet him, but as though at the sight of another of his kind, the runner turned and bolted away at a tangent, and all the time he shrieked and shrieked and shrieked. Jim raced after him, gaining with every stride. The man was heading for one of those deep depressions in the heath where formerly gravel had been excavated. Suddenly he stopped on the lip of the pit and faced his pursuer.

"Don't come near me!" he yelled. "Don't come near me!"

Jim thought he recognized the voice.

"Wait, wait," he entreated, and he saw something glitter in the man's hand. There was a thunderous report, and the thing that had shrieked and fled, as from the wrath of God, crumpled up and fell.

With a cry Jim knelt by his side and turned him over. The shot must have passed through the neck, severing the spinal cord, for he was quite dead.

"My God!" breathed Jim, for he was looking at the face of John Stope-Kendrick, his majesty's home secretary.

## CHAPTER IX.

"We regret to report the death from heart failure of the Right Honorable John Stope-Kendrick, the home secretary."

In this laconic manner was the suicide of

John Stope-Kendrick made known to the world.

"You quite understand, Mr. Blake, that it is very undesirable the world should know the true circumstances of Mr. Kendrick's death."

Jimmy had been summoned to Downing Street for the second time and was standing in the prime minister's presence. The premier seemed crushed by the tragedy which had overtaken his colleague.

"I am afraid poor Kendrick has not been quite himself for some time, but we had no idea that he was losing his mental balance." He stopped and eyed Jimmy sharply. "Mr. Blake, you and the constables who found him, and the inspector, and the police doctor, are the only people——"

"Mr. Sennett knows. He is a printer probably known to you," said Jimmy.

"Sennett?" said the premier sharply. "Oh, yes, of course, he is staying with you."

Jimmy wondered how the prime minister knew that.

"We can rely upon Mr. Sennett," said the minister. "He prepares most of the confidential printing for the cabinet. Nobody else knows, I hope!"

"Nobody, sir," said Jimmy promptly. At any rate, he could keep the girl's name out of the matter, and he could rely upon Joe seconding him in this.

"Can you explain, sir, why Mr. Kendrick was on Blackheath at that hour of the night?"

"I cannot tell you," said the premier. "Probably the death of poor Van Roon was on his mind, and in that case it would be very natural, if the abnormal can be natural, that he should be attracted to the spot where Van Roon was discovered."

"It seems reasonable to me, sir," said Jimmy.

"Of course, the newspapers will know how it happened," said the prime minister at parting, "and possibly it will be whispered about that John died by his own hand. The great thing is that it should not be baldly and publicly stated."

Jimmy was very grave, for only now was he sensing the bigness of the game into which he had been unconsciously drawn. He began to feel the need of a friend, and he cast his mind over the many men he knew to find one whom he could bring into his confidence. Some lacked imagination, some, he knew, were without sympathy, some he did not like enough and some he could not bring himself to trust in this matter. And then, when he had dismissed them and decided that he must play a lone hand, there drifted into the club's luncheon room a lackadaisical youth who greeted him with a feeble wave of his hand, and would have passed to another table.

It was Mr. Ferdinand Ponter, and Jimmy beckoned him.

"Come and sit down, Ferdie; I want to talk to you."

"Are you going to be intellectual?" asked the young man, as he seated himself, with every sign of apprehension. "The last time we met, you talked about printing till my head reeled."

"What you want," said Jimmy, "is another head. No, I'm not going to be very intellectual—yes, I am," he said suddenly, and Ferdinand's face expressed resignation and pain. "Ferdie, I want you to help me."

"Help you," said the startled youth. "Good heavens, what do you want help for? I will, of course," he added hastily, "but I had not the slightest idea——"

"Don't be a fool, I'm not talking about money. I want you to help me in another way."

"Not about printing?" asked Mr. Ponter in alarm. "I assure you, dear old thing, I know no more about printing than I know about beeswax, or Jerusalem artichokes. Which reminds me," and he called a waiter and ordered beer with a flourish. And then, remembering suddenly that he had certain condolences to offer, "I'm awfully cut up about poor Van Roon, Jimmy," he said. "I didn't know him very well, but it must have been an awful knock in the eye for you."

"It was, rather," said Jimmy shortly. "No, I'm not going to ask you about printing, Ferdie. I realize that the link between you and Ponters' is as slender as the thin edge of a check."

"Beautifully put," murmured the young man.

"The fact is——" Jimmy hesitated and yet, why should he, he thought. All this boredom and lack of interest in life which Mr. Ponter expressed with every gesture and word, was a pose. Ferdie Ponter had been Jimmy's observer in the days when Jimmy drove a D. H. 7. A cool child, who shot with deadly precision and never, under any circumstances, lost his nerve.

"Now, listen—I'm going to tell you a story, son, and I'm putting you on your honor that you won't mention a word of this to anybody, whether you come in and help me, or whether you stay outside."

"You thrill me," said Ferdie.

"I shall," replied Jimmy.

He had told the story to himself so often that he had every fact marshaled in order, and now he presented to the gaping youth a consecutive narrative of all that had happened from the moment Gerald van Roon had brought Schaffer's letter to his bedroom, down to his latest interview with the prime minister.

"Well, what do you think of it?"

Ferdie shook his head.

"I'm dashed if I know," he said. "What do *you* think of it?" he asked.

"I can't understand it," said Jimmy, "but I'm going to learn, Ferdie; and first I shall have a shot at the Warden's Lodge and discover what is happening there."

"Have you told anybody about Maggerson being at the house?"

"I've told nobody. You're the first person I've met who doesn't matter."

"Thank you kindly," said Ferdinand politely.

"What I mean," explained Jimmy, "is that it will not hurt or worry you, as it would hurt Miss Sennett."

Ferdie looked up.

"That is a name you haven't mentioned before? What the dickens are you blushing about? Congratulations!"

"Don't be a fool," growled Jim. "It is a—a friend staying with us, she and her father."

"Sennett," repeated Ferdie. "Why, she isn't related to our Sennett, is she?—the governor calls him our supercomp."

"She's his daughter," said Jimmy shortly.

"Indeed?" said the other interestedly. "Are you thinking of going into the printing trade, Jimmy?"

"As I say, I haven't told Miss Sennett, because, naturally, she'd be worried."

"Why should she be worried if she's not your fiancée? Dash it all, old thing, be reasonable."

"Huxley said," quoted Jimmy severely, "that the greatest tragedy in science is to see a beautiful hypothesis killed by an ugly fact. She is *not* my fiancée."

"I wouldn't call you ugly," murmured Ferdinand, somewhat at sea, "and who's Huxley?"

"That's beside the point," said Jimmy. "What I want to know is, will you stand in with me, if I make an attempt to enter this lodge and discover what was behind the killing of poor Jerry and the suicide of Kendrick?"

"I'm with you all the time," said Ferdie, and solemnly shook hands. "I've been wondering what I was going to do for the next week or two. I'm engaged for the Ascot week, of course, and I may pop down to Epsom for the Derby, but with the exception of the Derby, I haven't a single engagement. All my girls have shaken me, I'm frightfully unpopular with the paternal authority, I've overdrawn my allowance to a terrific extent, and I wish I was dead!"

"Probably if you accompany me on this little job your wish will be gratified," said Jimmy unpleasantly, and Ferdie brightened up.

He had theories, too; immediate and startling. Though no student, Ferdie was a reader and an admirer of literature in which mysteries abound, and where the villain of the piece is always the last person to be suspected by the reader. Therefore, Ferdie cast his eyes and his mind around for those who had the best credentials of innocence, and he suspected in turn the prime minister, Stephens, the butler, old Mr. Sennett, and he was on the point of naming Delia when Jimmy fixed him with a steely eye.

"Maggerson's in it, of course," Ferdie prattled on. "Up to his eyebrows. And that old German Johnnie, Schaffer—why don't you send Schaffer a wire and ask him what his nonsensical letter was all about?"

Jimmy stared at him.

" 'Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings,' " he said admiringly. "I never thought of that!"

There was no difficulty in locating Professor Schaffer. The first telephone inquiry Jimmy put through, which was to a friend of Gerald's, discovered the professor's address and a long wire phrased in German was dispatched to Leipzig without delay.

Jimmy was driving home that night, satisfied with the day's work, and had reached the southern end of Westminster Bridge on his way to Blackheath, when a newspaper poster attracted his eye. It was the placard of a labor journal, bitterly antagonistic to the government, but of this Jimmy was not aware. All he saw was the sensational announcement in the biggest type:

WELTMAN GOES MAD.

He pulled up the car with a jerk, jumped out and snatched a newspaper. Lord Harry Weltman! The bête noire of all labor men and the third member of that fatal party at Downing Street! Mad!

## CHAPTER X.

Lord Harry Weltman was a singular example of how a man may achieve success in spite of the most hampering disadvantages. The story of the poor and comparatively humble office boy who starts life with a shilling, and by the application of his genius to his employer's affairs, rises to such heights that he is in a position to make his former master a small allowance to keep him from starvation, is a common enough instance in the biographies of the great. But Lord Harry Weltman had succeeded in spite of the fact that he was the third son of an impecunious duke.

Handicapped by his aristocratic associations, he had outraged the feelings of his lordly family by going into business at eighteen and had built up one of the largest industries in Great Britain. He was the part inventor and the complete exploiter of the "Stael Six," a motor car that had made history. He had gradually drawn into his control other motor-car firms, and as his wealth increased, had bought up huge blocks of land which his discerning eye had marked for future townships.

There was scarcely a great city throughout the kingdom, on the outskirts of which he had not acquired land, and his purchases were justified, for it was in the direction of his holdings that the towns invariably grew.

At forty-eight he was a multimillionaire, the pride and envy of his ducal brother. At fifty-six he was a cabinet minister. He was a hard man, and the mention of his name at a labor meeting was invariably received with groans. His inclusion in the cabinet had been one of the most courageous acts of the prime minister's life, and for a while seriously imperiled his administration.

Weltman was a stickler for his pound of flesh. He ground from his workmen the very last ounce of energy for which he paid them. Rent day for his cottagers was a day of judgment, for inexorable were his demands, and inevitable were the consequences of nonpayment.

He was a just man and justice and popularity can never go hand in hand. In one respect he baffled his detractors. If he demanded his rents on the day and the hour they were due, his tenants were better treated in the matter of repairs and hygienic equipment than were most. And their rents were reasonably low. If he fought strikes, he also fought the disease which is so prevalent in congested industrial areas. His factories were planned for the safety and comfort of his workers; no safeguard which science could suggest or knowledge install had been left unplaced. His mines were the best equipped in the country, and the living conditions of the miners infinitely superior in comfort to their fellows employed in other mines.

The office of Weltman's Consolidated Industries, through which holding company Lord Harry controlled his interests, was in Throgmorten Street; an unpretentious building of three floors. Since his elevation to cabinet rank Lord Harry had paid very few visits to the City, but on the morning of Kendrick's death he descended from his electric brougham at the door and was ushered into the little office which he occupied when he had occasion to give his personal attention to his multifarious investments.

The general secretary, a man who had grown gray in his service, and who had never ceased to be nervous in his presence, met him at the door and led the way to the sanctum. Lord Harry lounged in, took off his gloves leisurely, his eyes all the time upon the neat pile of papers on his desk.

"You have made the summaries, Johnson?" he asked, in his harsh voice.

"Yes, my lord," said the gray Johnson. "I have set all the properties, their rents, et cetera, in one list. This," he pointed to the other pile, "is the set salary sheets summarized as your lordship suggested."

Lord Harry grunted something and sat at the table. "And this is the power of attorney." He took up a sheet of paper. "Bring in two witnesses."

Two scared clerks appeared and when Lord Harry had signed the instrument, they attested their names and were dismissed with a nod.

"Now understand, Johnson, what I am doing. The day after to-morrow is pay day, and every man employed by me is to receive the equivalent of three years' salary, by way of a bonus. If he has not been in my employ three years, then he will receive a bonus equivalent to the salary which he has already drawn. This applies to the office staff. So far as you are concerned, you will draw a check for yourself equivalent to fifteen years' salary."

"Oh, my lord——" began the flustered Johnson.

"Don't interrupt, please," snapped Lord Harry. "I also asked you to prepare an omnibus deed of gift, setting forth the names of all my tenants and their properties. I am transferring my cottages to their present tenants."

"I have it here, my lord." Mr. Johnson found the document and laid it before Lord Harry with a trembling hand. "I hope your lordship won't mind my saying that this extraordinary generosity on your part takes my breath away. Your lordship realizes that this will cost you the greater part of a million and a half."

"I am worth about three times that, am I not?" asked Lord Harry. "The only worry I have in my mind," he said thoughtfully, as he looked out of the window, "is whether I am giving enough. You see, Johnson, I have been working very hard and very uselessly, it seems to me. After a man has sufficient food to eat, and a roof over his head, a car to ride in, and sufficient for his living and pleasure, the additional money is dead money unless it is employed for the general benefit. I am going to give eight thousand people a great deal of happiness, Johnson. If I thought that it would double their happiness by doubling the grant I made them, I should certainly double it."

He brought his head round and met Johnson's bewildered look, and a little smile played at the corners of his thin lips.

"I hope your lordship doesn't mind my asking you, but is this matter to be made public?"

Lord Harry nodded.

"I want our people to know as soon as possible, and I can think of no better way than through the public press. Moreover"—he hesitated—"I may induce other employers to do the same. I think I could, too," he added slowly. "Now let me have the deed of gift."

Again the two clerks were brought in and the document was signed and witnessed. Then Lord Harry got up from his chair and looked round the office.

"I've had some very interesting times in this office, Johnson. I suppose you have, too?"

"Yes, my lord, I've had some very happy times here," admitted Mr. Johnson, and Lord Harry wondered what happiness there could be in servitude.

Two hours later every newspaper throughout the country had the story. The labor journals had only one explanation for this munificence of Lord Harry Weltman, and issued the placard which Jimmy saw.

He read the two columns from start to finish and then tucked the paper away by the side of the seat. Weltman had certainly gone mad, but it was a very pleasant and admirable form which his derangement took.

Delia was standing under the porch when he drove up and she looked worried.

"I've had a note from father saying he will not be home to-night." She laughed, in spite of herself. "It is queer how easily I'm calling the priory 'home.' I almost feel that I lived here all my life."

"To which I could make an admirable rejoinder," said Jimmy.

"Well, don't," she said promptly.

"Where is your father staying?" he asked her, taking her arm and leading her into the garden.

"At our house in Camberwell," she replied. "He says he will stay there when he is not at the office. He has so much work to do that he will not have time to come to Blackheath. Did you talk to the prime minister?"

He nodded.

"And what did he say about that poor gentleman?"

"Kendrick? Nothing. He asked me whether you knew."

"I?" she said in surprise.

"Apparently he knows that you and your father are my guests. I told him that you knew nothing and had seen nothing."

She was silent.

"I'm becoming so confused," she said at last. "I feel that something very dreadful is happening. I know the death of poor Mr. van Roon was terrible in itself, and so was that awful—awful——" her lips trembled and she shivered, but she mastered her distress, and went on steadily. "But they seem to me to be incidents in a bigger and a more catastrophic disaster. Tell me, Mr. Blake"

—she looked him straight in the eyes—"is there any likelihood of war?"

He shook his head.

"So far as I know we are at peace with the world," he said. "I can't imagine there is going to be a war. In many ways I wish there were; it would be something definite."

She nodded. "That is how I feel."

They paced the gravel path in silence. She walked with her hands clasped behind her, her eyes on the ground.

"The plant has nothing to do with the trouble?" she said, apropos of nothing.

"The plant?"

"Don't you remember, Mr. Maggerson brought a plant. I asked father if he had heard anything about a strange plant which Mr. Maggerson brought home from Mexico. He told me that Mr. Maggerson had not brought a specimen to England. It had died on the voyage and was thrown overboard by a steward."

"I always thought that was too fantastic a theory," said Jimmy, but he was rather glad that the mysterious plant had been disposed of.

"But isn't the whole thing fantastic?" she asked. "Isn't it fantastic that a man like your cousin, who hadn't a single enemy in the world, should be butchered almost within sight of your house? Isn't it fantastic that Mr. Kendrick, who was a deeply religious man, should have taken his own life?"

Jimmy could not answer this. The whole thing was maddening. There was no thread which led anywhere.

"Isn't it fantastic that my father should be brought into this matter?" she added.

"That isn't fantastic at all," said Jimmy quietly. "Your father happens to be the foreman compositor of a firm of government printers. The fact that they also print scientific work is a coincidence. It is natural, therefore, that he should be in the business, if not of it. No, Delia, even Ferdie Ponter doesn't think that that is fantastic."

She looked at him quickly.

"Ponter? That is the name of the house for whom father works. You know the son, don't you?"

Jimmy told her of his conversation with Ferdie at the club.

"He isn't a bad fellow; really he's quite a plucky kid. I must have somebody with me in this."

She stopped dead and looked at him in perplexity.

"You must have somebody with you?" she repeated slowly. "Why? What are you doing?"

"I'm going to find who killed Gerald van Roon and why Kendrick shot himself. I'm going to discover the mystery of the——" He stopped himself in time. He was on the point of revealing all he knew about the Warden's Lodge.

"The mystery of what?"

"One or two minor mysteries," he said, carelessly. "They've all got to be cleared up. I can foresee, Delia, that I shall come through this crisis a very high-class intelligence officer."

"Suppose you don't come through?" She asked the question quietly.

The idea had never occurred to Jimmy before.

"Do you imagine that people who did not hesitate to kill your cousin, and who drove a cabinet minister to suicide, would think twice before they removed you?"

Jimmy scratched his nose.

"You're full of cheerful thoughts this evening, Delia. Anyway, Ferdie is coming over to sleep to-night," he said, to change the subject. "I've asked him to come in time for dinner. He plays bezique, so we shall be able to amuse ourselves after you have retired."

"I'm not going to bed very early, to-night," she said calmly, "and it will be much easier to tell me what are your plans, than to devise methods for getting rid of me."

But Jimmy did not accept the invitation.

Ferdie came roaring up the drive in his racing Italia just before dinner, and naturally he brought half a dozen new theories, all of which had to be discussed in the girl's absence. Ferdie was frankly relieved when he discovered that the daughter of his father's foreman was good looking.

"Why, my dear Jimmy," he said reproachfully, "she's pretty."

"Did I say she wasn't?" growled Jimmy. "Now, suppose we discuss something else. Have you brought the things I asked you to get?"

"They're in the car," said Ferdie. "Rope with a large hook, telescopic ladder, two perfectly good electric torches. Shall I bring 'em in?"

"Don't be a fool," said Jimmy violently. "Let me impress upon you, before we go any farther, Ferdie, that this job is dangerous."

"So I gathered," said the complacent youth. "In fact, I've always understood that burglary was the most unhealthy profession a chap could follow."

"This isn't burglary," insisted Jimmy.

"It's very much like it," said Ferdie, "but that doesn't worry me. I'll be over the wall in a jiffy——"

"You'll not go over the wall at all," said Jimmy, emphatically. "I am going over; your job is to keep watch and stow away the ladder so that some cycling policeman doesn't discover it, and stand by in case of accidents."

"What do you expect to find in the Warden's Lodge?"

"If I had the slightest idea of what I expected, I shouldn't probably attempt to investigate," said Jimmy.

"Which is jolly cryptic," nodded Ferdinand and went on to apologize. "Cryptic is a word which I learned last week, old thing; I hope you don't mind my trying it on you."

Jimmy looked at his watch.

"There is time to go to the garage and transfer those things to my car, which is a little more noiseless than yours. Have you any arms?"

"And legs, old bird," said Ferdie promptly, "a well-balanced head and a pair of reasonable feet."

"Firearms, you goop!" snarled Jimmy.

But these Ferdie had not brought.

"You needn't worry," said Jimmy. "I've a couple of automatics upstairs, and there's plenty of ammunition in the gun room."

"Do you really anticipate bloodshed?" asked Ferdie hopefully. "I've got a couple of old Mills bombs at home that I brought back from France."

"And you can keep them at home," said Jimmy. "I hope there's going to be no shooting, which means that I hope nobody is going to shoot me. If I meet any person who shows the slightest inclination to bring my agreeable life to an end, there'll be a sharp exchange of repartee."

"Good for you," said Ferdie, "and I'll dash over the wall and bring your body back, and——"

At that moment the door opened and Delia came hurriedly into the study.

"What is wrong?" asked Jimmy quickly.

"Will you come please, Mr. Blake?"

He joined her in the passage. "Has anything happened?"



"I saw Tom Elmers—you remember the man?"

"Saw him; where?"

"He was in the garden," said the girl. "I saw him going into the shrubbery."

It was nearly dark, but there was light enough to make a search without the aid of lanterns.

"He looked awful," she told him. "I don't think you had better go."

"Did he see you?"

She nodded. "He spoke to me—he—he asked the strangest questions—what had happened to Mr. Maggerson, and——" She covered her face with her hands and shuddered. "He looked dreadful—dreadful," she whispered. "Please don't go, Mr. Blake."

But Jimmy was halfway across the garden, heading for the shrubbery. He had no weapons but his hands, and it never occurred to him that he would need them. The first intimation of danger came with a shrill swish from behind him and he leaped forward into a laurel bush. The stick just missed him, and he heard a thud as it struck the ground, and a crack as it broke. Then he turned to grapple with his attacker. In the half light he would not have recognized the man, for Elmers' face was red and more bloated, and the hair about his chin and mouth was long and unkempt. Jim warded the blow the man aimed at him and then gripped him, but only for a second. Jimmy was prepared for the blow but not for the kick that followed. The man's boot struck his shin, and he released his hold; in that moment his assailant had wriggled out of his grip and flown along the path. By the time Jimmy limped up, he was astride the wall.

"I'll get her and I'll get Joe, too! You tell her that! I know all about Joe. I know all about Maggerson!" he yelled.

"You'll know all about me, if you come down here, you swine!" said Jimmy between his teeth, and then stooping quickly, he picked up a stone and flung it, and Mr. Elmers' interest in the Sennett family would have suffered a total eclipse if he had not, with a lightning wriggle, dropped to the other side of the wall.

## CHAPTER XI.

Jimmy went back to the house. Delia's concern and sorrow, Delia's swift flight for hot water and cotton wool and iodine, and Delia's almost motherly treatment of a sore shin made Tom Elmers a respectable member of society and a daily encounter with him something to be looked forward to.

"It might have broken a bone," said the girl in a hushed voice. "You ought to go straight to bed, Mr. Blake."

Jimmy exchanged glances with Ferdie.

"I'm sorry I can't go to bed," said Jimmy meekly, "I have an important board meeting to-night—not a board meeting—I mean a——"

"A little supper party," suggested Ferdie helpfully.

She looked grave.

"Are you going on this—adventure?" she asked.

"It is not so much an adventure, Miss Sennett," interrupted Ferdie. "It's a little look round. Don't you be worried about him. I'll bring him back safe and sound."

"Miss Sennett isn't worried about me," said Jim coldly. "She is no more interested in my coming back safe and sound than she is about you."

Ferdie's young face went blank with astonishment.

"Ain't you engaged?" he asked in surprise, and that was his crowning indiscretion of the evening.

"But my dear old thing, you call her by her Christian name." This in the privacy of the study five minutes later. "I thought she was a great friend of yours, and really the Florence Nightingale way she bandaged your hairy old leg——"

"You're an ass, Ferdie," wailed Jimmy. "Don't you see how unfortunate your remark was? You've made her feel very uncomfortable."

"Suppose I go and apologize to her?"

"Suppose you don't," said Jimmy shortly.

The soreness to his shin remained, but by practice he found that it did not impede his power of locomotion, though it might conceivably affect him when he came to climbing. He was determined to make his attempt that night, and it seemed that the girl was equally determined that he should not. He dropped all pretense of having an engagement and went about the task of sitting her out. By half past twelve everybody was yawning except Delia, who was as cool and as fresh as though she had wakened from a long and dreamless sleep.

"It is late, I shall go to bed," said Jimmy desperately at last, and made a significant sign to his fellow conspirator.

"I think that is a very excellent idea, Mr. Blake," said Delia calmly. "You don't know how safe I feel here with you and Mr. Ponter in the house. I think if I woke up in the night and heard your car going off I should faint from sheer terror."

"Oh, yes," said Jimmy uncomfortably. "Then, you see, we've no intention of going out, have we, Ferdie?"

"None whatever," said Mr. Ponter glibly.

When Jimmy woke up the next morning with his leg so stiff that he could hardly bear his weight upon it, he was grateful that the girl had had her way. He was not feeling at all easy about Tom Elmers. The man was in the neighborhood, and the knowledge of this fact had been a stronger argument for not leaving Delia alone than any she had offered. He did not for one moment imagine that she would fall into a panic if he left her alone in the house, for "alone" was a term which implied in this case the protection of two maidservants, a valet, and the butler.

He hobbled down to breakfast late. Ferdie, who had preceded him by only a few minutes, cast a reproachful glance in his direction.

"Jimmy, you're going to be late for church," he said.

"For church?" said Jimmy in amazement. "Is it Sunday?"

"Of course it's Sunday." Delia looked at him reprovingly as she filled his cup. "And Mr. Ponter has very kindly offered to take me to church."

"How sweet of Mr. Ponter!" said Jimmy savagely. "Good Lord, Sunday!"

"Don't you ever go to church?" she asked severely.

"Frequently."

"Well, you're coming this morning, of course?" she said. "The Bishop of Fleet is preaching at St. Gregory's."

Jimmy looked at her. "The bishop of what?"

"The Bishop of Fleet."

The name vividly recalled the luncheon party at Downing Street.

"He was one of the fellows at the prime minister's party," explained Jimmy. "What the dickens is he doing so far out of his diocese? What is the matter, Ferdie?"

Mr. Ferdinand Ponter was frowning.

"The Bishop of Fleet? That's old Stillman! He was the head of my school. 'Squirrel' we called him. Good Lord, I can't go and hear him spout theology. The mere mention of his name makes a cold shiver go down my spine."

"He was head, was he?" said Jimmy interested. "Was he strong on the classical side?"

Ferdie shook his head. "He was the most horribly modern person you could meet," he said. "Specialized in bugs and isms; he was a terror to the sixth form—he took us in science."

"That accounts for his acquaintance with Maggerson and the prime minister," nodded Jimmy. "I'd like to hear this gentleman."

"He'll terrify you," warned Ferdie.

"Not he!" said Jimmy confidently. "There isn't an ex-head master in the world, bar one, that could put fear into my brave heart."

"This is the one *I* bar," said Ferdie, "but I'll go."

He looked at Delia and nodded.

Jimmy was a public-school boy, which meant that he attended chapel regularly every day of his life for years and years, until he left the university, when he went to church no more, regarding religious observances as part of a very painful discipline. But he had never had the peculiarly sweet experience of sitting elbow to elbow with a neat, tailored figure, or of listening to her sweet voice singing the responses; nor had he felt the spiritual uplift which can only come to a man when he sees the woman he loves at prayers. He settled back in his pew as a heavy figure climbed slowly to the pulpit. It was the cleric he had seen at No. 10 Downing Street; less jovial; melancholy, rather; for with his face in repose the bishop's lips drooped.

He gave out a text in a voice so low that Jimmy could not hear it and consulted the girl in a whisper. She shook her head.

There was nothing in the sermon that was in any way striking. It was a carefully reasoned, beautifully phrased appeal for human charity and loving-kindness, and it was not until the end was approaching and when the congregation had braced its feet to rise for the benediction, that he leaned over the edge of the pulpit and spoke in a new and a tremulous voice.

What he was saying, Jimmy could not gather. It was a wild appeal for the unity of man with man, for charity in all dealings, for love in all relationships, for the casting out of all hate and prejudices, and as he progressed his words grew wilder, his sentences more involved. Once he stopped for a word, stammered and went on; his voice grew thinner and shriller until it was a wail. The congregation stirred uneasily; people were looking from the bishop to one another, then to the consternation of everybody this big, healthy man broke down utterly, and laying his head upon his arms, sobbed like a child.

Jimmy was on his feet. It was a note he had heard before, that thin tone of fear. Then his face went white. He was hardly conscious of the fact that the girl's hand was in his and that she was pulling at him.

"Sit down, sit down!"

He heard her faintly, and fell back heavily in the pew.

He felt dulled, numbed, incapable of receiving any further impression. He stirred as the churchwardens gathered about the pulpit in the deathly and painful silence broken only by the bishop's sobs, and then the organ thundered out the national anthem and the tension was broken. They joined the throng in the aisle, and Delia breathed a sigh of relief when they reached the open air.

## CHAPTER XII.

### BY THE KING A PROCLAMATION.

WHEREAS it is desirable that members of one family should from time to time come together for the reëstablishment of those bonds of affection and service which are the bases on which the fabric of nationality is erected and

WHEREAS many citizens of this realm, by reason of their pecuniary circumstances and the incidence of their toil are unable to forgather periodically with their relatives, and

WHEREAS it is desirable that opportunity should be given for the stimulation of the amenities of family life

Now, therefore I, John Henry Felbent, Earl of Morland and Tynewood, President of His Majesty's Honorable Privy Council, declare that the fifteenth and sixteenth days of May shall be celebrated as a public holiday and shall be known and styled, "The Days of Uniting." And it is declared that on the fifteenth day of May, free transportation shall be given over the railway systems of this realm and all other public conveyances and transportation services. And that on the sixteenth day of May all transportation and labor of all kinds shall cease for a period of twenty-four hours.

Jimmy read the announcement in bed. "The Days of Uniting!" He dressed, and came down to find Ferdie and Delia had read the news and were speculating upon its significance.

"What I want to know is this," said Ferdie querulously. "Does this mean I've got to call on my Aunt Rachel or must Aunt Rachel call on me? It looks to me like a plot to get me to one of her beastly dinners at Hindhead."

Delia looked up as Jimmy came in and nodded. He had gone to bed early the previous night, abandoning his contemplated search of the Warden's House, all the more readily because there was a bright moon which made the night wholly unsuitable for his purpose.

"I can't understand it a little bit," he said. "Everything seems to have grown out of that fatal luncheon. Do you realize that of the dozen people who were there, two are dead, one is broken, another has performed the eccentric feat of giving away his money, Maggerson has disappeared——"

"Who is broken? You mean the bishop?" asked Delia.

Jimmy nodded.

"That's where you're mistaken, old bean," said Ferdinand triumphantly. "I met the Squirrel this morning. He was bicycling, and the old gentleman recognized me, and was as hearty and as cheerful as you could wish!"

"Did he say anything about his breakdown yesterday?"

"Yes, he even had the audacity to talk about overwork," said Ferdie. "That fellow has a memory like a cash register! He recalled both whackings he gave me—devilish bad taste, I think."

"Did he whack you?" asked Jimmy with a faint smile. "My respect for him increases. And what were you doing up this morning so early, anyway?" asked Jimmy, pushing aside his egg.

Ferdie smiled triumphantly. "Making a reconnoissance. Also chasing a gentleman I saw in the garden at daybreak."

The girl turned her startled face to his. "You never told me about that."

"The fact is, Miss Delia, I suffer from overwhelming modesty," he confessed. "I didn't intend telling you. A terrible ruffian he was, too. I shouldn't have heard him, but my window looks out on to the leads, and just as it was getting light I heard somebody working away at my window—and he was the clumsiest burglar I have ever heard about. I got up, and there was the gentleman trying to push up the bottom sash with the aid of a pocketknife. The moment he saw me he bolted, slipped down to the ground, and was halfway across the garden before I could get going. I dressed myself more or less sketchily, and went to look for him."

"What sort of a man was he?"

"About your height, Jimmy. Fairly young, with vile whiskers and a boozy face."

Jimmy and Delia exchanged glances. They knew it was the half-mad Elmers. After breakfast Jimmy led his friend to the study.

"If you have any exciting adventures ashore or afloat, that you would care to relate, I should be pleased if you would keep them for my private ear," he said unkindly. "I do not wish Miss Sennett to be alarmed."

"I'm dreadfully sorry, Jimmy," said the penitent Ferdie. "I really didn't intend talking at all. Who is he, anyway?"

"He was recently an employee of your papa," said Jimmy, and Ferdie saw light.

"Is that the fellow who messed about with old Van Roon's type?"

Jimmy nodded. "To-night we'll have a look at the Warden's Lodge, Ferdie," he said; "but I must go alone. I can't leave the girl by herself. This Elmers person is obviously half mad and I am a little scared for her sake. In fact, I am beginning to think that Blackheath is a pretty unhealthy neighborhood."

"I've always told you so," said the complacent Ferdie. "Give me jolly old Cavendish Square—that's quite rural enough for me."

Before they put their plan into operation that night, Jimmy told the girl frankly just what he intended doing.

"The Warden's Lodge?" she said in surprise. "Is that the house behind the wall?"

"That is the place," said Jimmy.

"But surely you do not connect the death of Mr. van Roon, or the suicide of Mr. Kendrick with the lodge?"

He nodded.

"But how?"

"That's just the information I can't give you," he said. "I tell you I'm as uncertain and doubtful about this aspect of the mystery as I am about the whole business. I shall leave Ferdie with you and make my attempt alone."

"You'll do nothing of the sort," she said quietly. "I shall not go to bed, and you can tell your manservants to be about until you return." She bit her lip thoughtfully. "I wish I could get into touch with father."

"You haven't heard from him?"

She shook her head. "I think he must be engaged on very important work—oh, of course," she said suddenly. "He printed the proclamation!"

"The Days of Uniting!" said Jimmy in surprise. "Of course, they would have to print posters."

"They are stuck up all over the town," said Ferdie. "I saw one pasted on the wall of Greenwich Park and two on each side of the gates."

"That is it," said the girl, relieved. "So it wasn't so mysterious after all. I expect we shall see him to-day."

But the night did not bring old Sennett, nor any word from him.

Though Jimmy had his doubts as to the wisdom of leaving her, she insisted on his taking Ferdinand and at half past eleven the big Rolls slipped silently from the drive and, taking a circuitous route, came slowly along the road by the park and stopped near the Warden's Lodge. It was a night suitable for their purpose, for the weather had broken again and rain was falling drearily.

Ferdie carried the collapsible ladder and the rope from the body of the car, and laid it on the grass some distance from the road, where it would be free from the observation of passing travelers. The difficulty was the disposal of the car. That difficulty was ended by driving on to the heath and leaving it, trusting to luck that nobody strayed in that direction, and, scenting a mystery in the abandoned car, communicated with the police.

Both men were in dark raincoats, and they were very necessary, though, as it proved, somewhat inadequate. They had not been waiting an hour before Jimmy was uncomfortably wet.

About twenty minutes past twelve the light of a car appeared, stopped at the usual distance, and after a while turned.

"Here is the first of the conspirators," said Jimmy. "They're as regular as the German artillery!"

It was the man with a stick who came first that night, walking slowly, and he turned into the house only a little ahead of the second man, whose car appeared immediately after the first had turned.

"Here's number three, the cyclist," whispered Jimmy. "He's going to burn his light to-night. No, he isn't; he's put it out."

The cyclist came noiselessly from the murk and followed his two companions.

"Now for the fourth," said Jimmy, but he waited in vain. The fourth man did not appear.

The explanation came to Jimmy with a flash, and took his breath away.

"Ferdie!" he whispered, "there will be no fourth to-night."

"Why not?" asked Ferdie.

"Because he's dead," said Jimmy. "The fourth man was Stope-Kendrick!"

"You're wrong, my lad," hissed Ferdie. "There he is! Get down!"

They crouched, for the new man was walking on the grass, on their side of the road. His behavior was peculiar. He did not go through the gate, although he went up to it, and they heard a faint squeak as he tried the handle.

"Can you see him?" whispered Ferdie.

Jimmy nodded.

"Perhaps he's forgotten the key," whispered Ferdie again, but Jimmy pressed his arm to enjoin silence.

They heard the swish of something being thrown. What was happening they could not see. Only occasionally did Jimmy detect the bulk of the black figure against a background almost as dark. Then he focused his night glasses. The figure seemed taller than it did before, and a second later was even taller; the newcomer was climbing the wall! They heard the squeak of the iron chevaux-de-frise as it turned in its socket, and saw the mystery man's head disappear into the greater darkness of the background above the wall. There was no sky line for them. Behind were the chestnut trees, and what was happening they could only conjecture.

They waited a few minutes, and then they heard a soft thud.

"He has got to the other side," whispered Ferdie excitedly and, standing up, they stepped gingerly across the road toward the wall. A rope was hanging from the iron spikes at the top.

"That's queer," said Jimmy. "Perhaps he did forget his key, but if he'd forgotten his key, he wouldn't have remembered the rope."

Jimmy was in a dilemma. If the man who went over was one of the four, he might follow, taking the risks he had anticipated. If, on the other hand, the man was an interloper, some stray burglar who, for reasons best known to himself, was paying the lodge a visit, the chance of detection was doubled.

"We'll wait for an hour," he said. "If nothing happens then, we'll go over."

At the end of half an hour Ferdie clutched his arm.

"Did you hear that?" he demanded under his breath.

It was a crash of glass they had heard, then:

"Joe! If it's you, come and fight, you old devil!"

The words were not spoken in anything higher than a conversational tone and came, apparently, from the other side of the wall and near at hand.

"Elmers," gasped Jimmy. "Listen, he is coming this way."

They heard feet in the garden, and then a shot broke through the silence of the night. There was no other sound.

"What do you think is happening?" whispered Ferdie.

"Maybe they're reading the proclamation to him," said Jimmy grimly. They waited another half an hour, and then: "I'm going over," he said.

The collapsible ladder was a simple affair, and in half a minute they had laid the top rung against the spikes and Jimmy had mounted. He could see nothing. There was no light visible, nor, peering down, could he discover a secure place to drop. He negotiated the spikes and discovered they were not as formidable as they appeared from the roadway. They served their purpose, too, for he hooked the end of the rope he carried to one of the rusty iron supports, and let himself slide down on the other side of the wall.

He came to earth on a heap of garden refuse, the same that probably had broken the fall of Tom Elmers, if Tom Elmers it was. The garden was choked with laurel bushes, but his electric lamp showed him a weed-grown path and this he followed.

Though the house was not more than fifty feet from the road, it was a considerable time before he sighted it. It was in darkness, and there was no sign of life. He walked round to the back, and here he was rewarded. A light was showing from a small window, but it was not this which brought him to a standstill holding his breath.

At the back of the house there was a space clear of trees. Here, on what appeared to be a lawn, three or four men were working. It was when he discovered the nature of their labor, that his heart came into his mouth. They were digging a hole. Presently the man who was in the hole stopped and climbed wearily forth, and then the three lifted something that was on the ground, and placed it in the earth. It was the body of a man. Jimmy had no doubts as to whose body it was. He moved closer, lying flat on the grass, and worming his way forward. Somebody was talking in a deep, emotional voice, and the curious intonation puzzled him, until he realized that the speaker was reading the burial service!

Jimmy was incapable of further movement. He could only lie staring at the blurred figures which loomed through the rain, standing over the grave of the man they had killed. He heard the chik-chik of earth against steel spades. They were filling in the hole.

Tom Elmers was dead! Who had shot him? Was it Sennett? He thought he had recognized the bowed figure of old Joe climbing out of the grave, but the light was bad and so uncertain that he could not be sure. After a while their labors were finished and they moved in the direction of the house and disappeared. Jimmy waited for a long time before he dared move, and then, pulling off his boots and tying the laces together so that he could sling them round his neck, he stepped cautiously toward the lighted window.

It must have been half an hour after the burial before he maneuvered himself so that he could look into the room without fear of detection. The light, he found afterward, came from a tin kerosene lamp, which had a reflector, and it was not until the lamp was turned, so that no direct light was shining toward the window, that he raised his head and looked.

There were five men in the room. Maggerson he recognized at once. He was sitting at a table covered with papers and he was writing for dear life. Opposite to him was a stranger, whom Jimmy did not remember having seen before—a tall, gray-bearded man. He was also writing with a pencil, apparently taking no notice of his fellow scribe. Another man was sweeping the room. A cigar was clenched between his teeth, and he was sweeping with long, slow, methodical strokes. He turned his head, and Jimmy nearly swooned. It was the prime minister of England! And the man who was holding the dust pan was Joe Sennett.

That was not the last of his surprises. A small fire was burning in an old-fashioned grate. The fifth person was bending over the fire frying bacon. The aroma of it came to Jimmy as he stood. Here, then, was a fitting companion to the picture of the prime minister of England sweeping a floor; for the cook was the Lord Bishop of Fleet.

Jimmy gazed fascinated.

Presently the bacon was done, and the bishop, who wore his apron and his gaiters—Jimmy noticed that his boots were wet and muddy—took up a coffeepot and filled the cups on the sideboard, and then faintly the watcher heard him say:

"This man's death must be registered."

"Registered!" said the prime minister's voice in the deepest scorn. "My dear Frederick, don't be absurd!"

Jimmy pulled up the rope after him and came down the ladder slowly.

"What did you see?" whispered Ferdie, agog with excitement.

"Nothing," said Jimmy. "Get the car while I fold this ladder, Ferdie."

"But you must have seen something," urged Ferdie as the car was making its noiseless way across the heath.

"Nothing, except—Elmers is dead."

"I thought so," Ferdie nodded. "And what else did you discover?"

"What sort of a mind must a man have," asked Jimmy slowly, "to read the burial service over a man he has helped murder, and to follow that performance by frying bacon?"

Ferdie looked at him in alarm.

"Don't say you have gone off your jolly old head!" he said anxiously.

"No, I haven't gone off my jolly old head," replied Jimmy, rousing himself; "and for Heaven's sake, don't give Miss Sennett the impression that I have. Now remember, Ferdie Ponter," he said as he stopped the car just outside the house, "you're not to say anything about the shot or Elmers!"

"The fellow who tried to break in last night?"

Jimmy nodded.

"Oh, well," said Ferdie, relieved, "he ain't very important, is he?"

Delia had arranged to wait up for them in the study and her look of relief when they appeared was especially gratifying to Jimmy.

"Did you make any discovery?" was the first question she asked.

"None," said Jimmy.

And then she looked at his feet.

"Where are your boots?" she asked in surprise, and Jimmy's jaw dropped. He had left his boots outside the window of the Warden's Lodge.

Only for a second did he gape, and then the humor of the situation overcame him and he laughed hysterically.

"I wonder if they'll fry bacon after my funeral?" he said, and Ferdinand looked at the girl and tapped his forehead significantly.

## CHAPTER XIII.

That morning Tom Elmers had received an urgent summons from his employer.

Elmers had recently come to occupy a dirty little room in a back street of Greenwich, and his landlady found some difficulty in waking him, for Tom Elmers had spent the night before in a Greenwich bar and the evening had finished with a fight. He sat up with a groan, for his head was sore and whizzy, and took the letter from the landlady's hands.

"It came by messenger boy an hour ago, and I've been trying to wake you ever since, Mr. Elmers."

"All right," growled the young man.

The writing danced before his eyes, but presently he deciphered it and began to dress.

He stopped on his way to the rendezvous, to visit a barber, and for all the heaviness in his eyes and the puffiness of his skin, he was more presentable than Mr. Palythorpe had seen him.

"That's better," said that eminent journalist, leaning back in his chair. The interview took place in Palythorpe's comfortable flat. "You've been boozing, of course, but you're not so bad as I've seen you. Help yourself to a drink."

Mr. Elmers obeyed.

"And remember that drink has killed more men than earthquakes," said Palythorpe in his best oracular manner. "Have you any news for me?"

Tom shook his head, and was immediately sorry that he had committed so reckless an indiscretion.

"You haven't been to Blake's place again, have you?" asked Palythorpe warningly.

"No, I haven't," was the snarling reply. "You'll get nothing there, I tell you——"

"I know that, now," Mr. Palythorpe interrupted him. "I think I've got the whole story in my two hands. And, what's more, I got it by accident."

It was hardly an accident, for in the very heart of the premier's household was a maid who had been from time to time a very useful informant. She was perhaps the best paid housemaid in London at that period, for Palythorpe could be generous.

"I didn't want to tell you much about this, but unfortunately I must," Palythorpe went on. "I have discovered that Chapelle is spending his nights away from home. Now, that can mean only one thing." He wagged his fat forefinger solemnly at Tom. "He is leading a double life. I never expected this sort of news for a minute, even in my most optimistic moments; but it only shows that the higher they get the worse they are. It's deplorable," he added virtuously.

"Where does he go?" asked Tom. "Do you want me to find out?"

Mr. Palythorpe's face creased in a smile of amusement.

"I should have to wait a pretty long time before you could find anything out," he sneered. "No, I know where he goes—I followed him last night in a taxi. He goes to Blackheath, to a little government cottage which is practically inside Greenwich Park. There is something fishy going on there, and it is your job to find out what!"

"That won't be difficult!" said Tom after a pause. "If he goes there, I can ask the servants——"

"You fool!" interrupted the other contemptuously. "Do you think, if it was a question of asking servants, that I should employ a bungler like you to stick your nose inside the house? Or do you think that the servants are sitting on the top of the wall waiting to be questioned? There are no servants, and, if there were, you wouldn't be able to get at them. The house is supposed to be deserted. If the prime minister goes there, and, of course, I did not hint to the fellow who gave me the information that I dreamed of such a thing—then nobody guesses as much. What I want you to do, Tom, is to get inside that place, and it is not going to be easy. Can you climb?"

It was Mr. Elmers' one accomplishment, that he could climb like a cat, and he stated the fact immodestly.

"That'll be all right," nodded Mr. Palythorpe. "There are some iron spikes on the top of the wall, and you could easily get a rope over them. I want you to get into the grounds and have a good look at the place. If there's a chance of sneaking into the lodge, and you can stay there any time without anybody knowing you're on the premises, so much the better."

"And what am I to do when I'm there?" asked Tom resentfully. The prospect of spending several days in an empty house did not appeal to him.

"You'll collect anything you can find that'll help me expose Chapelle," said Mr. Palythorpe emphatically; "letters and papers particularly, and, if a woman is there, any letters of hers. Don't forget, letters are the things I want."

Tom had made a survey of the house in the daylight, a proceeding he relished less than the night visit he had planned. Jimmy Blake lived uncomfortably close to the lodge, and Jimmy was the last man in the world he wished to meet. That night he waited his opportunity to make an entrance.

He was surprised that there were so many people on the road. He did not know that their destination, too, was the Warden's Lodge, and when he came up to the place, walking—this he did not know—within a few feet of two interested watchers, he was under the impression that the men who had passed him had gone on.

It took him a very little time to get a grip on the spikes above, but at last his rope caught and held. He had not overstated his claim when he said he could climb like a cat, and he was over the wall in less than a minute. His first act when he reached the other side was to unfasten the rope he carried round his waist, which he intended using in case there were other walls to surmount.

He remembered, cursing his carelessness, that he had left the rope he had employed to scale the wall hanging down on the far side, and decided to leave the second rope on the ground in readiness for a quick climb.

Very cautiously he pushed through the bushes and came to the house, as Jimmy had done, near its front entrance. He tried a window, but it was fastened. Then he peered up at the roof. It was too dark to make any attempt that way, and he went round to the south side of the house and tried another window. This time he was more successful, the window went up squeakily and, after waiting to learn if the noise had been heard, he slipped into the room and reached the passage.

He heard a voice, and he almost cried out in his astonishment. It was the voice of Joe Sennett! Then there was a movement in a room at the other end of the passage, and Tom Elmers went quickly and noiselessly up the stairs.

The upper part of the house was in darkness. He was on the point of striking a match when he heard a step in the hall below. He groped along the wall and found a door, opened it, and entered the room, closing the door quietly behind him. It was a small room with a flight of steep steps which led to a trapdoor in the discolored ceiling. Tom blew out the match he had lit, mounted the steps gingerly and pushed up the trap. It opened, and he stepped out on to a flat roof, easing down the heavy wooden cover behind him so that it made no noise. Here he waited five minutes, his ear pressed to the trapdoor, and he thought he detected the sound of feet, a furtive shuffling sound that ceased suddenly.

Several minutes passed without any further interruption. They must have gone down to the lower floor again, he thought, and, cautiously raising the trap, he descended into the cistern room. His foot had hardly touched the floor when somebody gripped him. For a second they struggled, and then, hitting out wildly, Tom dropped his assailant. The struggle could not have been heard from below, for when he came out on to the landing, there was no sound. He heard the man behind him struggling to his feet, and in two seconds he had reached the hall below, had crossed the room, and was through the window into the grounds.

He ran for the wall where he had left the rope and flung it up; at the second attempt the loop caught on the spikes and tightened. Tom Elmers took one grip of the rope and grinned. He had been instructed by his employer to devote his whole attention, and his every thought to the service which was demanded of him, but in that moment he forgot Mr. Palythorpe and remembered only that somewhere in the darkness an old man whom he hated was searching for him.

"Joe!" he mocked. "If it's you, come and fight, you old devil!"

There was a silence, a crash of glass, a running of feet toward him.

He pulled on the rope, but the bar at the top of the wall slipped round and the rope fell at his feet. The running man was nearer, and then out of the darkness leaped a thin pencil of brilliant light, and the silence was broken by the crack of a pistol.

Mr. Palythorpe waited in vain for the return of his lieutenant that night, and finally went to bed.

"He must have got into the house," thought the blackmailer, and with this comforting assurance he went to sleep.

## CHAPTER XIV.

"Everybody's taking this 'Days of Uniting' frightfully seriously. I've had a letter from my governor ordering me to report on the fifteenth inst."

"Which is the day after to-morrow."

"I looked up the calendar, and you're right, Jimmy. According to the governor, people think it's a very good idea."

"Who wouldn't, with free railway traveling chucked in?" said Jimmy in disgust.

The girl came out on to the lawn at that minute with a newspaper in her hand.

"Mr. Blake, have you seen this?" she asked.

"What is it?" asked Jimmy. "Something about the 'Days of Uniting?' "

"No, it is an article in the *Post-Herald*, and Stephens says that the police are going round to all the newspaper shops confiscating the paper because of that paragraph."

Jimmy almost snatched the newspaper from Delia's hand. She had marked the place with blue pencil, and he read:

### MYSTERIOUS ARRESTS.

WHAT IS THE NEW GOVERNMENT SCARE?

Three days ago the police, acting on orders from Whitehall, made throughout the country a number of arrests, which can only be described as mysterious. The people who were taken into custody and immediately hurried off to some unknown prison or camp, since they have not been brought up before the magistrates of the districts in which they live, are quite inoffensive, and in some cases, eminent persons whose lives are chiefly distinguished by their absolute blamelessness.

Among the arrests are those of Professor Mortlake, of Durham University, Sir John Gilgin, the Vicar of Troyston, and scores of other gentlemen who have no strong political views and who certainly are not criminals. What makes this occurrence so extraordinary, is the news which has just come to hand, that the convicts in Dartmoor Prison have been all released on special license, apparently to make room for the people who have been arrested in this wholesale fashion.

The release of the Dartmoor convicts is understandable in view of the government's fantastic "Days of Uniting." To be consistent they must extend the same opportunities for family reunion to the criminal classes, which they extend to those who are law-abiding citizens. The other arrests are beyond explanation.

"I don't know any of the people who have been taken," said Jimmy, shaking his head. "It is rather a rum proceeding."

The afternoon papers carried an authoritative statement issued by the government, that the arrests were made for political purposes, and that the prisoners would be released on the eve of the "Days of Uniting" and returned to their homes in time for the festival. Jimmy was not interested in this particular eccentricity of government; he was too concerned, too worried, by the insoluble mystery which his visit to the Warden's Lodge had set him.

He was in town most of the day, pursuing independent inquiries.

The girl did not know her father was living so close at hand, and he did not enlighten her upon the subject. No reply had come to his wire to Schaffer, and this puzzled him. A call on one of Gerald's old friends, however, assured him that he had sent the message to the right address.

"I am not quite sure," said the gray-bearded biologist to whom he addressed his inquiry, "but I have a notion that Schaffer is in Switzerland. I read the report of a lecture he delivered there a week ago. He may still be there."

But Jimmy's chief center of inquisitorial activities was in the House of Commons. Ordinarily he did not take a very great interest in the fluctuation of English politics, and the page in the newspapers containing the Parliamentary reports was one he never read in any circumstances. But that morning he had looked up a newspaper file to discover what other occupation the premier had than sweeping floors. The first thing that struck him was that the answers to questions which are supposed to be given by the ministers responsible for the various departments, had been dealt with by undersecretaries.

"The prime minister hasn't been in the House for over a week," said a member. "We're rather sore about it, because not only he, but Harry Weltman has been absent, and they did not even turn up the other night to lead the debate on the new police bill. There is going to be a row, too, about these arrests, and the suppression of the *Post-Herald.*"

"Who were the people who were arrested?" asked Jimmy.

"Oh, small fry," said the member indifferently. "Somebody was telling me they were mostly amateur scientists, but of that I have no information. The release of the criminals from prison is, of course, preposterous."

"Does it extend to the county prisons?" asked Jimmy.

The member nodded.

"I don't know what the dickens is happening to this country," he said irritably. "For some reason or other Chapelle has made himself a sort of dictator, and has introduced all kinds of regulations without the consent of Parliament. Do you know that foreign newspapers are not admitted into this country?"

Jimmy did not know.

"It is a fact. What is more, there's a tremendously severe censorship on newspaper telegrams. It is almost as though we were at war all over again."

The censorship might have delayed Schaffer's answer, thought Jimmy, as he drove back to Blackheath. What was the meaning of it all? Had the prime minister gone mad? And what part was Maggerson playing? Maggerson, the unshaven, foul-looking Maggerson, whom he had seen huddled up over a table in the Warden's Lodge, writing for dear life. And who was the bearded man opposite to him? He was another factor, and the center of another mystery. He was not a member of the cabinet. Jimmy had taken the trouble to go to the office of an illustrated newspaper which, he remembered, had published some time before a portrait not only of the ministers, but of their undersecretaries.

The face of the bearded man was not there; and yet he had seen it somewhere. That he was a public man of some sort Jimmy was certain. He had a queer feeling that, if he could discover the identity of the bearded writer, the inexplicable would be made clear.

Delia and Ferdie were out when he got

back, and he was unaccountably annoyed. For want of something better to do, he climbed again to the roof and took an observation of the house through the telescope, but this time without adding to his information. When he came down the two young people were in the hall. Ferdie was hanging up his golf clubs, and Delia was reading a post card which had come for her.

"Well, any luck, Jimmy?" asked Ferdie.

"None," said Jimmy shortly.

They had rather a cheerless dinner that night. Jimmy was not very talkative, and his gloom affected his friend. Only the girl prevented the meal being got through in absolute silence.

Jimmy was folding his napkin preparatory to rising—he was rapidly acquiring a sense of order—when the door opened and he jumped to his feet. It was Joe Sennett, who stood in the doorway, but a different Joe from the man he had known. His face was puckered and lined, and he looked a very old man indeed.

"I want you, Delia," he said gruffly. "And I'd like to see you, Mr. Blake, after I've seen my girl, or perhaps I'd better see you first."

Delia had run across the room to him with a happy little cry; he took her in his arms, an action which was unlike Joe, who was an undemonstrative man, and she wondered.

"Daddy, you aren't ill?" she asked anxiously.

"No, my dear." His voice was rough but tender. "I want to see you alone, darling. Can I come up to your room?"

"You can have my study or Mr. van Roon's study," said Jimmy.

Joe thought for a moment.

"I'll have your study," he said. "I can get on to the lawn and out of the house from there, can't I?"

Jimmy nodded. He wondered why the girl's father was anxious to leave the priory by that way.

"Can I see you now, Mr. Blake?"

It was Joe who led the way to the study, and, closing the door behind them and without preamble, he began:

"Mr. Blake, what did you see at the lodge last night?"

"What do you mean?" asked Jimmy steadily.

"What did you see when you were in the grounds of the lodge last night?"

Jimmy was silent.

"They don't know that it was you yet," Joe went on, "but they'll find out. They sent the boots to London, and there are a dozen detectives looking for the owner."

"I saw all there was to be seen," said Jimmy. "What is the explanation, Sennett?"

"There is no explanation that I can give, sir," said Joe Sennett, with a certain dignity. "Mr. Blake, will you take an old man's advice?"

"What is it, Joe?"

"Get away from Blackheath as quickly as you can."

"Bolt?" suggested Jimmy quietly.

"I don't know whether you'd call it bolting, and I hardly think you'd benefit much if you did bolt. At any rate, you'd be——" He stopped himself. "Will you take my advice, Mr. Blake?"

Jimmy shook his head.

"I shall stay here," he said, "and see it through, whatever 'it' may be."

Joe nodded.

"I've done all I can for you," he said, "and now I think I must see Delia."

Jimmy saw his face twitch as though he was contemplating an unpleasant interview.

"One moment before you go, Sennett." Jimmy barred the way to the door. "Is there a logical and reasonable explanation to all this mystery, or is Mr. Chapelle stark mad?"

"There is a very simple explanation, sir," said Sennett, "but it is not one that I can give, as I told you before."

Jimmy opened the door for him. "I won't press the question."

"You won't go away, either, eh?" said Sennett.

"I shall stay here," said Jimmy.

"Very good," said the older man, and without another word walked out of the room, Jimmy following.

Jimmy heard the study door close on Delia and her father, and strolled into the garden. He was there half an hour. When he went back to the study it was empty. He met Mrs. Smith coming downstairs.

"The young lady has gone to her room with a bad headache," she said, "and she did not wish to be disturbed."

"Isn't she coming down again, to-night?" asked Jimmy, in dismay.

"I don't think so, sir," said the housekeeper, and the young man cursed his luck under his breath. He went in search of Ferdie and repeated to him the warning which Sennett had given.

"You're in this, Ferdinando," he said, "and I won't disguise from you that there is bad trouble coming to me and possibly to you. Sennett is not the kind of man who would ask us to bolt unless there was danger."

"If there's danger to you, there's certainly danger to me," said Ferdie thoughtfully, "and I'll do just as you suggest."

"Well, I advise you to get away," said Jimmy, and Ferdie guffawed loudly.

"Jimmy, you have everything but brains," he said cruelly. "If I bolted, that would bring down suspicion on you. Either we both stay or we both go. And even if it didn't bring suspicion on you, the fact that I had disappeared before your arrest——"

Jimmy made a little face.

"It doesn't sound pretty, does it? But it seems to me a very likely ending to this lark," said Ferdie. "I was saying—if they came and pinched you and found I had gone, they'd be after me like a shot. Our only chance is to stick together." He turned to go. "I say, you don't feel like another visit to the Warden's Lodge, to-night?" he suggested.

"No, thank you," said Jimmy fervently. "I have no desire to monkey with a gang which includes a prime minister and a bishop, to say nothing of an eminent scientist."

Ferdie turned back.

"A prime minister and a bishop?" he repeated slowly. "Was the prime minister there?"

The last thing in the world Jimmy intended was saying as much as he had. There was nothing to do now but to tell the story.

"I thought you were nutty when you talked about the bacon," said Ferdie, after he had finished. "And I still think that you may have been seeing things. But what an unholy combination to butt into! Do you think that Chapelle has gone off his head?"

"No, and I don't think the bishop has, either," said Jimmy. "I should say the Bishop of Fleet was too shrewd and tough a man to be led into an adventure of this kind by an obvious lunatic. Ferdie, you were boasting the other day that you had a couple of Mills bombs. Take your car and go up to your flat and get them like a good fellow."

"Why?" asked the astonished Ferdie. "Are you thinking of bombing the old boy?"

"I did have some such idea," said Jimmy dryly.

"When shall I go?"

"Go now."

And Ferdie went off to get his noisy car.

An hour later the study bell rang and Stephens answered it.

"Bring Mrs. Smith here," said Jimmy, looking up from his writing table. "I want you to witness my will."

"Your will, sir?" said Stephens, startled.

"Hurry," said Jimmy. "I have followed the example of Lord Harry and have left five years' salary to everybody in my employ, and if you don't stop looking like an asphyxiated codfish, you won't benefit."

It was his will that he had written, a somewhat voluminous document, and his two servants fluttered and apprehensive, affixed their signatures as witnesses. Also Jimmy had destroyed all his private correspondence and made a rough survey of his financial position. He told himself that he was wasting time and acting like a scare cat, but he had realized that in the event of any sudden fatal accident to himself his property would go to the state, and just then he had a grudge against the state.

Neither Mrs. Smith nor Stephens read the provisions of the will, so they were not aware that the principal beneficiary was a girl who at that moment was sitting in her locked room, her hands clasped in her lap, staring out into the night with eyes that were big and tragic and hopeless. Jimmy had given up any hope of seeing Delia that night, when he heard the door of the study open and close again.

"I didn't ring for the coffee, but you can put it there," he said without raising his eyes from the letter he was writing.

There was no response and no movement, and then he looked up. It was Delia. Her face, at any time, showed little color, but now it was a dead white and her eyes seemed to have grown darker so that by contrast with her pallor they looked black.

"Delia!"

He went toward her, his hands outstretched, and she took them in hers and all the time her eyes were fixed on his. He saw in them fear and appeal—The Terror had come to her and had frozen her stiff and speechless.

"Delia!" He whispered the word and,

taking her by the arms, shook her gently. He saw her pale lips flutter and tremble as she tried to speak. "For God's sake, Delia—what is wrong?"

And then she spoke:

"Jimmy! Do you—do you love me?"

He nodded. He could not have spoken.

"You meant—all you said in the garden—that night?"

"Every word." His voice seemed that of a stranger, it was so cracked and strained.

"Will you marry me—at once—to-morrow? Please, please!"

He put his arm about and drew her tighter and tighter to him and the fear in her eyes died and the old soft, woman look returned—the old, shining, Delia look, only more glorious by the love and faith and surrender in them.

Something wonderful had happened—how, why, he did not know nor care. He was shaking, his arms were weak and trembling and his knees were feeble—it seemed as if the strength of life had been sapped in this joy.

"You'll do it to-morrow—you can get a special license, can't you—you will please—please, Jimmy, dear!"

She was crying and laughing.

"I never thought I'd be happy again," she breathed. "I know now that all my—fine plans—were stupid and unreal. But this is real, isn't it, Jimmy? It's the essence, the essence of life——"

It was she who raised her face and kissed him, holding her lips to his, her arm clasped about his neck, her eyes, divinely beautiful and lit with a new fire, so close to his that he felt the flick of eyelashes against his.

"Delia! What magic has been working, darling? I never dreamed of this happiness."

"It's the magic of—of——"

For a second the wild terror he had seen before smoldered in her dark eyes and then she broke into a passion of weeping, and sank down on a near-by divan.

"To-morrow—to-morrow—please, please!" she sobbed, and Jimmy held her in his arms and comforted her. She smiled through tears, checked a sob, and murmured: " 'As a mother comforteth her child, so will I comfort you.' "

And then she became suddenly quiet, and he thought she had swooned, but she was sleeping peacefully. He held her motionless, as the hours passed, and then his head began to nod and he, too, slept. It was Ferdinand Ponter who found them so. He came in at midnight, his coat pockets bulging, and stopped at the sight, then he stepped softly from the room and closed the door behind him.

"Well, I'm blowed!" said Ferdinand, and shook his head.

## CHAPTER XV.

Jimmy went early to the office of the registrar of the district to give notice of his marriage.

"Is it possible for the ceremony to be performed to-morrow?" he asked.

That morning he had read up the regulations dealing with the time of special licenses and had made the unhappy discovery that one clear day must elapse between the "notice" and the ceremony. But he had a dim recollection that during the war special facilities were given, and these might still be obtainable.

"You can be married to-day," was the surprising answer.

"To-day?" repeated Jimmy, delighted.

"Yes. The chief registrar sent us a memorandum yesterday to that effect. The government and the archbishop have issued a schedule to the proclamation giving special facilities for people who want to be married before 'The Days of Uniting.' "

Before he had finished the delighted Jimmy had gripped him by the hand.

"My lad," he said, "you're an angel!"

Jimmy guessed at the girl's age for the license data, and took it for granted that she had no other name than Delia, and then he drove into Greenwich, stopped before a jeweler's shop, guessed again at the size of her finger, and was at the priory with the ring in his pocket before Delia knew he had left the house. Ferdie and Stephens were the witnesses and the ceremony was ridiculously short and simple; fifty words spoken by each, and they were man and wife!

"I shouldn't have believed it was so jolly easy, Jimmy," said Ferdie, poising a pen in his hand over the register. "This is a bit of a warning to boys, isn't it? A fellow might be yanked into a place like this, and go out with a perfectly strange wife, before the poor boy knew what was happening to him."

Beyond the words she had repeated after the registrar, Delia had not spoken. Some of her color had come back and her face wore that ethereal, exalted look which Jimmy had seen before. Once she looked at the ring on her finger and smiled, but she made no other sign, till the last entry had been made, and the registrar had handed to her the marriage certificate in a tiny envelope, and then she said:

"I am very glad."

She slipped her arm through Jimmy's, and they went out of the dull office together to meet the unmistakable detectives who were standing before the door.

"Mr. Blake?" said one of these.

"My name is Blake," said Jimmy.

He felt the hand of the girl grip tighter on his arm.

"I am Inspector Cartwright, and I hold a warrant for your arrest."

"On what charge?" asked Jimmy quietly.

"Treason-felony," was the reply, and Jimmy nodded.

"I wondered what it would be," he said.

He gently disengaged Delia's hand.

"You had better go with Ferdie, dear," he said, and she did not speak; but slowly drew her arm from his, looking at him in a dazed, hurt way that broke his heart to see. A taxicab was waiting. He was hustled in by the police officers, and in a few minutes was out of sight.

"I don't understand," the girl said slowly, and then collapsed.

The cab, with Jimmy prisoner in it, drove into the yard of Blackheath Road Police Station. Jimmy noticed that his captors did not go through the formality of charging him, but led him straight away to a cell which had evidently been prepared, for on the rough wooden bench which served prisoners for a bed, a mattress had been placed.

Left alone, Jimmy sat down with his head in his hands to consider the position. He did not doubt that he was in real trouble. The prime minister was under the impression that he had surprised a state secret. Would the fate which, for some reason, had overtaken Gerald van Roon, also be his? Or were they sending him to join the thousand or so harmless citizens who had been arrested in the previous week? Certainly no charge was preferred, and no attempt was made to question him.

His lunch was brought, and at half past five a substantial tea was carried into the cell by the jailer. He must have received instructions not to converse with the prisoner, for he made no answer to Jimmy's questions. The day had passed like an eternity. He tried to sleep, but the moment his head touched the pillow, his mind went to Delia, and it was all thought of her that he was striving so desperately to keep from his mind. At nine o'clock the lock snapped back, the cell door opened, and the jailer came in.

"Put out your hands," he said curtly, and Jimmy obeyed.

A pair of handcuffs were snapped on his wrists. Taking his arm, the jailer led him along the corridor into the yard. A closed car was waiting, and beside the open door, a tall man, whose face was in the shadow. Jimmy stepped into the car and sank back with a sigh of comfort upon the luxurious upholstery. The stranger entered after him, slammed the door, and the car moved off. Jimmy knew where he was being taken long before the machine had stopped at the green postern gate.

Although it was much earlier in the evening than when the people of Warden's Lodge came and went, the road was deserted, and only one person saw his entry. Delia, lying flat on the grass, had kept watch since nightfall and now her vigil was rewarded.

Jimmy was pushed through the door, hurrying along the path he had trod the night before, but this time he entered through the front door. The man who was with him stood revealed in the light of the lamp which hung on the wall of the room into which he was pushed.

"Well, Mr. Blake," said Lord Harry pleasantly. "We are very sorry to put you to this inconvenience, but if you know as much about our business as we fear you do, you will quite understand why it is impossible to leave you at large."

Jimmy made no reply, and Lord Harry Weltman, stripping off his coat, opened a cigarette case and offered it to Jimmy. The young man extracted a cigarette with his manacled hands, and the minister of defense lit it for him.

"You can sit down," he said courteously. And as Jimmy accepted the invitation he went on. "You were in the grounds the night before last, of course. Were you alone?"

"Quite alone," said Jimmy.

"Did anybody know that you were coming?"

"Nobody," replied Jimmy promptly.

"You had no companion at all?"

"No, sir."

"Not even your friend, Mr. Ponter?"

"He was at the priory and had no idea I was coming," lied Jimmy.

"How did you get over the wall without assistance?"

"I brought a collapsible ladder in my car." Jimmy could tell the truth here, and he saw that Lord Harry was impressed.

"Now, Mr. Blake, I think we had better understand one another, and I might tell you at first that I am charged with the part of extracting from you the fullest possible details of your knowledge. What did you see when you were in the grounds?"

"I saw you burying the man Elmers," said Jimmy.

"Elmers?" Lord Harry stared at the other, and then: "You imagined you did," he said. "And then?"

"I looked through the window and I saw the prime minister sweeping up the room, and the bishop frying something—I think it was bacon—in a frying pan."

"It was bacon," agreed the other gravely, "and it was very excellent bacon. What else did you see?"

"I saw Mr. Maggerson and a gentleman whose name I do not know, sitting at a table writing."

"Do you know who the other man was?" asked Lord Harry quickly.

"I haven't the slightest idea, my lord," said Jimmy, and met the cold scrutiny of the minister's eye without quailing.

"Were you near enough to see what they were writing?"

Jimmy shook his head.

"And you say on your honor you do not know who the other man was?"

"No, sir, I do not."

"Well, I can give you a little information on that subject, but whether you will learn or not depends entirely on the view the prime minister takes of your case."

Jimmy's heart beat a little faster. He raised his shackled hands to take the cigarette from his lips, and Lord Harry, noticing the gesture, smiled.

"I'm sorry we can't release you from those fetters," he said. "I do sincerely hope you can convince us that you're not—dangerous."

"In what way dangerous?" asked Jimmy.

"The only form of dangerousness we recognize is an inclination to talk," said Lord Harry, and went out of the room.

He was gone a quarter of an hour, and came back with the prime minister. Mr. Chapelle had changed considerably since Jimmy had seen him last. He had passed from the pleasantly old to the painfully old, but he was as straight and held his head as high as ever, and when he spoke there was no break in his rasping, menacing tone.

"You would not keep out of this, Mr. Blake, and you have yourself to thank for your serious position. I was afraid this would happen."

He looked at the floor, fingering his chin.

"Bring him into the room," he said, and at a nod from Lord Harry, Jimmy followed him into the apartment at the back of the house, that very room into which he had peered.

The big table which he had then seen had gone, and so, too, had the bearded man and Maggerson. Old Sennett stood with his back to the fire, his hands behind him, but he did not meet Jimmy's eyes. Only the bishop, suave, pleasant, almost jocular, in his greeting, seemed to be free from a kind of strained nervousness which affected them all, save him.

"This is a bad business, Mr. Blake," he said, "a very bad business. And you were married to-day, I hear."

Jimmy looked at Joe Sennett. The old man did not raise his eyes.

"Yes, I was married to-day," said Jimmy quietly. "In fact, about four minutes before your police gentlemen abducted me."

"What are we to do about this man?" asked the prime minister impatiently.

"I'd appreciate something definite in the way of an idea on what you are prepared to do, myself," said Jimmy. He was recovering a little of his balance.

"I am prepared to commit you to prison," said Chapelle coldly. "I shall not hesitate at that, believe me! My mind is divided on the question of expediency. I would not harm a fly unnecessarily," he added in a lower voice, "and all that is human in me will deplore your misfortune, Mr. Blake—bitterly, bitterly!"

Jimmy could not restrain a grin.

"It will be worth something to know that I am sympathized with by as eminent a man as yourself, sir," he said, "and I shall naturally do my best to save you any unnecessary sorrow."

"Lord Harry tells me that you did not know the other gentleman who was here."

"No, sir."

"You're sure of that."

"I am prepared to swear to that, sir. I don't know him, although I seem to have seen his portrait in an illustrated paper." He knit his brows. "Why, of course, it is the astronomer royal, Sir John Dart!"

Before the words were out he bitterly regretted his indiscretion. He saw the prime minister's chest heave up and heard the long-drawn sigh.

"I was afraid you would," said the premier in a low voice.

All the time Joe Sennett had said no word, nor had he so much as looked at the prisoner. Now, however, he raised his eyes and they met Jimmy's for the space of a second and then dropped again.

"I was desperately afraid you would," the prime minister was saying. "Well——" He looked at Lord Harry, and the tall, hard-faced man nodded.

"He's absolutely too dangerous to us," said Lord Harry significantly. "We cannot afford to let him go at large. He *must* be imprisoned."

The premier nodded.

Jimmy's heart went cold, and he was seized with a momentary trembling, then he grew cool.

Joe had turned so that he faced the fire. The prime minister had his hand on the handle of the door preparatory to leaving the room, and from where he stood Jimmy could not see the bishop. Then a cold rage seized him. Why should he be incarcerated like any common criminal? He was innocent of any wrongdoing.

There was just one faint hope in Jimmy's heart. Had anybody seen him being brought in? Had Ferdie guessed where he would be taken? If any attempt was made——

"Crash!"

The window splintered into fragments. Somebody had shattered it with an iron bar, and that somebody, Jimmy knew, was Ferdie Ponter.

"Quick, Jimmy!" yelled a voice.

He dashed to the window, held up his chained hands, and something round and egg-shaped was thrust into them. Stooping, he drew out the pin of the Mills bomb with his teeth.

"Just a moment, gentlemen," he mocked. "You may be interested to know that if any one comes near me, this bomb will fall from my hands—and explode. If any one as much as stirs," he added, as the minister made a movement, "it will also fall—softly but efficiently—and your precious secret will be a secret no more."

There was a silence broken only by the painful breathing of the bishop.

"Take off his handcuffs," said the prime minister, at last. "I will give you my word of honor, Mr. Blake, that you shall not be harmed. You will go free. Bring in your friend from outside."

Jimmy hesitated, then walked to the window.

"You can come in, Ferdie. Are you alone?"

There was no reply to this, and then the door was opened. Ferdie came in, and following him came Delia. She took no notice of anybody else, but walking across the room she took Jimmy's hand in hers.

The two ministers had left the room. Joe still stared gloomily at the floor, and had taken no notice of his daughter. The only stranger was the bishop, who had dropped into the chair by the fire, his chin sunk on his breast.

"I saw them take you in," Delia said in a low voice. "I went straight back to Ferdie. He was wonderful, Jimmy. He remembered the bombs he had brought back for you and we came straight across. He didn't want me to come, but I just had to. There's a telegram for you—I found it on the hall stand just as I was leaving the house."

Jimmy slipped the buff envelope into his pocket.

"And what next?" he asked.

She shook her head.

"Father, what next?" she repeated.

He threw out his hands in a gesture of despair.

"How do I know, my dear? Have you told Mr. Blake?"

She shook her head.

"Told me what?" asked Jimmy quickly.

"Perhaps you will know."

The door opened and the prime minister came back; this time he was accompanied by the two men whom Jimmy had seen before—Maggerson and the stranger, the astronomer royal.

"Blake," said the prime minister without preliminary. "I am going to tell you the strangest story that any man has ever told, or ever heard, and that story will explain why your cousin met his death—at my hands."

"At your hands?" gasped Jimmy, doubting his senses.

The prime minister nodded.

"By accident I killed Gerald van Roon," he said solemnly. "He was an indiscreet man."

## CHAPTER XVI.

"Mr. Maggerson," began the prime minister, "is a very old friend of mine. We were at school together, and our early lives ran upon parallel lines. Maggerson is, I need hardly tell you, a brilliant man of sciencc. I, myself, am a dabbler in science. I am passionately fond of mathematics and physics, and by a remarkable coincidence, two other members of the cabinet were also men who had leanings that way. For years we made a point of dining every Thursday night, a practice which was discontinued after I accepted the leadership of my party.

"At these gatherings, my friend, the Lord Bishop of Fleet, was generally present, though he was not bishop in those days, but the head master of a school, as Mr. Ponter probably knows.

"I tell you this much, because I feel that it is well that you should know my authority for acting as I have done, and because, by reason of those friendships, I have been able to call upon three of the cleverest mathematicians in Great Britain to confirm a certain discovery which we made, or rather which Mr. Maggerson made, a little more than a week ago. Mr. Maggerson is, and of this you must also be aware, the inventor of a new calculus, or rather a table of variations which is used by mathematicians and those who have relations with the exact sciences all over the world.

"I think that this story really starts," the prime minister went on, "on the day of the luncheon party which I gave, partly to celebrate his return from America and partly to celebrate the issue of his amended calculus, four hundred thousand copies of which were, I believe, sold within a week of issue.

"As you know, Mr. Maggerson was late, and when he did arrive he was in a condition bordering upon—hysteria. I can think of no better word. It took us some time before we could get him calm, and when we did it was to learn something which I think stunned every one of us. Fortunately there were only us five friends present. My secretary was away in Glasgow in connection with a meeting which I was to address. Beside myself and Maggerson, there was Lord Harry Weltman, Mr. Stope-Kendrick, and the bishop in the room.

"It is rather difficult to explain to a layman, one who is apparently not interested in mathematics, the exact functions of the table of variations with which the name of Maggerson is associated. By its use it is possible to make the most exact—indeed, the only exact—astronomical calculations that can be made. Those calculations, as you probably know, if worked out without the aid of what, for a better term, I will call a mathematical ready reckoner, would take years to accomplish, and it was with the object of measuring the immeasurable, that Newton and Leibnitz produced their calculi.

"On the day before the luncheon Mr. Maggerson read a note in one of the foreign papers concerning the discovery of a comet which interested him. In the afternoon he visited Greenwich and had lunch with the astronomer royal. They discussed the appearance of the comet in the northern skies, a comet which was neither Eneke's, which had been sighted the year before, nor Winnecke's, and which was either a newcomer in the heavens or else the identical comet on which Newton based his famous calculations. This, however, they decided it could not be, for Newton's comet was not due for another hundred and fifteen years.

"Now, hitherto, in calculating the periodicity of comets, there had been considerable difficulties in making accurate predictions, difficulties due to the influences exercised by various planets, which attract the wanderer from its course. Jupiter in particular seems to have an extraordinary influence upon cometary matter.

"By means of Maggerson's table, however, the most extraordinary accurate results can be obtained, and after taking the longitude of the perihelion, et cetera, Maggerson went home and began to work out the character and the identity of the comet.

"Then, gentlemen"—the voice of the prime minister was lowered—"he made an astonishing discovery. It was this, *that on the sixteenth of May of this year, the comet 'X'—for no name has been given to this wanderer—must inevitably collide with the earth!"*

For a second Jimmy's heart stopped beating.

"Inevitably?" he repeated.

The prime minister nodded.

"The character of a comet is not known. You can only take the spectrum and discover that it contains certain hydrocarbons, sodium, and other chemical constituents, but whether the nucleus, which is bigger than the earth, is solid or whether it is as vaporous as its attenuated tail, nobody knows. If it is solid"—he paused—"if it is solid, and the collision occurs, it is certain that human life, or, for the matter of that, any life, cannot exist on the earth."

Jimmy cleared his throat.

"You mean, sir, that on the sixteenth all civilization, all that the world is and means for us, may be wiped away?" His voice sank to a whisper.

The premier nodded.

"Maggerson was not satisfied with his work. He began again, and working all night, he arrived at a similar result. And then it was that, forgetting he was not dressed, forgetting everything except the approaching cataclysm and the terror into which the world would fall, if the news were known, he ran from his house, and did not stop running until he reached No. 10 Downing Street."

One of the men in the room had a loud watch. Jimmy heard it distinctly.

"Then what happened?" he found voice to ask.

"Maggerson asked me and Stope-Kendrick to check his calculations. In conjunction with the astronomer royal we worked carefully throughout the next night, and a portion of the next day. We were beginning to attract attention. The newspaper reporters had noted that we were together, practically locked in one room, and then it was that I thought of the Warden's Lodge. It was crown property and had been standing empty for many years. It was near to London, but what was more important, it was within a few minutes' walk of the royal observatory.

"It was after we had installed ourselves that the astronomer royal suggested we should send for Gerald van Roon. This course was heartily approved both by Maggerson and by myself, though you, Lord Harry, objected. I can only wish most fervently," said the prime minister, "that we had listened to your objections. Lord Harry pointed out that Gerald was a man of extremely high principles, and that he had very definite views on the duty of science to the public. We had some trouble with him last year when he was called into consultation over the failure of the wheat and corn crop."

Jimmy nodded.

"I remember; he was writing an article on that very subject on the night of his death," he said.

"However," continued the prime minister. "We overcame Lord Harry's objections, and Harry and Stope-Kendrick themselves went across to your house and delivered the message, returning with Gerald van Roon. In the meantime, the bishop had gone to arouse the government printer, Mr. Sennett here, whom you know. We felt, as a preliminary measure, that it was necessary to warn military authorities that some sort of trouble might be expected. What we most feared was the news leaking out that such a collision was inevitable.

"The destruction of the earth, the wiping off of life, will be a matter so terrifically sudden that nobody will realize what has happened. There is no terror in death—swift, painless, universal," he said quietly, "but there is a terror of fear which would drive men and women frantic, which would reduce the world to a shrieking madhouse. Mr. van Roon came. We told him quickly the facts as we knew them, namely, that on the sixteenth of May, the unknown comet would cross the orbit of the earth at a point where a collision was impossible to avoid.

"At first he was horrified, and then he sat down to study the tables which Maggerson and the bishop had prepared between them. When he had finished there happened what Lord Harry had feared. Your cousin was a deeply religious man, and he insisted that the world should know. That was, naturally, a course which we were determined should not be taken. There was an angry scene, the end of it was, Gerald van Roon walked through that very door with the words:

" 'Whatever you may say, I consider it my duty to communicate to the world the danger which threatens our existence.'

"And there was no doubt whatever that he intended to put his threat into execution. For the moment we were paralyzed, and not until he had left the house did it come to me just what his action would mean.

"We had made some rough preparations,

crude and unskillful, to deal with any intrusion into our sanctuary. I had brought down an automatic pistol which my son gave me after the war, and this was then lying on the mantelpiece. I snatched it up and ran after your cousin. He was half-way across the garden. It was raining heavily, I remember, because I slipped on the greasy grass, and in slipping I fired.

"I had no intention of killing him; my plan was to bring him back and hold him a prisoner, but as I slipped I must have thrown out my hand and gripped at the trigger. I am not used to the ways of automatic pistols, and I did not realize that, so long as the trigger is pressed, the weapon continues to fire. I heard five shots, and could not realize that it was I who had fired them, until I saw Gerald van Roon lying senseless on the grass.

"I came back to the house, and we had a consultation. The position was a dreadful one. To explain his death would mean to explain the circumstances under which he met his death. There was nothing to do but to carry out Lord Harry's suggestion, which was that he should be carried on to the heath and left there.

"I was perfectly certain at the time that he was dead, for he showed no signs of life, and the wounds"—the premier shivered —"were terrible! We carried him out just before daybreak and left him, and his fate you know. I might say that Mr. Sennett was not present; indeed, Mr. Sennett did not come into our confidence until a few days ago, when it became necessary to prepare our proclamation."

"The object of the proclamation being to unite families for the final day of life?"

The prime minister nodded.

"It was the last service which we could render to humanity," he said, "and that will also explain to you, Mr. Blake, the release of the convicts from the various prisons throughout the country."

"It does not explain the arrest of thousands of innocent men," said Jimmy.

A faint smile played at the corners of the premier's delicate mouth.

"Those innocent men were all gentlemen who possessed telescopes," he said. "They were, in fact, corresponding members of various astronomical societies, and it was very necessary that we should not allow them to make independent calculations. There is one more matter to explain and that is—the end of poor Kendrick." The premier's voice shook. "He was my very dearest friend," he said, "a quiet, scholarly man on whose mind the knowledge of this terrible danger produced a deplorable effect. We had met earlier one evening and the bishop remarked upon the strange appearance of the poor fellow. We missed him for a moment—and in that moment he had passed through the gate—I don't want to think about it."

Jimmy looked round the room from face to face. The girl's eyes had not left his, her lips were set tight. As to Ferdie, he was all blank amazement.

"Perhaps you would like to see—our friend," said the prime minister.

Jimmy wondered who he was talking about.

"He is very clearly visible to-night," Mr. Chapelle went on, and then Jimmy knew that he was talking of the comet. "But I am afraid he will not impress you."

"I did not know there was a comet visible," said Jimmy.

"Very few people do," said the prime minister, "although one or two indiscreet references appeared in the newspapers, emanating from foreign correspondents; that is why we established the press censorship. It is a curious comet, because it has little or no tail, and that is probably why it has escaped general observation."

He led the way to the dark garden, and it was the astronomer royal who directed Jimmy's eyes to the northwestern firmament. Presently he saw it—a blurred spot of light like a star seen through a thin cloud.

"He doesn't look very formidable, does he?" said the prime minister, as he led the way back to the room; "and yet, Mr. Blake, he is the world's terror. For billions of years we have escaped contact with any of these waifs of space, and there are thousands of great men who are emphatic that the laws which govern the movement of celestial bodies make it absolutely impossible that contact can be made."

"There is only one thing I would like to ask you, sir," said Jimmy, "although I realize that I have no right whatever to question you."

"You may ask anything you wish," interrupted Mr. Chapelle.

"There was no accident in your shooting the man who came into your garden the other night, the night I left my boots under your window?"

It was Lord Harry who replied.

"I killed him," he said simply, "he was a local criminal named Day, a poor devil who specialized in stealing lead piping."

"Day?" said Jimmy, staring at him.

Lord Harry nodded. "We thought we heard suspicious sounds, and I went into the garden and I found him sliding down a water pipe with a coil of lead pipe which he had taken from a disused cistern. Not knowing who he was, or what was his object, I called on him to stand. He ran and I shot him."

Jimmy collapsed into a chair.

"Then it was not Tom Elmers!" he said hollowly.

"Tom Elmers?" It was Joe who spoke. "Was he here?" and Jimmy told him all that he had seen on the night he broke into the grounds.

"That is serious," said the prime minister. "Do you know him, Mr. Sennett?"

"I know him," replied Joe startled, "he is dangerous, sir—he would probably understand every calculation that has been made in this house. I should say that next to myself he is the finest mathematical printer in England."

"You did not see him again after he disappeared over the wall?" said Chapelle, turning to Jimmy.

Jimmy shook his head.

"No, I didn't see him. I was perfectly satisfied that he was the gentleman you were burying."

"That's very, very bad," said the prime minister. "Is he an enemy of yours?"

"Not of mine, sir."

"He is of mine," said Joe. "He wished to marry my daughter, and neither she nor I wanted anything to do with him and he took to drink. My own impression is that he is a little mad. He always was a violent, undisciplined man."

There was a long silence broken by the prime minister.

"That man must be found," he said quietly. "He may be concealed in this very house. You have neither seen nor heard anything, Maggerson?"

The great Maggerson shook his head. Apparently he was the only one who spent the whole of his time at Warden's Lodge.

"We had better make a search," said Lord Harry shortly. "You and your friend come along, Mr. Blake."

Jimmy followed him into the broad paneled hall and up the rickety stairs. Ferdie brought up the rear carrying an oil lamp. The gloomy rooms were empty and in a sad state of disrepair. Only one, where Maggerson had slept and in which Jimmy had seen him through his telescope, was occupied. There were five rooms on the upper floor, and each room was explored without producing any other sign of life than mice.

"He's not here," said Jimmy. "Are there any cellars?"

"None," replied Lord Harry. "The only place on which he could conceal himself is the roof, which is flat, like most of the houses in this neighborhood."

He pointed to a trapdoor leading from a small cistern room. It was reached by a steep ladder.

"The last man who was in here," began Lord Harry as he climbed the steps, "was the unfortunate burglar whom you saw being buried. There," he pointed, "is the end of the piping he stole."

He pushed up the trap, and Jimmy followed him into the night. It was both impossible and inexpedient to bring up the lamp and Ferdie, and they had to conduct their search in the darkness. They were groping their way along the parapet, when they heard a crash behind them. It was the trapdoor falling. Immediately afterward came a yell below and a smashing of glass. Jimmy stumbled across the roof, found the trap, and flung it up. From below came the smell of kerosene, but the lamp had gone, and so also had Ferdie. Jimmy dropped to the floor and ran downstairs. The front door was open, and he flew out into the night. He saw a figure in the half darkness, and then heard Ferdinand's voice.

"Sorry, old man, he climbed the wall, and I haven't the key of the gate."

"Did you see him?"

"No, but I felt him," said Ferdie grimly.

When he came into the light they saw he had a long cut on his cheek.

"Lost him," he said laconically.

He had not seen the "him." Standing at the foot of the ladder beneath the trapdoor, the man had suddenly dropped on him; the light had been extinguished, and before he could pull himself to his feet, the attacker was halfway down the stairs.

## CHAPTER XVII.

The prime minister turned to Maggerson.

"You wrote a summary of your observations. Those are the only papers he could get at—it would take too long to follow the calculations," he said. "Will you bring the summary down? It will also help Mr. Blake to understand. I fear I may have failed to impress upon him the seriousness of our discovery."

"I think I understand fairly well, sir," said Jimmy quietly, after Maggerson had gone upstairs to his room. "On the sixteenth at some hour——"

"At half past four in the afternoon, by Greenwich mean time," said the prime minister, "the point of contact will in all probability be within a hundred miles of the south pole, but the effect will be just as disastrous as if it struck the city of London."

"At that hour, sir, you expect the world to be destroyed?"

"Not destroyed," corrected the prime minister. "I think the world will go on rolling through space; it will probably stagger, perhaps, for a few seconds."

"And it will require no more than that?" asked Jimmy in amazement, "to wipe off all forms of life?"

"Some life may still exist," said the prime minister. "For example, we expect that fish—especially the deep-sea fish—and a very large proportion of the others, will still continue living. Certain insects, too, will continue, and it is possible, though very improbable that mammalian and even human life will be left with a representative or two. It depends entirely on the effect which the impact may have upon the atmosphere. The atmospheric belt may be burned up, leaving the world a cold cinder, in which case, of course, even the lowest form of sea life would perish."

Maggerson came in at that moment, a worried frown on his face.

"Did you take the summary from my room, Chapelle?" he asked.

"No," said the prime minister quickly. "Has it gone?"

"I had it under my pillow. I swear I put it there last night, but it's not there now."

Jimmy, still dazed and almost crushed by the news he had heard, could only wonder that such a minor matter as the disappearance of a summary, whatever that might be, should affect the prime minister so.

"We must get that man," he said.

"What use would the summary be to him?" asked Lord Harry, "and who would publish it, supposing he took it to an editor?"

"I know a man who would publish it," said the prime minister, between his teeth. "Though it may seem a fantastic theory on my part, I believe Elmers was sent by him to discover what is going on at Warden's Lodge."

Jimmy, with Delia, and Ferdinand Ponter, left the dark house by the postern gate he had come to know so well. They walked across the heath, each in his or her own way reflecting on what the days would bring forth.

In silence they turned into the dining room, and Stephens, who was sitting at the dining-room table, his head upon his hands, jumped up as if he had seen a ghost.

"Mr. Blake, sir," he stammered. He was speechless until he found the formula which came readiest: "Can I get anything?"

He was eager and trembling and Jimmy shook his head with a smile.

"No, thank you, Stephens," he said.

But there was one who was not to be denied.

"Beer, Stephens, my lad," he said, "nut-brown ale—and draw it with a froth."

"Beer!" said Jimmy with a wry little smile. "I can't understand you, Ferdie, you're a weird bird! I suppose you don't realize the significance of all the prime minister told us."

"I only realize that I want beer in large quantities," said Ferdie firmly. "It's rather a pity this sort of thing's going to happen. It's a jolly old world when you come to think of it," and Jimmy shuddered.

"Your good health, Mrs. Blake."

He raised his tankard and Jimmy looked up and stared open-mouthed at him.

"Mrs. Blake?" he repeated. "Who the dickens——" and then he looked at the girl, her mouth twitching with laughter. "Good Lord, I'm married!" he gasped.

Joe Sennett came across from the Warden's Lodge the next morning and brought the latest news.

"Half the police force of England are searching for that fellow," he said, shaking his head. "He's a thoroughly bad lot. I suppose Delia told you she knew, Mr. Blake?"

"About——" Jimmy hesitated.

"I broke faith with Mr. Chapelle in telling my daughter, but I was certain she would not tell even you." The old man bit his lips. "I wonder——" And then, "Have you any friends or relations with whom you are spending to-morrow?" he asked.

"No, Joe," said Jimmy quietly, "except my wife and, I hope, my father-in-law. I intend leaving this house to-morrow morning early in my car and taking Delia and you with me. The servants I am sending to their homes. Mr. Ponter is going to his father's house."

"Where do you intend going, Mr. Blake?"

"To Salisbury Plain," said Jimmy. "I want the openness of it, and Delia agrees. I want to be away from houses, and the sight of humanity suffering, if it does suffer—please God it will not."

"At what hour, sir?"

"At daybreak," said Jimmy, and his father-in-law went up to his room without further comment.

His work was done, Jimmy learned later. The country was quiet; no word of the approaching catastrophe had been spoken and the necessity for secret orders, printed or otherwise, had passed. Every railway was running to the utmost limit of its rolling stock, carrying, for the first time in its history, passengers who paid no fare and who were stopped at no barriers.

Jimmy drove up to town that morning to make sure that the servants at his flat were taking their holiday.

As he drove down Blackheath Hill that bright May morning, with the sky a fleckless blue and the world bathed in yellow sunshine, it seemed impossible that this terrible thing could happen. Women were shopping in a busy thoroughfare through which he passed, laden trams were carrying unsuspecting workers in their holiday attire, buses were crowded, and the streets of the poorer parts through which he passed were thronged with children. He caught glimpses of them in less busy thoroughfares, playing in the middle of the road, and at sight of them he caught his breath. They would go out, vanish, at a snap of a finger—all of them. There would be none to mourn them—there was a comforting thought in that.

As he passed a hospital he saw what had evidently been the result of a street accident carried through the doors of the institution. All the thought, all the work, all the science which would be employed to bring back that battered wreck to life and health, would be wasted.

The wonderful inventions of man, the amazingly competent systems he had set up, would disappear with their inventors, and the history of mankind would end with all the history that mankind had written.

He could not understand it, he could not believe it.

His car skidded across the nose of a horse and its driver cursed him in voluble cockney. He slowed his car down to apologize. The driver told him to go to hell. Jimmy grinned, and with a wave of his hand, went on.

His way lay across Westminster Bridge, and under the shadow of the great gray house, that monument to democracy and its power, he thought of all the men who had spoken within those walls. Disraeli, Bright, Gladstone, Palmerston, Peel—shadows, and soon to be less than shadows. Who would remember them or know of them? Who was to perpetuate the fame of Billie Marks, that eminent theatrical lady whose portrait adorned the hoardings?

Only the insects and the fishes might survive the cataclysm, and in the course of millions of years, produce all over again the beginning of a new civilization. And where London stood would be a great mound of earth, covered with forests, perhaps, and New York City would be just the rocky platform of Manhattan Island, and when the winds had blown away the dust of crumbled masonry, and kindly nature had covered the desolation with her verdure, there would be a new America awaiting through the ages new discoveries, or equipping expeditions to locate a mythical Europe.

He was passing down Pall Mall when a shrill whistle attracted his attention. He saw Ferdie's big motor car parked in the center of the road before he saw Ferdie standing on the steps of a club, beckoning him frantically. Ferdinand had gone to town an hour before him, and he was the last person Jimmy expected to see. He pulled his car in to the curb and Ferdie walked along to him.

"Jimmy, old thing," he said. "I saw that bright lad this morning."

"Elmers?" asked Jimmy quickly.

Ferdie nodded.

"Spotted him in the park. He was walking with a respectable old boy, and he was all shaved and dolled up."

"What did you do?" asked Jimmy. "You know there's a warrant for him, and it is absolutely essential that he should be arrested?"

"That's what I thought," nodded Ferdie. "It also struck me that it would be a good idea to find out where he was living. Anyway, I might have lost him in the park; it's a ticklish place to trail people in a sixty-horse-power Italia. Partly," he added unnecessarily, "because I've never taught the dashed thing to jump railings or swim lakes, and it looks as if I'm never going to," he added with grim humor.

"Well, what did you do?" asked Jimmy, anxious to get off that subject.

"I followed him as slowly as the old bus could go. He was just about to turn into a house in Welton Street, that's just off Piccadilly, when he must have spotted me out of the corner of his eye, for he walked on. The stout gentleman went into the house, No. 16. The gent's name is Palythorpe—how's that for a piece of high-class detective work?"

"Palythorpe?" said Jimmy. "I wonder if the prime minister knows him? Come along with me, Ferdie, maybe you have done something useful before you die."

They found the prime minister at home. He had been up all night and looked less troubled and more serene than Jimmy had expected.

"Palythorpe?" he said quickly. "It can't be that unspeakable blackguard—wait a moment."

He went out of the room quickly and returned in five minutes.

"Yes, it is evidently the same man," he said. "He owns a scurrilous weekly paper."

"But surely he wouldn't publish anything about this," said Jimmy, horrified at the thought. "What was the summary, sir?"

"It was a statement prepared by Maggerson and the bishop setting out in as plain language as they could command, just what is going to happen. We prepared this, because there was a time when the bishop wondered whether it would not be his Christian duty to give the world an opportunity for making spiritual preparations. But, mild as the statement was, it was too terrible to put into circulation. Even the bishop agreed to that."

"But what object could he have?"

"The man has been to prison, and I was responsible for sending him there," said the prime minister. "He had gone out of my mind until—last night. You remember I said there was a man."

"But such a statement would not hurt you, sir," insisted Jimmy.

The prime minister shook his head.

"It would be enough for Palythorpe to know that I wish this secret kept. There is also the possibility that he might believe that it was a scare without any basis of reason, and publish the summary in order to throw ridicule on me—from whatever motive he put the summary into circulation the effect would be the same. Scientific men would recognize immediately that the statement told the truth. There would be a panic in this country, probably throughout the world, a panic of such a nature that I dare not let my mind contemplate. I've sent the police to arrest Palythorpe. Could you arrange to meet them at the corner of Welton Street? I told them that I should ask you to accompany them."

"Like a shot," said Ferdie, who had not been asked.

When they reached Welton Street the police car was already standing at the corner, with four men grouped near by. One of them must have known Jimmy, although the man was a stranger to him.

"If you'll show me the house, sir——"

Ferdie led the way, but their search was in vain. Mr. Palythorpe had gone out five minutes earlier, the servant told them.

One detective was left in charge of the flat to conduct a search, and Jimmy and his friend took the other three to the office of the little sheet which Palythorpe edited. Here, too, they drew a blank. The office was closed and locked. It was a public holiday, and Mr. Palythorpe did not carry his enmity of the prime minister to such lengths that he had denied his employees their vacation. Probably his employees had had something to do with the matter.

The detectives had a consultation.

"Who prints this paper?"

One of them fished a copy from his pocket and examined the imprint.

"It says printed by Tyrhitt Palythorpe."

"Has he a press of his own?" asked Jimmy.

"I'm blessed if I know," said the detective, "but we can easily find out."

It was some time before the necessary information was forthcoming. Palythorpe had apparently printed his own paper. His new venture was of a semiprivate character, and was sold in a sealed envelope. As to the exact location of the works there was some conflict of evidence. On a day like this, when all the business houses were closed, it was almost impossible to get into touch with the people who could have supplied the information. Printer after printer was called by telephone at his private residence, and none could give any kind of direction. Neither the telephone book, nor the London directory, carried the name of Mr. Palythorpe and his printing works.

It was a handicap to Jimmy that the police were not aware of the reason for the arrest and search. To them Palythorpe was a political offender of the first magnitude who had been guilty of some mysterious crime against the state, as to the exact character of which they were ignorant.

Jimmy had a short consultation with Ferdinand.

"Suppose he prints the information," said Ferdie. "I don't see what he can do with it. No trains are running. He couldn't distribute it to-day if he tried."

"There is a post," said Jimmy significantly, "and there is an early-morning delivery. The postmen are the only people who are working to-morrow."

"But he couldn't get the news all over the country," protested Ferdie. "Do you suggest that he could get into touch with every lad in every village?"

Jimmy shook his head.

"It is only necessary that two of those summaries should go to every town. The news would be out in five minutes. And then!"

"He wouldn't do it," said Ferdie. "No man would be such an unutterable blackguard!"

But he did not know Mr. Tyrhitt Palythorpe.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

Five minutes after Ferdie had left the vicinity of Welton Street, Tom Elmers had joined his companion of the morning, and found him pacing his room nervously.

"Who was that?" he asked.

"A fellow named Ponter. He's a friend of Blake's. He chased me once out of Blake's garden."

"Did he recognize you?" asked Mr. Palythorpe quickly.

"Of course he did," snapped Tom.

Mr. Palythorpe's genial face was puckered in an expression of thought.

"Then the best thing we can do is to get away from here as quickly as we can," he said, diving for his hat. "This will mean bad trouble for me."

They found a wandering taxi, and Palythorpe gave the driver an address in Actor. Up a side street was the little printing shop which the man had bought for a song after his release from prison, and which was the foundation of his new activities.

It was no more than a grimy, dilapidated shed, with one press, and cramped accommodation for the half a dozen compositors whom he employed. In the language of the trade it was a "rat house." Mr. Palythorpe employed only this type of labor, for reasons not unassociated with certain profitable side lines which he ran. For he was a great printer of surreptitious lottery tickets and illegal sweepstake prospectuses.

He unlocked the discolored door and ushered Elmers into the stuffy interior. Tom Elmers looked round with the supercilious contempt of one who had worked under ideal conditions in a well-conducted office.

"Not much of a shop!" he said.

"It's good enough for me," said Mr. Palythorpe shortly.

At one end of the building a small cubbyhole of an office had been run up.

"Come in here," said Palythorpe, switching on a light. "Now, let me have a look at this paper."

It had been Mr. Maggerson's boast that his summary was understandable to the meanest intelligence.

It is a reproach which has often been leveled against the scientist that he is the only man who has anything worth saying, and yet does not know how to say it. In this case, however clear the summary might be to him and to his friends, it had been more or less gibberish to Tom Elmers. Tom had been told to discover papers and bring them to his principal, and he had obeyed, but a perusal of the summary had disappointed him.

"It's about a comet," he said as he took it slowly from his pocket.

"About a comet?" repeated the other incredulously.

Tom nodded.

"I told you there wasn't much in it. Old Maggerson has been making calculations for days and days. I used to watch him through a hole in the floor."

Mr. Palythorpe was chagrined and displayed his disappointment.

"Then all they've been doing is making astronomical calculations," he said with a curse. "And I have wasted all my time. I thought there was a woman in it. But why was Van Roon killed? You don't know anything about that?"

Tom Elmers shook his head.

"Ask me another," he said sarcastically "Here is the paper."

Mr. Palythorpe adjusted a pair of rimless glasses and began to read. As he read Tom Elmers saw his face go white, and before he had finished, the hands which held the closely written sheets of manuscript were shaking.

"My God!" he breathed as he put the papers down.

"What's up?" asked Tom, alarmed.

Mr. Palythorpe did not answer him. He sat with his chin in his palm, staring at the discolored blotting pad.

"He doesn't want anybody to know. That is it," he said aloud, though he was speaking to himself. "He doesn't want anybody to know! It would break his heart——"

He looked up suddenly. His eyes were narrowed and shone beyond the swollen lids bright and hard.

"It would break his heart," he said slowly. "By God, that's what I'm going to do! Get your coat off!"

"What's the idea?" asked Elmers in surprise.

"Get your coat off and go to that case. You'll find a couple of fonts of pica type—I want you to set something."

Mr. Elmers did not display any enthusiasm.

"This is supposed to be a holiday," he said. "What's the idea? I've been working hard for you, and all I get out of it is——"

"Do as you're told," snarled the man and, taking some paper from the rack, he began to write.

Tom Elmers had no intention of working that day, and it was with the greatest reluctance that he slipped off his jacket and, rolling up his sleeves, sought for and found the cases of type which Palythorpe had indicated.

Presently the stout man came out and laid a sheet of paper in front of him.

"Set that," he said, and gave instructions as to the length and spaces between the lines. "Make it a twenty-six-em line and double lead it. I only want to fill one little page."

"Is this all that has to be set?" said Tom, brightening up.

Palythorpe nodded.

"While you're doing it I'll be addressing envelopes, and after you've finished you can come and help me. I have three thousand addresses, and I think they'll do the trick."

Tom sniffed.

"All right," he said.

"No, by the Lord!" cried Palythorpe. "I've got over three thousand addressed envelopes ready for the next issue of the paper. They will do—they're pretty evenly distributed."

Tom did not answer. His eyes were staring at the first few lines of the copy:

> To-day, May sixteenth, the world will come to an end at four-thirty-three Greenwich mean time. The unnamed comet which has been visible for three weeks will strike the earth at a point six hundred and thirty miles north of the south pole——

He read the lines again and then turned to Palythorpe.

"What's this?" he asked huskily. "Are you putting up a scare?"

And then it was that Palythorpe made a mistake. He himself had read and accepted the news, if not with equanimity at least with courage.

"It is true," he said; "this is the gist of the summary you brought me. Now you understand why they've been working near the observatory."

The steel "stick" in Elmers' hand dropped with a crash to the floor. He staggered back, his face livid.

"It's a lie, a lie," he shrieked. "I tell you it's a lie!"

"It's true enough," said Palythorpe shakily, for some of the man's terror had communicated itself to him, and then without warning a raging lunatic leaped at him and gripped him by the throat.

"You're lying, you're trying to frighten me! The world is not coming to an end, you devil! You devil!"

Palythorpe struck out at the madman. Twice he hit the bloated face, and then, with superhuman strength, Elmers flung him away and darted to the door. It was locked, but he tugged at the handle, whimpering in the high, clear note which Jimmy had heard when Stope-Kendrick came flying across Blackheath to his death. He released his hold of the handle, and springing on a bench, kicked out the window and, struggling through the broken glass, dropped into the street.

A policeman saw the wild figure, his face streaming with blood from the glass, and sought to intercept him. Elmers flung him aside and raced down the main street. An empty taxicab was pulling away from a rank and he leaped upon the running board.

"There! There!" he said, and pointed ahead. "Go fast, faster, faster!"

The frightened driver tried to fling himself from his seat, but Tom's hand gripped him by the collar and wrenched him back.

"I'll kill you, I'll kill you!" he sobbed. "Take me away from this, do you hear?"

"Where do you want to go?" gasped the driver.

"To a church, any church——"

It was at a little Catholic chapel of the Sacred Heart, on the Barnet Road, that the sweating driver brought his car to a standstill, and Elmers, springing off before the taxi had stopped, flew up the steps and into the cool interior. A priest was standing near the altar rail in the deserted church, giving directions to some workmen who were repairing the mosaic floor. He heard the clatter of the man's feet and faced him.

Elmers staggered up the aisle, his arms outflung, making a queer and eerie noise that momentarily turned the blood of the priest to ice. For a second they confronted one another. The calm, the serene, frocked figure, the uncouth, half-mad printer.

Tom looked past him, and the priest saw the man's breast rising and falling and heard the shrill wail of mortal terror in his voice.

"God! God!" Tom Elmers' voice rose to a scream, and he stumbled forward and, gripping the altar cloth convulsively with his grimy hands, he fell.

And the world ended for him in that second.

## CHAPTER XIX.

It was dawn on the morning of the sixteenth and a big Rolls stood at the door of Blake's priory. Jimmy came out of the house fastening his gloves and cast an eye at the sky. The chauffeur was waiting.

"I shall not want you, Jones," said Jimmy. "You had better go to your home and your people."

Jones grinned.

"I've got neither home nor people, sir," he said cheerfully, "and if I don't go with you, I shall stay here."

"Well, you'd better come along," said Jimmy. "No, you'd better stay," he said after a moment's thought.

It was curious how he had to readjust his system of conduct in the light of the great factor. He could not take the man with him, because that would mean Jones would have to be told, and he could not trust any man to receive that stunning news with philosophy.

Joe came out, buttoned to the neck in a heavy overcoat, for the morning was chilly, and then Delia came, and Jimmy took both her hands in his and smiled into her face.

"You look lovely, Delia," said Jimmy. "Did you sleep well?"

She nodded.

"It was absurd to sleep, wasn't it?" she laughed. "But one cannot break the habit of a lifetime, even though——"

She looked at Jones and cut her words short. Joe climbed into the back of the car, lit his pipe, and pulled a rug over his legs.

"Good-by, Jones," said Jimmy.

"Good morning, sir," said Jones, walking by the side of the slowly moving car. "What time do you expect to come back? You'll be back to-night, of course, sir?"

"I don't think so," said Jimmy, and with a wave of his hand was gone. He did not look back at Blake's priory. This "Day of Uniting" was a day of looking forward.

The streets were deserted, the world was sleeping, and the only people he saw were the policemen slowly pacing their beats.

They stopped at Guildford for breakfast, and Guildford was *en fete*. The "Day of Uniting" had coincided with the unveiling of the new war memorial and the streets were alive with holiday folk. Here, apparently, the instructions in the proclamation were not being observed. Servants were on duty at the hotel where they breakfasted, though one of them told him that they were being released at twelve o'clock, to spend the day with their families.

The newspapers had been published that morning, since their publication did not involve working very far into "The Day." Jimmy bought a copy on the street and gazed at it with interest. In billions of years' time perhaps a new civilization would reach its zenith. Would there be brains that could understand, supposing their owners discovered a newspaper which had escaped the world's destruction and the passage of ages, just what all these little figures in black upon white signified to a bygone age?

He turned to the principal news page. There was a story of a crime which had been committed a week before and which had excited attention. There was a statement concerning a new measure for the adjustment of income tax which was to be introduced at the next session of Parliament, there was a speech or two, and the record of a meeting of the royal society, where a professor had lectured upon the peculiar properties which had been discovered in radioactive clay. Jimmy folded the paper with a sigh and put it into his pocket.

"A very uninteresting newspaper," he said, "and thank God for it!"

"What did they do with this man Palythorpe?" asked the girl.

Jimmy shook his head.

"I think he has been sent to the Tower of London. It is very likely," he added simply, "that he is dead."

Their progress was a leisurely one. Jimmy had one hand on the steering wheel, in the other he held Delia's. Her calmness was anodyne to his troubled spirit, and he marveled at her serenity. She had extracted the sting from death and he worshiped her. At a little village where they stopped, they met the vicar outside the parish church, and he gossiped pleasantly.

"Did you see the comet last night? I am told it was a wonderful sight."

"No," said Jimmy. "I did not see it."

"Some of my parishioners saw it. The men who went to work very early in the morning. They said it was extremely beautiful, much larger than any comet they had seen. In fact, it was visible after daybreak."

"How fascinating!" said Jimmy and changed the subject.

They had to avoid the big military camp which the government had created on Salisbury Plain during the war, and at last they came to a spot in a fold of land, where a little stream trickled and trees cast a pleasant shade. Jimmy turned the car from the road and brought it across country into the tiny valley.

"And here we are," he said gently. "We'll have lunch in a jiffy. I'm starving."

He and the girl set the cloth while Joe wandered off on to the plain, and they talked of picnics and discussed food in "a perfectly animal way," said Delia apologetically.

Jim looked round. Joe was nowhere in sight.

"Delia, I haven't spoken to you about our marriage," he said. "When you came to me and—and—asked me, you knew, didn't you?"

She nodded.

"And you wanted this to happen before the——"

She raised her grave eyes to his.

"I wanted just to know that you were mine," she said. "I wanted the spiritual union, the sense of belonging to you—I wonder if you understand?"

"I think I do," said Jimmy quietly. "You don't know what comfort these hours bring and how cheerfully I can face whatever comes because of that very union you spoke of."

He put his arm round her shoulders and drew her to him. For the second time in his life he kissed her, and he thought how lovely it would be if there were a to-morrow, and wincing, put the thought from his mind.

Joe came back soon after. He was never a loquacious man; he had hardly spoken a word all the day.

"What are you thinking about, Joe?" asked Jimmy, after the lunch was cleared away.

"Oh, just things," said Joe vaguely. "I wasn't thinking of this afternoon—except in a way. I was just hoping."

"Hoping? For what?"

Joe shook his head.

"I had a thought this morning as I was dressing. Just a pin-point thought, and it took me a long time before I could hold it for my own comfort."

"Pass it along," said Jimmy with a smile. "We all want a little comforting."

But Joe smiled and shook his head again.

"I think not," he said.

The morning was hot. The early part of the afternoon was sultry. On the southern horizon great cumulus clouds were piling up, and an occasional gust of wind ruffled the leaves of the tree under which they sat.

"A storm is coming up," said Jimmy. He looked at his watch; it was half past three.

"I hope it rains," said the girl. "I love rain."

For half an hour it seemed that the clouds did not move and then the storm began to move with extraordinary rapidity. The white thunderheads towered higher and higher and the horizon was fringed with a purple haze. Presently they heard the low rumble of thunder.

"I think we'd better get into the car," said Jimmy. "Help me put up the hood, Joe."

They had it fixed and were in the car when the first few drops of rain fell. Almost immediately after, there was a blinding flash of light, and a crash that sent the girl shivering closer to Jimmy.

"It is only a storm, my dear," he smiled.

"I know—only my nerves are just a little —a little upset," she said faintly.

Jimmy had thought the storm would be a severe one, and in this he was not mistaken.

The fitful wind strengthened to a steady gale. The rolling plains were rimmed with quick, blue flashes of ribbon lightning. The thunder grew from a roll to a roar, and rose to an incessant crackle and crash. And then the rain came down. It poured a solid sheet, blotting out all view of the plain, and through it and above it the blue lightning went "flick-flick!" The air suddenly cooled and the twilight, which the forerunners of the storm had brought, darkened to a terrifying gloom.

Delia pressed her face against Jimmy's breast and put her hands to her ears.

Suddenly there came a terrifying explosion, that deafened and stunned them. It was followed by a sound as though giant hands had torn a sheet of steel as men tear paper. Jimmy drew the girl tighter and pulled a rug over her head and shoulders. He glanced at Joe Sennett. The old man was sucking at his pipe, his blue eyes fixed on vacancy.

"That must have been a tree that was struck," said Jimmy presently, glancing out and straining his head backward. "Yes," he nodded, "it was only a tree, Delia, and lightning, my darling, never strikes——"

A blue light so intensely brilliant that it blinded him blazed suddenly before his eyes; an ear-splitting crash and the car shook.

"In the same place twice," murmured Jimmy.

But he knew that it was the second of the trees which had been shattered, for he had seen a molten rivulet of liquid light running along the ground.

It seemed as though the pandemonium had lasted two hours. Then he looked at his watch. It was half past four, and the storm was passing. Rain still fell, but it was lighter. He waited, every second an agony, his watch gripped so tightly in his hand that he broke the glass without realizing the fact. He looked down at the girl and, miracle of miracles, she was asleep! Exhausted nature was taking its toll, and in the midst of that horrific moment, she had surrendered.

Jimmy uttered a prayer of thankfulness. He did not dare turn to Joe, for fear he should wake her, but presently he heard a movement behind him and the old man bent over the back of the seat and looked down at the girl and Jimmy saw a smile on his face.

They waited. How long Jimmy did not know. His senses were numbed, his mind a blank. Then suddenly the girl moved, opened her eyes, and sat up.

"I've been asleep," she said aghast. "What is the time?"

Jimmy peered at his watch. It was a quarter after five! They looked at one another, and it was Joe Sennett who made the first move. He rose, opened the door of the car, and stepped out. The rain had ceased. Far away to the northward they saw the black bulk of the storm sweeping on its way, but above, the patches of blue between the cloud rack were growing bigger and the sun, showing under the western edge of the cloud line, flooded the plains with golden splendor.

"I think we'll have some tea," said Jimmy huskily.

And when he looked at his father-in-law he found that Joe Sennett had already lighted the vapor stove they had brought with them. A solemn trio they were. They sat on the running board and sipped at their tea, each busy with his own thoughts. Presently the girl asked:

"What was in the telegram, Jimmy?"

"Telegram?" said Jimmy with a start.

"The telegram I brought over to you at the Warden's Lodge?"

Jimmy gaped at her.

"I never read it," he said. "Whatever made you think of it?"

"Whatever makes one think of anything at any time?" she asked.

Jimmy realized that he was wearing the same suit of clothes that he had worn on the night he had been taken to the Warden's Lodge. He put his hand in his side pocket, without, however, discovering the telegram.

It was in the inside breast pocket that he found it.

"Rather bulky, isn't it?" he asked as he tore it open.

There were three sheets and they were written in German. He looked hurriedly at the last page.

"Schaffer," he said with a groan. "And I don't understand a word——"

He heard the girl's laugh. She took the pages from his hand and read them through, and he saw a frown gathering on her forehead and waited for her to speak. When she did her voice was shaky.

"I don't understand it quite," she said, "and yet——"

"Read it," said Jimmy.

She smoothed the folds of the sheets on her lap and began:

"My letter to Van Roon was to point out four extraordinary inaccuracies in Maggerson's Calculus of Variations. These are obviously printer's mistakes, but unless they are immediately corrected, there will be grave and serious errors in all astronomical tables which are worked out from the calculus. Please see Maggerson and tell him. As an instance of the danger, I might tell him that I worked out parallax of the new comet, and according to his calculus it would collide with the earth on the sixteenth of May, whereas it really crosses the earth's orbit twenty-three days before the earth reaches line of supposed contact. SCHAFFER."

It was Joe Sennett who spoke first.

"That was my thought," he said in a low voice.

"Did you know?"

"I only know that that dog Elmers deliberately tampered with the type of three books, and I could only pray that he had also done the same with Mr. Maggerson's tables. It was a faint hope, but if he had and had done the work so cleverly that it could not be detected at sight, then it was possible that Mr. Maggerson had made a great error."

Jimmy rose and stretched himself, and on his face dawned a smile which was a veritable smile of life.

"That is what happened," he said softly. "I know it, I know it!" And then he laughed, a long, low, hearty laugh that ended in something like a sob. He picked up the girl in his arms, kissed her, and seated her in the car.

"Let us go back to life," he said as he started the motor.

The sunlight was still in the sky, though the stars were shining brightly overhead, when the mud-spattered Rolls turned into the drive of Blake's priory, to the consternation of Mr. Jones, the chauffeur, who was entertaining a lady friend to supper in the dining room.

## TRAILS IN THE AIR

THE army air service is going to ask the coöperation of chambers of commerce, aërial clubs, and other civic organizations in providing municipal landing fields, emergency fields, and identification markers for a system of airways connecting the more important cities of the country. The Boy Scouts, with their usual helpfulness, already have offered to assist by providing markers and by helping flyers in trouble. Each of these air routes will have main and subsidiary stations and emergency landing fields. Each main field will be provided with telephone and wireless equipment, and will have a meteorological station. The advantages of these trails of the air will be available to all owners and operators of aircraft.

The first of these airways will connect Washington, D. C., and Dayton, Ohio. There will be seventeen main and subsidiary stations in Virginia, West Virginia, Maryland, Pennsylvania, and Ohio. This air trail will follow, roughly, the route taken in the early days by pioneers, emigrants, and military forces trying to reach the Ohio River. Other contemplated air routes are: from New York City to Langley Field, Virginia; from Jacksonville, Florida, to San Diego, California; from San Antonio, Texas, to Tucson, Arizona; the "Yellowstone Air Trail," from St. Paul to Seattle, with stations in South Dakota, Montana, Idaho, and Washington; and an air route between New Orleans and Chicago, over the Mississippi Valley.

# Six Rounds

By A. M. Chisholm

*Author of "The Man of Two Packs," "Little Fish," Etc*

**"Butch" McShane and "Chuck" Wilson sure got a lot of punch into their acting**

NOBODY knows exactly what makes a champion. The history of the ring teems with examples of might-have-beens—of men who had everything except something; and as to what that missing something is or was opinions vary. But the outstanding fact is that many fighters of admitted skill, gameness, punch, and fighting spirit, have never reached the top. Which was the case with "Butch," christened Thomas McShane, and "Chuck"—by baptismal rites Henry Wilson. Either of them would have made a lightweight champion and, later, a welter extend himself to the limit. And yet they were never even in sight of a match with a champion. Perhaps that was why.

Butch and Chuck were very well acquainted, even intimate. But their relations were not at all those said to exist aforetime between David and Jonathan, being rather in the similitude of David and Goliath, or possibly Cain and Abel. Such relations on their part had been strictly professional and without personal animus; and they had resulted in a mutual respect and something—outside the ring—akin to friendship.

To say that Butch McShane was no beauty is to put it kindly. Starting under a heavy, natural handicap his features had suffered in various affrays, public and private, under weapons of aggression ranging from half bricks to eight-ounce gloves. Their normal expression, carefully cultivated for professional purposes, was ferocious. But one comfort was that the worst had happened. However in the future they might be shuffled, cut, or worked over the result could scarcely be worse, with a fifty-fifty chance of being an improvement.

But, when it came to physique, Butch was there with the goods. He was swarthy, hairy, and solidly built. He owned a jaw like a battleship's ram, endowed by kindly nature with natural shock absorbers and further protected by high, muscular shoulders which, separated by a very short and thick neck, rendered said jaw practically immune from all but high-angled fire. Also he possessed an abdominal armor belt capable of withstanding most broadsides of the yard-arm-to-yard-arm variety.

With his chin tucked comfortably behind his left shoulder, Butch was accustomed to take his medicine until the opportunity came to unhook his right hand, which was his best. When that got across and connected properly—and it usually connected properly when it got across—Butch was wont to turn away nonchalantly, remarking generously as his gloves were unlaced: "Chees, Jerry, dere was one hard guy to punch out!"

On the other hand, Chuck Wilson was distinctly good looking. He was taller than Butch, and more rangily built. His hair was fair and his eyes, normally, were blue. Sometimes they were black and blue, surrounded by a prismatic, puffed area to be reduced by application of the raw flesh of the steer. But as works of the Creator unspoiled by the gloved hand of man they were clear blue with the frank, innocent gaze of happy childhood; intensely puzzling when viewed above two five-ounce mitts of which either held the kick of a gray Georgia mule. He was of the white-skinned type, which bruises and bleeds easily; which also was misleading, for he was at his very best when he looked like a casualty station in a busy sector. His muscular development, while not so obvious as Butch's, was there nevertheless. His were the long, smooth muscles, with tremendous driving power. There was no doubt about his batteries, and many a disgusted fighter had failed to dent his abdominal armor belt.

On such occasions as Butch and Chuck had faced each other in roped and resined arenas the results had been painful but indecisive. That is, they were indecisive as to the principals, though a credulous public was under the impression that on one occasion Butch's right hand had been the sole reason for Chuck's quiescence while a referee counted ten; and that on another occasion this result had been reversed. But in reality these outcomes had been arrived at by private arrangement, in consideration of an equitable division of winner's and loser's ends, plus certain side bets.

On other occasions, failing satisfactory frame-ups, they had given the public full value for its money, going the route to draws after honest and whole-hearted attempts to kill one another. Both had the clear sand of gamecocks and both could absorb punishment and come back for more. Possibly Butch could take a little more than Chuck; and perhaps it was lucky for him that he could. Perhaps his right hand was better than either of Chuck's, but Chuck was quicker on his feet. Butch fought from a crouch; Chuck was a straight-up boxer. Privately each considered that in a finish fight with a blind or lenient referee he could lick the other. And both had of necessity given up the attempt to make the lightweight limit.

For years Butch and Chuck subsisted easily, if not in clover at least in good pasture. But there came a time when not only they, but others of their profession fell on evil days. A wave of hysteria disguised as moral reform overran the country, submerging legislatures and municipal bodies. Reformers, riding triumphantly on its crest, denounced the degrading and brutalizing exhibitions known as prize fights, and refused to see the subtle distinction between the said exhibitions and those euphemistically termed "glove contests."

In vain practical unregenerates pointed out that a trained man in ring costume is not only a more pleasing spectacle but a better risk than an untrained one running to catch a car. The wave choked their feeble protests, and swept out of existence not only advertised contests, but "athletic clubs" where any fairly skillful gentleman willing to go through the motions might earn a few honest dollars almost any Saturday night. Mayors and city councils developed strong uplifting tendencies, and police departments, speeded up and investigated, played it safe to save their jobs, and threw chests of new and uncompromising virtue. Temporarily, at least, there was nothing doing for fighters whose celebrity did not warrant the erection of arenas in the rude and ungodly mining towns of the West.

The reform wave left Butch and Chuck metaphorically high and dry. They had never taken much thought for the morrow, and they were strangers to the good, old fable of the busy ant. Eventually they were forced to establish relations with a gentleman who did business beneath the sign of three balls, and so got rid of a number of superfluities in the form of jewelry and fine raiment acquired in more prosperous days.

But the proceeds of these forced sales decreased with a rapidity peculiar to resources when all is outgo and income is nothing. They began to adopt simple methods of living; and thus one day they met in an eating place whose chief recommendation was its cheapness. Up till then neither had confided in the other. It was Butch who started the confessional ball rolling by a modest request for temporary accommodation to the extent of ten dollars.

"If I had it loose youse'd get it, Butch," Chuck replied frankly, "but I ain't. Youse beat me to it. I was just goin' to ask you."

Butch regarded his old rival at first with suspicion, but decided that he was telling the truth.

"So we're both up against it!" he ruminated gloomily. "The way it is wit' me, Chuck, if I don't git a fight pretty soon, I'll have to quit eatin'. And I don't see no fight comin'."

"The fightin' game's on the blink," said Chuck.

"They got it so's it's safer to wallop a guy wit' a lead pipe in a dark alley than wit' a glove in a ring," Butch agreed. "What's birds like me an' you goin' to do?"

The problem was beyond Chuck, and he gave it up.

"I'm sellin' papers when I break into de game," Butch confided sadly. "I don't know not'in' else but fightin'. I'll say it's a dirty deal we been handed. Here's me an' you, bot' of us hard guys. We could fill a house any night wit' ten rounds, an' pull all our punches so's they wouldn't hurt a baby. An' they won't let us!"

"You said something," Chuck agreed. "We ain't champeens, Butch, because we done too much fightin'. But get us right, an' either of us could come near cleanin' up on some of these dancin' champs."

"Ain't it the bloody truth!" Butch rumbled. "I'd rather fight some of them champs twenty rounds than take you ten on de level. They wouldn't be half as rough an' dirty."

Chuck accepted this tribute in the spirit in which it was offered.

"When it comes to de rough stuff, Butch, I ain't got not'in' on you," he acknowledged. "De last fight we had, if de referee had knew his job, I'd of win when you foul me in de sevent'."

"If he'd of knew his job," Butch corrected, "I'd of win when *you* foul *me* in de fift'."

"Well—maybe," Chuck admitted frankly. "If you ask me, somebody hands that referee a piece of change to make us go the full route."

"You said it," Butch agreed. "He was crooked."

Silence infolded them as they meditated upon the depravity of the referee who had forced them to fight the full ten rounds. Butch broke the gloomy silence.

"We got to git a fight, 'sall there is to it. S'pose we see Costigan?"

"He's crooked," said Chuck.

"Straight guys like us ain't got no chance, anyway," said Butch. "He may be able to frame something for us."

Mr. Costigan, sometimes referred to as "Honest John," dwelt in an unpretentious hotel frequented by "sports" of various kinds. Be it said for Mr. Costigan, he did not seek the spotlight. A modest violet of sport, he preferred the shaded nooks, which unkind persons said were sometimes very shady, indeed. However, nothing had ever been brought squarely home to him; which fact might indicate honesty, genius, or pure luck.

As it happened, Mr. Costigan himself was up against a serious financial shortage. The disastrous reform wave had washed out the props upon which several of his activities had rested, and he had been unfortunate besides. He was not entirely without money, though if he had paid his debts he would have been. But he had no intention of paying them just then, being well aware that, though mathematically the position of one having debts and cash just sufficient to liquidate them is exactly that of one having neither cash nor debts, practically the difference is vast. For opportunity knocks vainly upon the door of him who is flat broke. In fact, Mr. Costigan was seriously considering the advisability of letting financial bygones be bygones by the simple method of putting a thousand or so miles between him and Falls City. He was ready to take a chance on making money, but the announcement of Butch and Chuck that they desired to exchange blows for currency left him cold.

"You couldn't pull off a pillow fight in a cellar in this town," he said. "The lid's down and clamped."

"We thought youse could find some place like a big barn out in the country or a barge on the river," Butch suggested hopefully. "An' then, if you tipped off some of them boob sports it was a grudge fight and they'd see a murder for their money, they'd fall for it."

"Fair enough, only it ain't binding," Mr. Costigan returned. "That grudge thing is played out. And some people are leery of you boys."

"Why?" Butch queried in hurt surprise.

"Funny, ain't it?" Mr. Costigan observed, with faint irony. "If you want to know, they say you're too clever to hurt one another in the ring."

"Ain't Chuck hung the K. O. on me, and ain't I hung it on him?" Butch asked in aggrieved tones.

"S'posin' we are clever," said Chuck, "don't they want to see speed?"

"You got your alibis," Mr. Costigan admitted. "You're fast and tough, and you make a good match—when you try. But not for mine. Nothing in it for me."

"There'd be betting," Chuck pointed out. "You get money up and wise us, and either me or Butch will drop dead any round you say."

"That's crooked," said Mr. Costigan severely.

"Well?" said Chuck.

"And you couldn't get away with it," Mr. Costigan added, more convincingly.

"We'd do it right," Butch assured him. "We know how."

"I guess you do," Mr. Costigan admitted. "I'll think it over, but I don't see it now. The fighting game ain't what it used to be."

"It's our business," Butch lamented, "an' they've went an' ruined it on us. How are we goin' to eat? Tap some guy on the bean, or what?"

Mr. Costigan was not in the habit of casting bread upon the waters, being more than doubtful of its return; but two boys who would do as they were told were in the nature of an investment. After hesitation he produced a sadly attenuated roll.

"I'll stake you to a ten-spot apiece," he said. "They don't grow on the bushes no more, and I ain't flush myself, so be careful of it. If I hear of anything, I'll let you know."

"T'anks!" Butch acknowledged, without false shame.

"T'anks!" Chuck echoed. "If you're ever bettin' on a fight I'm in, Costigan, just put me wise."

II.

In the days when the moving-picture business was in an embryonic state and the present stellar system had not evolved, a concern known as "Brownstone Films, Inc.," was born of a union of the monetary resources of one Isaac Braunstein and the ideas of a certain Martin O'Hara, who possessed an extensive experience of the managerial end of the theatrical business, and thought he possessed an accurate knowledge of the tastes of the great American public.

"Look ut, now," Mr. O'Hara was wont to say on such occasions as he aired his views in the premises: "What is it the public gives up to see? Is it a circus or a wild-West show? Once a year, mebbe, yes. Is it these here 'problem' plays wrote by erotic hopheads where the seventh commandment is always busted or goin' to be? Not unless ye can get pulpit publicity, the preachers boostin' for ye by tryin' to knock. Is it the 'spectacular' kind? Most of them go broke. I'm tellin' ye the show the public says it wants, as proved by its steady patronage year after year, is the one that represents the life and the people it knows, mixed up and opposed to the life and the people it knows only by hearsay.

"It's settled that pictures are to be popular-priced; which means they have to be made with popular-priced audiences in view. Now, the backbone of the popular-priced audience is the workin' lad and his gyurl. When the rich lad defies his haughty parents, puts on overalls and marries the foreman's datter they're tickled to death; and the same when the young heiress marries the husky young mechanic.

"As a recipe for a good, dependable show on the stage, the wise ones have always taken a workin' lad and a workin' gyurl, a millionaire with a marcelled wife, a haughty datter and a wild son, a smooth, gamblin' crook to lead the son astray and ruin everybody else; and for seasonin' added an English butler, a parlor maid named Nora O'Shea, and a cop called Dinny Hogan. Then they had a show that would run for years. Ye can name them runnin' now that's playin' to the sons and datters of the b'ys and gyurls that saw them first. And why? Because they have the rock-bottom ingrediencies that never fail to raise the dough, because they're based on human nature. Shakespeare gets by four hundred years after for the same reason. He wrote plays for the folks who went to see them."



With these guiding principles, which seemed sound enough then, Brownstone Films proceeded to live, movie and have its being, and for a time did very well with a public to which the picture itself was so novel that it did not demand novelty in the picture. It had no high-priced stars and it paid no exorbitant salaries. It produced no special feature films, but it did turn out real—or almost real—human stories that appealed to a public not yet emancipated from traditions of the spoken drama. Its plays were made by a solid, dependable cast. Its leading lady, Georgia Dale, and its leading man, Ned Baxter, had good experience in "stock." "Stunts" were not required of them. Brownstone Films thought in terms of the stage, and its productions ran along lines delimited and limited by stage limitations.

But there came a day when the public palate, tickled by more highly seasoned food, refused to be satisfied by the plain, wholesome, but slightly stodgy Brownstone fare; a fact sadly if somewhat belatedly recognized by Braunstein and O'Hara.

"You can lead along a horse to the water a halter by, Marty," was the way the former put it, "but you can make him drink nix. We got to change our policy. We got to produce special-feature stuff—something with a punch to it."

"True for you," O'Hara admitted frankly. "I own up I didn't see the possibilities of the picture business. But one thing I do know—you got to give the public what it wants."

Braunstein nodded agreement.

"Our productions will cost more, and like we got to get some new people—that can jump off a runaway locomotive into a river and go around the paddle box of a steamer, and ride buck horses and all them stunts."

"I'd hate to can Ned Baxter," said O'Hara. "We're friends."

"On a pay roll," Braunstein stated, "friendship is out of place—like truth on a epitaph."

"Well, it isn't his fault if we've been producing the wrong stuff lately," argued O'Hara, who possessed the virtue of loyalty. "He does that as well as anybody could, and we'll always have to have somebody for the line he's been doing. Stunt actors are in a class by themselves. If we have to get one we will, but I won't can Baxter."

Braunstein, being fair-minded, nodded. Baxter made love beautifully and was equally at home in evening clothes and overalls.

A week after, Braunstein handed O'Hara a scenario which it appeared had caught his fancy. In due course O'Hara read it. The title was "A Man of His Hands." The general plot is immaterial, but it had several features, among them a ring contest in which the hero for good and sufficient reasons defeated the champion—class unspecified—a human brute and cave man, to the confusion and financial disaster of the villain and the alternate fear and joy of the heroine who, disguised as a reporter, occupied a ringside seat. There were training scenes and plenty of action. It was close enough to the old stuff to appeal to O'Hara, and it had enough of the new to conform to the new policy. He knew it would film well, but he found himself up against an initial difficulty, for if he had pugilists in his company he did not know them. He hunted up Baxter.

"Ned," he said, "can you box at all?"

Baxter was a clean-cut, fair-haired man who looked younger than he was, and in make-up looked positively youthful.

"It depends on the other fellow," he said frankly. "I can if he'll let me."

"At that you're no worse than some fighters," said O'Hara. "Could you get away with a fight scene?"

"What kind? Barroom, street, or what?"

"Ring. You knock out the champ."

"No, I don't," Baxter returned regretfully. "I'm not good enough to put it across. What's the idea?"

O'Hara told him. Baxter shook his head.

"Well, of course, not everybody can be a boxer," O'Hara admitted. "But Braunstein likes this thing, and so do I. Only I don't know where the divil I can get an actor who can scrap or a scrapper who can act."

He put this problem up to Braunstein. The latter was determined, but not helpful.

"You should get an actor who is also a fighter," he said sagely.

"Give me the name of one," said O'Hara. "And we need two."

"Plenty of fighters go on the stage."

"Old Peter Jackson made a good *Uncle Tom,*" said O'Hara, "and Jim Corbett gets away with it. Outside them, show me! The public goes to see the fighter himself, not to see him act. Fighters on the screen—murder! The only thing I see for it is to switch the story around so that the hero doesn't fight. Then I can get a couple of pork-and-beaners for the ring scene."

"The ring scene has to be good," Braunstein pointed out. "Two bums in the ring will be two bums on the screen. We got to give the public the real goods, Marty."

O'Hara admitted it sadly.

"Well, I'll do my best to find somebody for the part the way the script reads now," he said. "If I can't, I'll get a couple of scrappers and shoot the ring scene, anyhow."

"Get good scrappers," Braunstein advised.

"How good?" O'Hara demanded. "How much do you want to pay for this ring scene?"

"Understand me," said Braunstein, somewhat apprehensively, as the high cost of realism obtruded itself, "I ain't saying you should get real champeens. The fighting game is dull just now, account of these here laws against fights. You should pick up two good fighters cheap in a dull market."

But O'Hara, after diligent search, failed to find two actors who could make even a bluff at a championship contest. He fell back on the alternative of changing the story to conform to the necessities of the situation. It was difficult to eliminate the hero from the ring scene and make everything else fit; but at last he did it. Then he went hunting for two lightweights to go a limited route to a fake knock-out.

Leading exponents of the manly art objected, he learned, to being filmed with an opponent of anybody else's selection; and the necessity for a knock-out, real or pretended, settled the matter definitely for reasons succinctly stated by a gentleman of near-championship caliber, known as "Kid" Slade.

"I don't have not'in' to do wit' no fake kayos, see," Mr. Slade announced through the southwest corner of his mouth. "S'pose I'm boob enough to let some guy put me out in a pitcher, what happens? Why, of course, he claims he does it on de level, an' dere goes me rep! Maybe some day I lose a fight, an' de papers says I'm layin' down like I done in de movies. Or if de odder guy lets me hang it on him, it's a frame, ain't it? An' a pitcher showin' me in a frame don't do me rep no good. No, bo, not'in' stirrin'!"

O'Hara's pugilistic acquaintance was not extensive, and he soon exhausted his prospects, for the amounts they demanded as a condition precedent would have given Braunstein heart failure. He spoke of his troubles to a friend and this friend advised him to see one Honest John Costigan.

"Who's he?" said O'Hara. "And not knocking him if he's a friend of yours, most of these Honest Johns you run across would have slugged the widow of Scripture for her mite."

He got a brief account of Mr. Costigan and made up his mind to see him. When he knocked at the latter's door in the River House the owner opened it a mere crack.

"Mr. Costigan?" said O'Hara.

"I'm called that," Mr. Costigan admitted in a tone which implied that he could deny it successfully if necessary, but he admitted his caller. O'Hara stated his business without circumlocution, and Mr. Costigan assumed an expression of grave doubt.

"Good boys are hard to get now," he observed, shaking his head.

"They shouldn't be," said O'Hara bluntly.

"Have you tried?" Mr. Costigan queried.

"Not to mention," said O'Hara, who had no intention of bulling the market by doing so.

"What would these boys have to weigh in at?"

"Weights don't matter—except that they've got to look about evenly matched."

"Do they have to look like anything at all?" Mr. Costigan asked. "I mean do they have to have good looks? Because beauties are scarce in the business."

"If one looks like a human being," O'Hara replied, "the other can be a double for the missing link for all I care. In fact, the less looks he has the better."

"You mean the human being knocks out the link," Mr. Costigan deduced sagely.

"Virtue and good looks always triumph—in plays," said O'Hara.

"The public's a funny proposition," said Mr. Costigan, who knew something of the animal himself. "How good do the boys have to be?"

"In the scenario the fight is for a championship," O'Hara explained, "so you can see I can't use dubs. They've got to put over about six rounds of real fast, rough milling—the real thing short of a knock-out. That comes in the sixth."

"I see," said Mr. Costigan. "I might be able to get you two real good boys—if you'll pay what they're worth."

"What's that?" O'Hara asked.

"Well, times are hard just now," said Mr. Costigan. "Say about five hundred."

"Try one of my cigars," said O'Hara genially. "They're milder than that one you're smoking."

"I thought you wanted *good* boys," Mr. Costigan returned. "I can get you pork-and-beaners for twenty apiece."

"I do want 'em good," said O'Hara. "But I'm not hiring them by the month. Only six rounds."

"Now, see here," said Mr. Costigan earnestly, "I don't claim to be doing this for nothing. I want a little myself. These boys are *good*. Each of them has about everything a champ has—as high as the ears. What they ain't got above that, and the fact that the right man never got hold of 'em, it what's kept 'em from being contenders. They've got the speed and the punch. They're as fast and tough as they make 'em, and they can put your fight scene across right. If that's worth five hundred to you, say so. If not, it's all right with me. You're the doctor."

O'Hara reflected and in the end capitulated. He suspected that he was being held up, but the quotation was cheap compared with others he had had, and if these fighters came up to this advance notice they would be well worth the money.

"I'll want to see for myself what they're like," he said.

"Sure," Mr. Costigan nodded.

"You understand," O'Hara explained, "we're going to stage a real fight. We're showing training quarters and so on, and the preliminary work. Then we have to show the arena, the crowd—everything. Of course, I've seen a few fights, like everybody else, but I'm no expert. They tell me you know a good deal about the game."

"A little," Mr. Costigan admitted.

"You've refereed fights, I'm told."

"Not for a long time," said Mr. Costigan. Modestly he neglected to state that his retirement from the arduous duties of a referee had been accompanied by a nimbus of beer bottles and other missiles, expressive of popular disapproval of his humane efforts to nullify the soporific effects of a right hook by taking twenty seconds to count ten. "But any dope I can give you is yours."

"This is business," said O'Hara. "I'll pay you a hundred to supervise the setting—look after details of the ring and so on. That satisfactory?"

"Suits me," Mr. Costigan agreed.

"All right," said O'Hara. "And now when can I see these boys?"

Mr. Costigan, after a glance at his watch, thought that they could be found working out in a gymnasium back of a saloon owned by an ex-pugilist known as "Happy" Morgan.

"If they work together they're friendly," O'Hara commented. "Remember, I don't want a love scene—I want a fight."

"Don't worry," Mr. Costigan grinned. "If you're satisfied they got the goods, I'll fix it with them. You'd better leave that to me. If they heard you were in the movie business, they might try to hold you up."

"One holdup is enough for me," said O'Hara.

The small gymnasium back of Morgan's place was tenanted by a young man with a lowering, ferocious countenance who was skipping a rope industriously; and a second who was putting a bag through its paces.

"Butch McShane skippin'; Chuck Wilson punchin' the bag," said Mr. Costigan succinctly. "Come over here, boys, and meet me friend, Mr. O'Hara."

O'Hara reflected that Butch would need no make-up whatever; but when he got a fair look at Chuck he barely stifled an exclamation. For Chuck's natural likeness to Ned Baxter was remarkable. The fighter was some years younger, some pounds lighter, and naturally his costume or lack of it made a difference. He was not Baxter's double, but O'Hara thought that Webb, his make-up man, would have little difficulty in turning Baxter into Chuck or Chuck into Baxter. Which fact naturally was fraught with all sorts of possibilities.

Butch and Chuck were quite willing to spar a round or two for Mr. Costigan's friend.

"Make this good, boys," Costigan whispered as he laced on their gloves. "There may be something in it."

"Zat so!" said Butch. "All right, Chuck?"

"Sure," Chuck nodded. "Let's go!"

Now, Butch and Chuck could give an imitation of murder good enough to deceive the average referee. The three rounds O'Hara saw were apparently faster and harder than some paid-admission bouts he had witnessed between alleged topnotchers. Actually they were "pulling" their punches and "slipping" them with roll of head and give of body. But, nevertheless, it took condition and cleverness to put up the exhibition.

The best of it, from O'Hara's standpoint, was that they were contrasted types. Butch was the brutal prize fighter to the life. Chuck, the fair-haired, straight-up boxer, was the logical—screen—victor. And if the latter was not the dead spit of Baxter, Webb could make him so. O'Hara, at times somewhat skeptical of Providence as an institution, took it all back. It was great luck.

"Will they do?" Mr. Costigan asked, knowing the answer in advance from O'Hara's face.

"They'll have to," said the latter, who considered it prudent to disguise his satisfaction. "Fix it up with them."

"When do you want them?"

"Not for a few days."

"All right," said Mr. Costigan.

## III.

One of Mr. Costigan's rules of life was to get his as he went along, and as much of it as he could. He hated to see in retrospect a bet he had overlooked. Hence he was accustomed to consider all the possibilities of a situation before action, and this seemed to present several.

"You wanted a fight," he said to Butch and Chuck a couple of days later, "and I think I can fix it. Only it's got to be kept quiet."

"Sure!" Butch agreed eagerly.

"Not a peep out of us," Chuck confirmed.

"It's a new stunt," said Mr. Costigan, "and it ought to work—once. That fellow I brought in to see you the other day—he's a movie man."

"You're wantin' us to fight for the movies!" Butch exclaimed.

"Chees!" said Chuck.

"Do you think you're heavyweight

champs?" Mr. Costigan inquired with dampening sarcasm. "Fight for the movies? Nothing like it. This movie thing is a stall. Fights are barred, but a ring scene for the movies is different; so we pull the fight that way. There'll be a camera with a guy turnin' the crank, and to make it binding somebody'll maybe tell you what to do in the ring. We can get away with it—once."

"Do we fight on de level?" Chuck inquired.

"If you can," Mr. Costigan returned, "for about six rounds. Then one of you takes the high dive."

"Which of us?" Butch asked.

"I'll tell you later."

"What do we get out of it?" Chuck asked practically.

"A hundred," Mr. Costigan replied experimentally; "and fifty," he added, warned by the expression of Chuck's face.

"Apiece?" Butch asked in the interests of clarity.

"Are you crazy?" Mr. Costigan countered.

"Not enough to fight Chuck six on de level for half of a hundred and fifty," said Butch.

"Well, make it apiece," Mr. Costigan conceded generously. "It's more than I intended, but——"

"And before we go in the ring," Chuck interrupted with determination.

"Say, what's the matter with you?" said Mr. Costigan indignantly. "When I say you get it that means you get it, don't it?"

Chuck refused a direct answer. "When we got it, we got it," he stated. "And I get mine before I draw on a mitt, see? Cash money. In me hand."

"Me, too," Butch backed him up.

"Oh, all right," Mr. Costigan agreed. "For two guys that's broke you're mighty particular."

"When you're broke you got to be," Chuck returned. "I could use about fifty of that now."

So could Butch. Mr. Costigan obeyed the plain hint with obvious reluctance.

"Now, don't go and blow it," he advised.

"Do you mean on automobiles and yachts?" Chuck returned. "Not me. I was thinkin' of takin' a trip around the world with it, but just as you say."

"You got a bright mind," Mr. Costigan observed. "When this fight's over I'll try and get a job for you tellin' jokes in vaudeville."

He informed O'Hara that the fighters would be ready when he was, and showed a keen interest in details of the fight set.

"How would it be," he asked, "if I got a real ring crowd of fight fans? There's a lot of them in this town."

"What would it cost?"

"Not much. I think I can fix it so it won't cost you anything."

"Go as far as you like that way," said O'Hara.

This apparently valueless concession appeared to please Mr. Costigan, who repaired to a job printer, and subsequently interviewed various sports of his acquaintance, winding up with an interview with the chief of police, from which he emerged smiling.

Now O'Hara was not overlooking the resemblance between Baxter and Chuck, which might make it possible to use the scenario in its original form. Baxter could get away with everything but the training camp and ring scenes. In the former, Miss Dale as *Betty Harrington* visited the training quarters of her lover, *Jack Somerville* with whom she had a pretty little love scene and, disguised as a newsboy, she spied upon the training of the brutal champion. There was also an impromptu rough-house between *Somerville* and the champion. The question in O'Hara's mind was whether Chuck could make even a bluff at the love stuff cut down to a minimum, and the only way to find out was to give him a trial. Naturally any make-up would suffer in the ring scene, but the solution of that was to make up Baxter in the other scenes, and allow Chuck to step into the ring *au naturel*.

O'Hara thought it all over and decided to retain the original version if he could. When he told Costigan to bring the fighters around the next day that gentleman did not appear pleased.

"This is different," he said. "All you told me was that you wanted these boys to go six rounds. That's what I told them. Now you want them to act as well."

"I'm paying for it," said O'Hara. "Where does it grind you?"

Mr. Costigan found difficulty in answering.

"Well, let it go," he said at last; and with Butch and Chuck he did the best he could.

"You'll spar the six rounds," he told them; "but O'Hara wants some pictures of training camps, and you're to make them. So you're movie actors."

"Us!" Butch gasped.

"Chees!" said Chuck.

"I had a hard time landing the job for you," said Mr. Costigan, "but I told O'Hara you could do it, and it's up to you to make good."

"Movie guys drags it down in bunches," said the progressive Chuck. "We'd oughta get more coin."

"You'll get maybe a five-spot a day extra," Costigan informed him. "But don't get all swelled up about it, because the only reason they want you at all is because you look like an actor named Baxter who can't box. The stuff he ought to do and can't, you do for him. They'll fix you up to look like him so the audiences won't spot you for a ringer. So you keep quiet, and don't tell anybody, and there may be a little more in it for you. I'll speak to O'Hara."

When he had gone the fighting men were more apprehensive than elated. Fighting was their business; but acting was a nervous job. Chuck felt premonitory symptoms of stage fright. He took a vicious right-hand stab at the bag and turned to Butch, who was perched meditatively upon the vaulting horse.

"How do they fix me up to look like that actor guy, huh?" he queried.

"There was a bird tellin' me about a friend of his that had it done," Butch replied. "This bird's friend is a yegg, see, and the bulls is runnin' him ragged. So he goes to a doc; an' the doc saws some bone out of his nose, an' trims up his ears——"

"T'ell!" the startled Chuck ejaculated.

"An' cuts his map open t'ree or four places an' draws it up diff'rent wit' catgut stitches an' leaves 'em in till it sets that way," Butch pursued, with cheerful relish. "Then he jerks out some teeth, an' scalds his face all over wit' boilin' water till the skin peels off so it'll grow on new. That's all he does. This bird says the yegg says there's not'in' to it."

"There ain't, huh!" Chuck commented, with strong distaste.

"It don't hurt much, this yegg says," Butch encouraged. "All the time he's shot full of dope."

"You can try it, if you want to," Chuck offered generously.

"They don't want me," Butch returned with cheerful resignation. "It's youse."

Chuck was in a state of nervous tension when they presented themselves to O'Hara, but steadied when he learned that beyond a possible touch of pencil and grease paint no liberties with his face were contemplated. He shook hands with Baxter, and surveyed Miss Georgia Dale with a tongue-tied admiration which was shared by Butch, for Miss Dale was not at all hard to look at.

Webb, the make-up expert, had no doubt that he could make Baxter and Chuck indistinguishable for screen purposes, and O'Hara proceeded to instruct his recruits.

"Now," he said, "here's the idea; this is what you boys have to do. It ought to be easy for you, but get it clear in your heads. Butch, you're the champion, *'Bulldog' Hogan,* a man-killer. Chuck, you're *Jack Somerville,* a college athlete, and your old man's a millionaire, only he's gone broke, and you've quit college and gone to work in a garage——"

"But I don't know not'in' about cars," Chuck interpolated.

"Nobody in a garage does," said O'Hara with some bitterness. "Anyway, Baxter will do that overalls stuff. I'm just giving you the plot. You're working in a garage, and all your old society pals give you the go-by, because you're broke and working for wages. You're in love——"

"Huh!" Chuck ejaculated in alarm.

"With *Betty Harrington,* the datter of the guy that put the skids under your old man," O'Hara went on, unheeding. "Miss Dale, here, is *Betty,* and her old man would take a shotgun to you if he could, but *Betty's* true blue. You've got to make some money, and you've boxed a lot at college, so you challenge the champ and make a match."

"You don't get no crack at a champ like that," Chuck objected. "You got to have a rep."

"And not too much of a rep or he sidesteps you," Butch amplified.

"Shut up and listen to me!" O'Hara snapped. "This isn't real life. You challenge the champ and start training. *Betty* visits you in your training quarters. You're in love with her, and you have a love scene that——"

"I do—what?" Chuck gasped. "Say, I ain't——"

"You do the best you can," said O'Hara soothingly. "She'll show you how, won't you, Georgie?"

"Of course I will," Miss Dale nodded. "I'm easy to make love to."

"Y-yeah!" Chuck admitted.

"She wishes you luck and so on," O'Hara

proceeded. "You've got to win the championship for her sake, understand."

"Ain't they no purse?" Chuck asked practically.

"Dammit, can't you get it that this is a play?" O'Hara rasped. "There's a purse of a million or more, stage money, if you want it. Well, then, *Betty* gets tipped off that the champ has a new man-killing punch, and she gets into boys' clothes and goes to his camp as a newsboy, selling papers.

"Now, Butch, *Betty*, as the newsboy, makes a hit with you by giving you a con talk about how good you are, and how she's bet her hard-earned nickels on you, and fought another newsboy who says you're a cheese. This tickles you, and you sort of take her for a mascot and she's around your camp a lot. She gets you to show her the punch you're going to use on the other fellow. Then, of course, she wises him up."

"The skirt double crosses me, huh!" said Butch. "I getcha."

"That's it," O'Hara nodded. "You show her the new punch several times, till she's wise to it."

"But there ain't no new punches," Butch stated. "There ain't a new punch since they barred the La Blanche pivot. The old-timers, like old Jack Dempsey an' Georgie Dixon an' even 'Yankee' Sullivan had 'em all. Why, Sayers an' Heenan had 'em!"

"Well, you show her something, old or new," said O'Hara. "You're not taking any chances with this *Somerville*. You know he must be good because he's a college champion——"

"Cheese!" said Butch with contempt. "Soon as they see Chuck on the fillum they'll know he ain't no amateur. Amateurs ain't no class. There never was an amateur champ that could last three rounds with a dub perfeshnal, unless he was let."

"This isn't real life, as I told you before," said O'Hara impatiently. "You fake up some punch. Then, some days later, you're doing road work and you meet *Betty*. She's in her own clothes, but you know her, and you get suspicious. You stop her and try to make her tell what her game was. She won't, and you get a little rough. Then *Somerville*, doing *his* road work, comes along and interferes. You're starting to mix it when a car full of sports comes along and stops you.

"You're sore, Butch. This mix-up shows you that he'll be a hard man to beat, and you're pretty sure that *Betty* has given away your pet punch. So you frame it with your sparring partner to quit you, and go over to *Somerville's* camp and get a job."

"Who's me sparrin' partner?" Butch queried.

"That's so," O'Hara admitted. "I never thought of that. We'll have to get somebody. For effect I'd like to get a colored boxer."

"How about Sam Langford?" Butch suggested humorously.

"Jeannette for me," said Chuck, grinning.

"Don't be funny," snapped O'Hara. "Do you know a colored boy who can box?"

"Well, I know a good smoke," said Butch. "He ain't no Gans, but he can take a punch."

"Bring him around to-morrow."

"He won't be out of jail till Thursday," Butch replied regretfully. "He gets tanked and barbers another coon——"

"No razor artists go on this lot," said O'Hara. "Get somebody else. Your partner shows *Jack* your punches—all wrong, of course. In the ring, if he does what your partner tells him, he'll leave himself wide open for another punch you've invented. Get all that?"

"All but the punch," Butch replied honestly. "This fancy-punch stuff is bunk. What you do in a fight, if the other guy don't like the rough stuff and wants to box you, you tear right into him from the gong; or, if he likes it that way and tears into you, you stall along and cover up, an' lay on him in the clinches an' make him do the breakin', all the referee'll let you, till he loses his steam; an' then——"

"How many times do I have to tell you this is the screen?" O'Hara interrupted. "The punch is the idea of a frame-up, of crooked work, you're putting over on the audience, if you can understand that. That's all there is to the training scenes.

"Then we come to the fight itself. You go six rounds, as fast and hard as you know how. You make it real milling. And in the sixth you try to work this man-killing punch on *Jack*, but he fools you and knocks you out."

"Just like that?" said Butch, with some distaste.

"Just like that," O'Hara nodded. "Make it a good knock-out, too. I've heard you know how."

He intended to put them through a scene or two, but just then his presence and Baxter's were requested elsewhere, and he left the two fighters to the tender mercies of Miss Georgia Dale.

Miss Dale was a lady of considerable versatility, and a love of mischief which had well-nigh wrecked several companies with which she had been connected in her stage career. She looked upon the ferocious visage of Butch and the deceptively innocent features of the equally murderous Chuck, and was delighted to observe that they were embarrassed at being left alone with her. And she went to it joyously.

"I've always wanted to meet real fighters," she gushed. "Which of you is the best?"

The question was as embarrassing as she had intended it to be. Looking at this divinity, Butch earnestly desired to tell her that he could knock Chuck through the ropes; while Chuck felt an equal urge to confide in her that he could cut Butch to pieces. Both blushed deeply, and awkwardly shuffled expert feet. Chuck at last rose to heights of self-abnegation.

"Butch, he's a pretty tough baby," he admitted generously.

"Aw, I ain't no tougher than you," said Butch, not to be outdone in generosity. "Of course I got——"

"You got—what?" Chuck asked coldly, as Butch hesitated.

"Well, maybe I got a better right," Butch concluded modestly; "but——"

"Yeah—'but,' " said Chuck. "You pack a good right wallop—but——"

"Have you ever fought each other?" Miss Georgie inquired with charming interest. "And which won?"

"Once he win," Butch replied; "and once I win; and two other times we go to a draw."

"Wit' a crooked referee!" Chuck amplified meaningly.

"Crooked is right!" Butch agreed, with meaning equal but opposite.

"So then you're evenly matched," Miss Georgie deduced.

"On de record," Butch admitted, in tones which impugned its veracity.

"Uh-huh, on de record!" Chuck agreed with equal contempt.

"How interesting!" Miss Georgie commented. "I wish I could see you box."

"If there was a set of mitts handy," Chuck suggested obligingly.

"Oh, not now," said Miss Georgie. "I'm to show you something about acting. Have you ever had any experience, Mr. Wilson?"

"Call me Chuck, won't youse?" said the pupil.

"All right, Chuck. Have you ever had any experience in love scenes?"

"Sure he has," Butch put in obligingly. "All de skirts fall for him. Dere was a girl——"

"Shut up!" the Lothario interrupted, glaring at his friend. "He's just tryin' to be funny. I'm a fightin' guy. I ain't there wit' no love stuff."

"Well, I'll show you how it's done," said Miss Georgia. "Now imagine, if you can, that you're in love with me. This is your training camp. I hold out both hands like this—take my hands, please—and I say: '*Jack!* at last!' And you say: '*Betty!* my darling!' And then you embrace me." With a sudden motion Miss Georgia threw herself against Chuck's highly developed pectoral muscles. "Go on. Put your arms around me—as if you meant it. Hug me—hard!"

Chuck, whose rough work in clinches was notorious, obeyed with a fervor which made her gasp.

"I didn't tell you to break my ribs," she exclaimed, extricating herself. "Don't you know how to hug a girl?"

"Don't you know no better than to rough it wit' a lady?" Butch demanded sternly.

"You said 'hard,' " Chuck palliated, ignoring his friend.

"I won't say it again," said Miss Georgie, wriggling her spine experimentally. "That will do for this time." And she departed, leaving the fighters to their own devices.

Nobody paid any further attention to them, and they left the Brownstone premises together, but with very different feelings, which presently reacted upon their wonted amicable relations.

Chuck was inwardly elated at the part that was to be his. Privately he considered that he might have unsuspected stage talent. Which opened a nebulous but roseate future. He saw visions of himself as a movie actor, as he phrased it, "dragging it down in bunches." For art for its own sake had no appeal for Chuck. In these visions he saw himself starring with Georgia Dale, from which it may be deduced that that young lady had made a hit.

But Butch was not pleased. He was to be the fall guy for everything. He was to do the screen dirty work, and, as a finish, collect the wages of sin in the form of a left hook or a right cross from Chuck, who stood on a screen pedestal of virtue. Chuck a college guy! Butch snorted disdain. He admitted ruefully that Chuck had the looks. He would make a good enough college bird as long as nobody heard him talk or saw him eat, for Chuck, in the relaxation of private life, considered forks superfluities. But as a fighter he had nothing on him, Butch. Why, then, was he given all the metaphorical fat—including Georgia Dale—leaving him, Butch, nothing but stringy lean?

Admitting that Chuck was a tough bird to punch out, Butch privately considered that he could do the trick, and it ground him to be in a picture depicting his own downfall at Chuck's hands. If those scenes were only on the level he would show him up. He listened sourly to Chuck's cheerful observations on the movie business.

"If youse want to know what I think," was his comment, "all this movie stuff is bunk."

"How is it bunk?" Chuck asked.

"Every way," Butch maintained. "Take that fancy-punch stuff. Take a college guy gettin' a match wit' a champ. It don't happen. And if it did, the champ would make a mess of him."

"Oh, I dunno," said Chuck. "Some of them college guys is hard birds."

"Huh!" said Butch. "You'll make a swell one—I don't think!"

"I'll get away wit' it," said Chuck, with confidence. "Of course, actin's new to me, but I b'lieve it'll come natural."

Butch stared at him incredulously.

"Chees!" he said. "Are you tryin' to be funny?"

"What's funny about that?" Chuck demanded, frowning.

"What ain't?" Butch returned. "If youse could of saw yourself when that skirt asks you to clinch——"

"Looka here," said Chuck coldly, "you want to remember you're speakin' about a lady."

"Who said she wasn't?"

"You called her a skirt."

"Well, ain't a skirt a lady?" Butch demanded.

"Maybe," the purist admitted, "but a lady ain't no skirt. I don't stand for no raw stuff, see?"

Butch, who was quite innocent of any such intent, was indignant.

"Who's raw?" he demanded.

Nobody better be," Chuck returned.

"Speakin' of raw stuff," Butch retorted, "what do you think you pulled when she was tryin' to show you how to act? Youse put me in mind of Joe Walcott in a clinch."

Which jarred Chuck badly, as containing a certain amount of truth. But he had no adequate comeback.

"Where do you get off at buttin' in wit' that crack you made about me and girls?" he demanded.

"You can't blame 'em for fallin' for college guys—'specially when they's champs," Butch retorted.

And again Chuck found himself without a comeback.

## IV.

Chuck's belief in his natural acting ability was due to receive several rude shocks. O'Hara began by putting him through a training-camp scene with Miss Dale. With all the will in the world to make love to her, Chuck did it rather more woodenly than a cigar-store Indian, and O'Hara began to have doubts. Also after several trials he began to lose patience.

"Come on now, Georgie, while he's punching the bag," he admonished Miss Dale. "Thank Heaven that's *one* thing he *can* do. Stop just inside the door Register shyness, emotion, pride in your lover's skill. That's it. You, Chuck, what th' devil are ye turnin' around for? Keep on punchin'. Make the bag dance. You don't see her, at first. Wait till she speaks. That's your cue. *Now,* turn 'round. No, *not* like that. Nobody threw a bottle at ye! Slower. Do it over again. That's better. Now, register surprise, delight. Oh, dammit, look as if you were glad to see her!"

Chuck, in an endeavor to express these mingled emotions opened his eyes very wide; and to give the very best representation of astonishment in his power he also opened his mouth.

"Oh, blessed martyrs, ye had a cinch compared to my job!" O'Hara groaned. "Ye were sure of heaven, anyway. What do ye take the girl for? This is *not* a ghost scene. Ye are not in low comedy, preparin' to swally half a pie at a clatter. Can't you get it through you at all? Come here, Ned, and show him how a human being acts with a gyurl. If he can't originate, maybe he can imitate. Even a monkey can do that."

Butch, who had been highly diverted by Chuck's efforts, which he had watched with a broad grin, found this so funny that he laughed aloud. The novice whirled on him.

"What are youse laughin' at?" he demanded in tones charged with homicidal mania.

"I'm laughin' to see how natural actin' comes to you," Butch returned. "Youse oughta git a lookin'-glass!"

"Not in the same room wit' you," Chuck retorted. "I don't want no seven years bad luck."

He anticipated sweet revenge when Butch should be put through his scenes, but to his intense disgust the latter did fairly well and earned the commendation of O'Hara. Butch had not much acting, as such, to do. About all that was required of him in his first scene was to act naturally, which is sometimes hard enough. But it galled Chuck, and was perhaps responsible for a flare-up in the scene depicting the rescue of *Betty* by *Jack Somerville* from the brutal clutches of *Bulldog Hogan*.

"I'll give you the idea of this," O'Hara instructed. "Just run through it once, to-day. Now, Butch, you're doing your road work. You're just jogging along. Here's *Betty,* who was the newsboy. You meet. You take a second look at her. You register surprise. Not half bad. Georgie, you try to pass him. Catch her by the arm, Butch. Do it quick and hard. Register, savagery, anger, brutality. That's pretty good. Hold her there, just as you are.

"Now, Chuck, come ahead. Remember, she's your gyurl, your sweetheart that he's treating rough. Remember her old man has a million—if that will help you. Register anger, indignation. You butt in fast and hard. You tear him loose. Then he makes a swipe at you, and, of course, you come right back at him. Try it now. Ready? Go! And for the love of Heaven put some punch into it!"

His last injunction was obeyed to the letter. Chuck caught Butch by the arm with a savage twist; and Butch immediately unhooked a vicious right that landed solidly. In a split second there was a rough-house realistic enough for even O'Hara.

"Stop it!" he roared. "How dare ye waste stuff like that without a camera. Quit, I tell ye!" And when he had effected a forcible separation of the combatants, he gave them a tongue lashing surcharged with vitriol.

"Aw, what's de matter?" Butch rumbled. "Didn't youse say to put some punch into it?"

"Sure, dat's what youse said," Chuck corroborated, eying Butch hungrily.

"I didn't tell ye to fight!"

"We wasn't fighting," said Butch.

"When we fight we git rough," said Chuck.

" 'Rough!' " O'Hara exclaimed, and called on the name of his Creator. "Beat it outa here and come back to-morrow. I'll try ye again. Ye can't be worse, that's one consolation."

Butch and Chuck departed together, more from force of habit than from any desire for companionship. O'Hara's parting speech had not improved their tempers. For some minutes they walked in silence. Then said Butch:

"I've a good notion to quit this movie game."

"I would if I was you," said Chuck sourly.

"At that," Butch stated, "I done better than you."

. "All you got to do is to act tough," Chuck retorted; "and for you that ain't no actin' at all."

"If you call what you're doin' actin'," Butch returned, "all I got to say is you oughta take a look at yourself once. You make a swell college guy—not. But I'm goin' to help you look like one."

"How?" Chuck inquired suspiciously.

"When I git you in the ring," Butch stated, "I'll make you look like a real college guy."

"Is that so?" said Chuck.

"Yeh, that's so," said Butch; and as a matter of ordinary prudence he removed his hands from their customary shelter in his pockets; a movement straightway duplicated by Chuck.

They halted and eyed each other coldly. From sheer force of habit Chuck's left elbow crooked a little. Butch's dependable right hand moved back a trifle. Each was quite unconscious of his own action, but keenly aware of the other's.

"Are youse lookin' for something now?" Chuck demanded.

"I can take anything *youse* can give," Butch returned.

"You can, huh!" said Chuck. "Yesterday you started in to tell Miss Dale youse could lick me."

"I didn't—but I kin!" Butch stated flatly.

"You're a liar—both ways!" said Chuck; and hooked a flashing left upward as Butch's celebrated right whizzed at the angle of his jaw.

They were at it hammer and tongs with a few axes thrown in for good measure when big Con Gallaher, the weight lifter and shot putter of Falls City's finest, strolled around the corner.

When Mr. Gallaher recognized the combatants and the privilege that was his of beholding them in a fight minus the cramping effect of a referee, he blessed his patron saint and leaned against a telephone pole to enjoy the spectacle to the full. But unfortunately there were other spectators. And Mr. Gallaher reluctantly took up the white cop's burden by interposing some two hundred pounds of legal majesty.

"What's this, now?" he demanded sternly. "Takin' a chanst on breakin' yer hands fightin' widout gloves! An' breakin' the peace as well! Be ashamed!"

"Huh!" said Butch, with a presence of mind highly creditable, considering that twin red rivulets stole down from his nostrils to mingle with the carmine of cut lips. "Why, you don't think we was scrappin', do you?"

"Some such idle thought was in me mind," Gallaher admitted.

"We're in the movies now?" said the resourceful Chuck. "We was just practicin' our act."

"The movies, is ut?" said Gallaher. "Then so was Gettysburg. I ought to pinch ye for lyin'. I did hear on th' quiet that ye wor framin' up a grudge fight under cover of a movie stunt, but I t'ought it was a fake. Well, duck down this alley, b'ys, an' save th' rest of it for th' ring!" And Gallaher, grinning broadly, moved on in battleship majesty.

The combatants, having "ducked" as suggested, stopped in the seclusion of the alley's end and surveyed each other in disgust.

"Well?" said Butch.

"Well—what?" said Chuck.

"Want to finish it?"

"Naw," Chuck replied. He regarded his left knuckles which were cut and bleeding. "I come near breakin' me hand, like Gallaher said. I make me livin' wit' them hands, an' when I scrap you again, it'll be wit' de mitts."

"You won't have so long to wait," Butch observed. "In the pitcher we go six rounds. You watch yourself in them six frames, because I'm goin' to show you up. I'll make a monkey out of you, like O'Hara said. I'll make you look like a real college champ."

Chuck grinned the grin of a pit dog.

"Look who's here!" he retorted. "*Bulldog Hogan*, de man-killin' champ, wit' de fancy punch. Yeh! All right. In the pitcher I put you out in the sixth. Well, I'll put you out *good*."

"If that's what you're framin'," Butch returned, "O'Hara can get somebody else. I don't leave meself open for no real punch, see?"

"You don't need to," said Chuck. "I'll get you on de level."

"Turn over," said Butch; "it's just nightmare."

"In de sixth or before," Chuck affirmed. "I'm tryin' for a knock-out all de route. Come on, now, fade me!"

"You're faded—but you're crazy," said Butch. "I'll bet half what we're gettin' you don't put me out. I'd bet it all, but I got to eat."

"Course you can stall an' cover up," Chuck admitted.

"I don't fight dat way," said Butch honestly. "I'll be comin' right after you."

"Then you've made a bet," said Chuck.

"I need the money," said Butch with satisfaction. "Come through wit' a knock-out if you can—college champ!"

Ill news proverbially travels fast. So does scandal. In twenty-four hours every sport in town knew that Butch and Chuck had mixed it on the street. Accounts varied, but the salient fact was undisputed. Indeed, the features of the principals corroborated it.

Alone, Butch might have got away with the brilliant fiction that he had run against a swing door in the dark; but taken in conjunction with Chuck's black eye it met ribald incredulity. O'Hara more or less believed the swing door tale until he saw Chuck. Then he began to suspect more than coincidence.

"How did you get that eye?" he demanded.

"I'm playin' ball after supper," Chuck explained, with engaging candor, "an' I lose a fly ball in de sun. She comes down t'rough me hands an' biffs me in de lamp."

"Do you know where the sun is after supper, just now?" O'Hara scoffed.

"You see," Chuck amplified resourcefully, "she shines on a brewery window back of where we're playin', an' dazzles me."

"Pretty fair," O'Hara admitted. "And the dazzle cut your hand, too, didn't it?"

"Oh, no," said the truthful Chuck; "I skins me knuckles on some gravel scoopin' a ball."

As O'Hara was not ready to shoot any scenes their facial injuries made little difference. He put them through an intensive course of rehearsals, finding them docile enough, and seemingly not inclined to indulge any grudge they might hold. At any rate there was no more rough stuff.

O'Hara had his own ideas of the ring scene. It must observe the best traditions of fiction. That is, the tide of victory must sway. The hero must be in difficulties, almost out. He must rally by a supreme effort. He instructed the fighters carefully. The picture must show real fighting; and must show, moreover, that first one and then the other had the better of it.

"You find the college champ a hard proposition," he said to Butch. "You tell the men in your corner he's a tough bird. He keeps coming after you, and in the third round he nearly gets you. But in the fifth you nearly put him out, and you get confident. You're going to get him next round. So in the sixth you go in to finish the job. You feint him open for your secret punch; and that's when, instead of your getting him, he gets you. The knock-out has to be good—a perfect imitation of the real thing."

But he was not satisfied with the illustration they gave for his benefit. For the real knock-out is seldom spectacular. Apart from those which are the culmination of a wearing-down process where the beaten man is already dead on his feet and the victor can take his time and set himself for a final punch, the average spectator does not know how it happens and even experts have disagreed in famous ring battles. The short, snapping jolt that, traveling but a few inches drops a man cold, is too swift for the ordinary eye; and it is not impressive. The recipient simply crumples at the knees and goes down with the spectacular effect of a wet dishrag—being very apt to receive a totally unnecessary hook or swing while doing so. This unnecessary blow most of the spectators see; but few have seen the first, which really did the trick.

And so in faking a knock-out artists in the business prefer close range and a swift, snappy exchange.

"It's like this," Butch explained: "Takin' a kayo, if you wait for a punch, everybody makes a holler he seen you stick out your chin for it; or else they say it was pulled so's it wouldn't have bust a paper bag. An' de newspaper guys pans you. So what you do, you come up to a round; an' about the second minute you work in close an' slam away wit' some good stiff wallops; an' de first one dat catches you around de jaw you do a Brodie. An' nobody can prove it's a fake, because everybody seen it different."

But this sophisticated simplicity did not fill O'Hara's bill. Though a ring crowd might not be able to see a knock-out punch, his audiences must. So he crisply negatived this tried and true system, and decreed a finish wherein a spectacular punch should be brought into play.

The "man-killer" which Butch evolved to meet the exigencies of this situation possessed most of the characteristics of a slab artist's wind-up, and might possibly have proved effective against a paralytic. But it satisfied O'Hara. The latter knew that the real thing—the feint, the lightninglike shift and shooting glove—would never get across with an audience because not one in a thousand would see it. And he told Chuck to evolve a counteroffensive.

Chuck in his simplicity demonstrated the left shift brought into prominence by the late Mr. Fitzsimmons, but that did not suit O'Hara. He wanted something more complicated and a great deal slower. Finally Chuck in sardonic humor called on recollections of a burlesque boxing match he had once witnessed, and to his amazement O'Hara approved. So Butch and Chuck, grinning in spite of their enmity, rehearsed these monstrosities, and finally became punch perfect. But when Mr. Costigan, who had kept himself in the background, witnessed one of their last rehearsals he nearly had heart failure.

"You don't mean to say this is the kind of stuff you're going to pull!" he exclaimed to Chuck, in horrified tones, after it was over.

"Sure," said Chuck, who had no intention of mentioning his private feud. "O'Hara wants it that way."

Mr. Costigan exhibited symptoms of nervous breakdown.

"I'll see him," he said. "This stuff will spoil his fillum."

But O'Hara refused to consider any change. When Mr. Costigan became insistent he told him to mind his own business, and where to go to do so most effectively. Instead of obeying, Mr. Costigan again sought Chuck.

"O'Hara's so pig-headed he won't take advice," he said; "and like all pig-headed guys he's ignorant. You boys can't afford to pull this stuff. You got your reps to consider. It'll make a monkey out of you all over the country, besides spoilin' the fillum. Now, listen: don't say anything to O'Hara. Rehearse this comedy stuff. But when the picture is being made you and Butch pull a knock-out the way you know how."

"What'll O'Hara say?"

"You'll be doing him a favor. He'll know that when he sees the fillum. You boys pull this right. Let Butch stay out a coupla minutes, and when he comes to he claims he was put out on the level."

"He does, huh!" said Chuck, who fully intended to furnish a knock-out beyond criticism, but who began to wonder at Costigan's insistence. "Well, of course we're workin' for O'Hara."

"Who got you this job?" Mr. Costigan asked. "You do what I tell you, and there'll be an extra fifty in it for you."

"Who from?" Chuck queried.

"Me."

"Where do you win on it?" Chuck asked, with pardonable curiosity.

"If you win fifty that's enough," Mr. Costigan returned.

"I get fifty if Butch takes the count so's it'd get by wit' a referee?"

"That's it."

"I'll take it now," said Chuck.

"Guess again," said Mr. Costigan.

"In me mitt," Chuck insisted, and finally made it stick there.

Mr. Costigan saw Butch, to whom he put the situation much as he had to Chuck. Butch also was reticent. But if Chuck chanced to land him in the sixth, fifty dollars would be a little solace. Like Chuck he wanted it in advance.

Having made these arrangements to save O'Hara from the effects of his ignorance, Mr. Costigan sought that gentleman and requested a couple of days' notice of the day on which the fight scene was to be "shot."

"I've got a crowd of ring fans, but they've got other jobs, and I have to let them know ahead."

"Thursday," said O'Hara. "The set will be ready by then."

He had already shot the other scenes, reserving the ring scene till the last. The results of the others were better than he had hoped.

## V.

Though Chuck was outwardly untroubled, inwardly he was uneasy. When he cooled down after his challenge he remembered that Butch was an exceedingly tough proposition. He had always thought he could beat him in a finish fight, but gambling on rounds was another thing. Butch knew all the tricks of the trade. Butch would make very sure that his bandages incased no plaster, that there was no shot sewn into his gloves, that no eye irritant was rubbed into them between rounds. Of course, if he failed in a knock-out Butch would get the blame, but that was poor consolation. O'Hara would probably raise Cain anyway, if the knock-out was not as rehearsed. But Chuck intended to make his bluff good if he could; and then he wanted to punch Butch out, anyway.

Butch himself was not worrying. It was up to Chuck. If O'Hara blew up, as Butch saw it, it meant only sparring an extra round some other time, which would be pure fake. But in the six rounds he would show Chuck up so that everybody—including Miss Dale—would know which was the better man. So he proceeded to get himself into the best possible shape for eighteen minutes of heavy weather.

On Thursday when all was ready to "shoot" the fight scene, O'Hara was surprised at the number of simon-pure sports, who crowded into his small "arena." Mr. Costigan himself, stationed at the entrance, appeared to be taking in tickets, which rather puzzled O'Hara. These, on investigation, he found to be passes admitting bearer to the premises of Brownstone Films.

"What junk is this?" he asked. "I never authorized these things."

"You authorized me to get a real fight crowd any way I liked, as long as it didn't cost money," Mr. Costigan replied. "When I gave a few of them out the guys began to show them around and tell their friends they were working for the movies. Then their friends wanted to get in on it, too."

"Good work," O'Hara approved.

"I told 'em you wanted action," Mr. Costigan went on; "so some of 'em will root for Butch and some for Chuck, and I've fixed it so's they'll flash stage money and make ringside bets and so on. Is that all right?"

It suited O'Hara down to the ground, and when the chief of Falls City's police appeared, he greeted him cordially.

"Come to see that the law is observed, I suppose," he remarked facetiously. The chief grinned.

"Call it that," he said. "But you watch me rub it into some of those sports when it's over. I'll just naturally kid them to death."

O'Hara did not quite see the humor of the situation, but was too busy to ask.

"All set, Jimmy?" he asked his camera man. "Right. Let's go!"

Chuck, wearing the conventional bath robe bearing a mystic device supposed to be a college emblem, made a spectacular vault of the ropes. He looked round at the familiar faces of Fall City's sports, and a puzzled expression grew in his own. Butch, who came next with the proper pomp of a champion, looked puzzled also, but he turned his celebrated, ferocious fighting scowl upon his opponent. Both fighters had their hands carefully taped, and they examined these bandages and the gloves with considerably more interest than they had shown in rehearsals. They sloughed their bath robes, and the referee—a stranger supplied by Mr. Costigan—called them to the center for the customary instructions. The camera recorded merely his hard-boiled but earnest face and lifted finger, but the remarks he delivered in a husky whisper were much to the point.

"You guys get this, and get it now," he said. "You got to make this good all the way. Cut out the comedy and pull a K. O. in the sixth that's a twin of the real thing, if you want to park your dogs around Morgan's lunch again. This ain't no movie crowd. This is a fight crowd, get me? They come to see a fight, and you give it to 'em the way Costigan told you, or somebody'll spill the real dope on them old fakes of yours, and that won't do you no good. Do you make me? That's all. Take your corners."

And, meantime, a heavily avoirdupoised sport arose in a front seat and shook aloft a sheaf of currency.

"Even money on Butch McShane!" he bellowed. "Come an' get it!"

Promptly Mr. Costigan responded: "Get it here. How much of it?"

Here and there in the crowd money was offered and taken; which was good grist for O'Hara's mill. He was pleased with Costigan. This money stunt was good. He got what he wanted, via the camera, and signaled for the fight to begin.

Butch and Chuck came out of their corners with the well-simulated eagerness which was part of their stock in trade; but when they met in the center they sparred warily.

Both were puzzled by the referee's words. They did not know him, but there was no doubt that he was a friend of Costigan's. And there was no doubt that the crowd was exactly the crowd which would have attended a real fight in happier days. They intended to put up a scrap which would satisfy the most exacting, but, knowing each other thoroughly, each waited for the other to develop his line of offensive. Which was a waste of time and film that did not please O'Hara.

"Get in there and fight!" he roared. "What do you think a camera is for? What am I——"

The remainder of his remarks were drowned in the loud disapproval of the spectators, impatient of stalling. Chuck remembered suddenly that six rounds was a very limited route. So he feinted, shot a short left for the face, and ripped a right for the body. Butch grinned, and his own right missed Chuck's chin by a fraction of an inch. They gave the crowd a full minute of fast work, and then clinched.

"Rah-rah-rah!" Butch hissed in what he intended as a sarcastic imitation of a college cheer as he lay on Chuck heavily. "Come on, college champ, git me! You only got five frames more!"

"Quit your layin' on me," said Chuck, refusing to waste his strength.

The referee broke them, and from force of habit warned them against holding.

"Now, college champ," said Butch, who knew that the phrase annoyed Chuck, "show us a flash of dat higher edjication!"

Chuck obliged him with a sample which, if not strictly academic, at least left no time for conversation. Butch took a jolt that snapped his head back, a right under the heart, and another that was almost too low. He came to another clinch, chopping a vicious right for the kidneys.

"How do you like dat college stuff?" Chuck inquired, grinding a hardened chin into Butch's collar bone.

"Quit your foulin'," Butch rumbled. "You're dirty!"

"Come an' clean me, then!" Chuck retorted, as he broke and slammed with his first free hand.

In the second round he played for the head and face and Butch thought he knew why.

"Wit' me lamps closed I'm easy, huh!" he jeered, leaning heavily into Chuck. "Well, say! ain't youse college ginks there wit' the deep stuff!" And perhaps by accident a moment later he landed hard on Chuck's left eye, cutting the brow with a cunning twist of the glove which would have done credit to the art of Mr. McCoy; so that the blood, running down, caused Chuck considerable inconvenience.

But the latter, though he intended to put up the shutters on Butch's optical works if he could, was also trying to tempt him into carelessness of body defense. So he continued to shoot high and fast, and when he shot low he shot slow, though perfectly aware that there is nothing like the body punch to lower its recipient's steam gauge.

Butch, having the like knowledge, trained his batteries low, on the theory that solid punches around the belt line would draw some of the dynamics from Chuck's dangerous gloves. So they made the round so good that not even the hypercritical could find fault with it; and came up to the third nicely warmed up and going strong. And in the first minute of it Chuck dropped Butch with a left jolt that had the snap of a rivet punch.

Now, though O'Hara had decreed that in the third round the hero should have the best of it and nearly get his man, the stark suddenness of the knockdown as contrasted with the somewhat labored effect of the rehearsals, startled him. Miss Dale who, with Baxter, was an interested spectator, gripped his arm.

"Ned! I believe that was *real!*"

"He's all right, anyway," said Baxter.

Butch, on one knee, his head singing a little, but rapidly clearing, was taking full advantage of a slow count by a puzzled referee who kept an eye on Mr. Costigan. At "nine" Butch came erect and, neatly smothering Chuck's flying gloves, clinched.

"Thought youse had copped me, huh!" he grunted.

"I got your number," said Chuck. "You've went back, feller. I kin drop you any time."

"Lemme last a coupla rounds more," Butch pleaded with heavy sarcasm. "I got me widow and orphants to support."

"Break!" the referee commanded.

"He's holdin' me, Mr. Referee!" Butch complained.

"He's a liar," said Chuck. "He's stallin' and layin' on me."

The referee broke them, not gently, and Butch gave proof of his recuperative powers by a savage, two-handed attack that drove Chuck to the ropes and into another clinch, which he reached at the cost of two hard body blows pumped in at close range. Both hit viciously on the break, and the bell found them going to it with the relaxed abandon of Kilkenny cats.

The fourth round had been a hummer. Both were fighting under a full head of steam, boring in, taking to give. The crowd stood on its hind legs and howled. The chief spoke to O'Hara.

"I've seen fights that were church festivals to this. Do you mean to say you rehearsed all this stuff?"

"The main features," O'Hara replied. "The idea is to give a realistic representation of a fight."

"You're doing it," said the chief.

"In the next round," O'Hara explained, "the hero gets into difficulties; but rallies and wins by a knock-out in the sixth."

"I thought he'd won by a knock-out in the third," the chief commented. "It ought to make a great film—if the censor doesn't get to it."

But Mr. Costigan was uneasy. Without doubt the fighters were carrying out his instructions to make it a fight which the public could not tell from the real article; but the trouble was that he could not tell it himself. There was too much steam behind the punches; they roughed it in the clinches; and, though he could not hear the words, he suspected that each was engaged in the gentle art of getting the other's goat. He had excellent reasons for desiring that Chuck should win, and win in the sixth by a cleverly faked knock-out; but he knew that if just one of the whizzing rights that Butch was shooting across happened to connect in the right place, there would be no sixth round. At the end of the fourth, he spoke to the referee.

"If those boys ain't fighting then I never saw a fight," he said, as that official leaned over the ropes.

"I told 'em to make it good, like you said. I'll say they're doin' it, too."

"Tell 'em to go lighter," Mr. Costigan whispered. "First thing they know something'll land by accident."

And then the bell rang for the fifth.

Now, in the fifth, as arranged by O'Hara, the college champion was to find himself in trouble. He was to get the worst of it and the sympathy of the audience, which was to be rewarded by his final success.

But Chuck had no intention of getting the worst of it, if he could help it. He had no time for artistic details, which he had forgotten, anyway. Having nearly closed Butch's right eye, he was playing for the body. He thought Butch was beginning to slow down, and if they had been going fifteen rounds or even ten he would have been fairly confident. But over the limited route he had to force the pace, and he drove in from the bell, being warm, and limber and at his best. He made up his mind to get Butch at the first opportunity. If five rounds such as he had put up didn't satisfy O'Hara and Costigan it ought to. So he concentrated on looking for an opening.

In this life it is unwise to concentrate on what you are going to do to the other fellow to the point of forgetfulness of what he may be trying to do to you. Perhaps Chuck reached that point. At any rate, he failed by a split second to remove his chin from the predestined groove of a left hook, and he went down with a bang and a hazy idea that a corner post had jumped up and hit him.

If the opening had been for Butch's right instead of his left the referee might have counted a hundred and taken his time about it. As it was, that startled official began to count late and did it slowly. The first sound that reached Chuck's temporarily benumbed brain was the word "five." It carried no special meaning, but "six" did. At "seven" he gathered his unwilling legs together, lifted his body at "eight," was on one knee at "nine," and came up at "ten;" a little unsteady but well covered up, in a bombproof crouch, his chin tucked home and his elbows guarding his engine room; in which head-on position he met the typhoon that Butch immediately loosed.

But it was by no means the first heavy weather that Chuck had ridden out to a temporary drag. He took everything Butch had in stock on his gloves and arms, and ducked into a clinch with the relief of a storm-tossed mariner crossing the harbor bar. When he pinned Butch's arms he saw blue sky again, and he hung on hard while the numbness passed from his brain and the spring came back to his legs.

"So I've went back, huh!" Butch taunted in his ear. "What was that number of mine you said you got?"

Chuck did not waste his valuable breath in reply; but on the break he uppercut Butch on the jaw and drove a right into his stomach with a steam which showed a rapidly rising gauge. The round ended with both going great guns and the crowd going wild.

"Ned," said Georgia Dale, "they're really fighting."

"All the better for the picture."

Miss Dale glanced at the crowd.

"There's something funny about it. These people aren't just 'extras.' They're seeing a real fight, and they know it. I believe they came to see one. The betting—now I wonder if it was real money?"

Baxter whistled softly.

"I wonder! Costigan was taking in what he said were passes. He was taking bets in that stage money, but now I come to think of it all the bets he made were on Chuck. I wonder if he has put something over. I've been told he'd stand watching."

Miss Dale chanced to meet Butch's good eye. The fighter's ferocious countenance expanded in what he intended for a happy and confident smile. He indicated Chuck with a meaning and derisive jerk of the head. She glanced at Chuck; and Chuck, who through the ministrations of two hard-looking tickets in his corner had ceased to bear a general resemblance to a slaughter house on a busy day, beamed back at her and wigwagged with a glove. Superficially, at any rate, neither was worried.

When the bell rang Chuck came out of his corner with a furious attack that drove Butch to the ropes. Butch tried to clinch, but Chuck evaded, slugging him off, working him into a corner. Butch broke out, and began an offensive of his own. A minute of hard fighting passed. In the second minute neither showed signs of slackening pace. Chuck, with time running against him, was shooting in everything he had.

"Look here," the chief exclaimed, "this is no movie stuff, O'Hara. You can't fool me. This is real fighting. What have you been trying to put——"

"Wait a minute, wait a minute!" O'Hara cried, scarcely hearing him. "You'll see the knock-out now. Butch is getting ready to deliver his trick punch. Then Chuck gets him."

Quite by accident Butch had assumed an attitude resembling that of the rehearsals; the accident being due principally to a hard right to the body and left to the face. But he swung a left of his own which missed. He should then have brought the complicated man-killer into action.

"Here it comes," said O'Hara to the chief. "Watch this!"

Butch had half turned with the force of his missed swing. For a moment he was almost unbalanced, and Chuck seized the opportunity. He went in hitting with both hands, putting a left to the head, a right to the body, and a wicked left hook to the jaw. There was a world of steam behind the punches, and Butch staggered. He stood swaying, seemingly almost out upon his feet. Chuck shot his left to the jaw again, but still Butch refused to go down, though his head sagged and his knees quivered.

Chuck thought he had him, and with the certainty he felt a wave of sympathy. Poor old Butch! He was a game bird, a hard guy to punch out. It was hard luck to be shown on the screen throughout the country, badly whipped, taking a knock-out. Chuck almost hated to put over the final punch. But it was necessary, and he intended to do it neatly, with no messy work. Just one clean punch, and Butch would take a well-earned rest. So, mindful of the camera which would show him as the victor—and of Georgia Dale, who would see that he had it on Butch every way—Chuck struck an effective pose, judged his distance, and drew back his right for the soporific.

He was so sure, so engrossed in landing that final punch exactly right, that he was careless of everything else. He was wide open, posing, set for the knock-out.

Too late he saw a wicked grin chase the helpless vacuity from Butch's battered visage. He started his frozen punch, but, even as he did so, he knew Butch had beaten him to it. The latter's celebrated right came up and across with the speed of a coil spring and the impact of a high-velocity shell. And then Chuck distinctly saw a tall colored man turn out the lights.

When Chuck opened his eyes upon the world he found himself in a neat, white bed in a setting of strangely sanitary surroundings. He had a misty recollection of something like an earthquake and a railway collision, but the whole thing was a blur. His gaze rested upon a quantity of flowers, tastefully arranged. Being accustomed to associate floral tributes with the last sad rites, he stared at them apprehensively.

Then he beheld a face angelic enough to support the hypothesis that he had joined the celestial throng. However, it was surmounted by a starched cap instead of a halo, and if its owner had wings they were effectively concealed by a uniform.

"Good morning," said this being, negativing Chuck's attempt to sit up by pressure of a surprisingly strong hand on his forehead. "Steady, now, till your motor picks up a little."

So Chuck perforce lay still and admired the angelic countenance of Miss Mary Smith, who was the most efficient nurse in Falls City's hospital and as hopelessly practical as she was distractingly pretty. His head felt sore, and so did his jaw. His investigating hand discovered that the former was bandaged.

"What's the matter wit' me?" he demanded.

"Not a thing," Miss Smith returned cheerfully; "or there won't be if you keep quiet for a few hours. The way I get it somebody hit you on the chin——"

"I getcha now!" Chuck exclaimed, with sudden illuminating recollection. "Butch, he cops me wit' his right in de sixt'. An' it was a pippin!"

"I heard it was a peach," Miss Smith murmured. "You were out so long they phoned for the ambulance. And unfortunately a hose wagon hit the ambulance and you got another crack on the head that put you out for fair. That was yesterday. But you'll be all right now."

"Them fire guys is too careless!" Chuck frowned.

"Altogether," Miss Smith agreed. "Do you think you could eat a little something?"

"I knew you was an angel when I lamp you first," Chuck returned with enthusiasm.

The angelic Miss Smith blushed, and when she entered the kitchen she said to the diet nurse: "Come through with another dollar, Brownie!"

"No?" Miss Brown exclaimed incredulously. "You don't mean that tough scrapper pulled that stuff, too?"

"He said he knew I was an angel when he lamped me first," Miss Smith returned. "Is that good enough?"

"I guess so," the diet nurse admitted sadly. "I'll owe you the dollar, because I'm broke. And I won't bet any more."

"All right," said the angelic Miss Smith. "Darn it, I wish some of my cases would get a new line for a change. I'm fed up on that angel stuff!"

And, later, when Chuck had cleared his tray, she ushered in a visitor whose face possessed no angelic attributes.

"Butch!" Chuck exclaimed joyfully.

Mr. McShane, who had been tiptoeing in approved sick-room manner, brought his heels down and grinned horribly.

"How's de boy, Chuck?"

"Wit' good nursin'," Chuck returned hopefully, "I'll pull through."

Mr. McShane looked after the departing Miss Smith and grinned again.

"You got it soft," he stated, glancing around. "It's Miss Dale sends you them flowers."

"When I lamp 'em first I think I'm a stiff," was Chuck's acknowledgment.

"That ain't no lucky word," Butch protested. "When you stay out, an' they phone for the ambulance, the chief he's goin' to pinch me for manslaughter."

"It was a pippin of a right youse copped me wit'," Chuck testified frankly.

"I broke me hand wit' it," said Butch exhibiting a bandaged starboard battery in proof. "I wasn't figurin' on landin' no knock-out; but in the last frame youse nearly had me, an' I got about one good punch left. So I let me knees shake, an' when I see you wide open I send it across."

"I'm froze an' flatfooted," Chuck admitted. "What happens after? What does O'Hara say?"

"He blows up," Butch replied, "but there's a lot of inside stuff we ain't wise to. You seen the chief at the ringside. Well, he butts in an' says he's goin' to pinch O'Hara for stagin' a real fight. It looks like he has the goods on him, too. Maybe you wondered how all them fans come to see a movie stunt. I did, meself. It's because Costigan slips them the word it's goin' to be a real fight, wit' the movies for a stall, same as he told us at first; an' he sells 'em seats at from one to five bucks.

"He knows the chief will hear of it, so he has the crust to tell him he's sellin' tickets to play a joke on these sports, an' that they'll get their money back. The chief falls for it, an' when he thinks it's been put over on him he's red-headed. O'Hara has a job to show him. Then Costigan bets even money you win by a knock-out; an' one to five you do it inside six rounds. He gets the coin up, too. It's a cinch. But when I cop you, it pretty near breaks him. He beats it outa town last night."

"He was crooked," said Chuck virtuously, "and look where it lands him."

"Sure," Butch agreed with equal virtue. "He never let us in, and us doin' the work. It was comin' to him. Well, O'Hara was wild at first, but now he says the picture will be great, an' all we got to do is to fake a round when you get out, instead of the sixt' the way it is now; or else he'll stop, when you drop me in the third. He don't know which he'll do yet. But he's goin' to make more pitchers wit' boxin' an' trainin' stunts; an' he gives us steady jobs—if we quit beatin' each other up."

"When you put me away in six rounds that's good enough for me," said Chuck.

"Chees, chees," Butch returned generously. "You fight diff'rent when you only got six frames to go. An' then you're thinkin' of the camera when I land you. It ain't like straight fightin'. When do you get outa this hospital?"

"I dunno," Chuck replied, glancing at the door which framed the incoming Miss Smith. "Wit' a wallop on the jaw an' a crack on the head like I got, I can't take no chances. I got to be careful."

"I don't blame you," said Butch. "Youse want to watch this guy," he said to Miss Smith, "or the first thing youse know he'll be incurable."

*Mr. Chisholm will be represented again in an early issue.*

## THE REAL EDUCATION

EDUCATION is preparedness for emergencies. If a man fails, no matter how much he knows, the fact of his failure is unanswerable proof that he neglected to educate himself for his life's work.

# A Strategist in Citrusia

By Clarence L. Cullen

*Author of "Southbound," "A Side Line for a Southpaw," Etc.*

**Byron J. Bingley believed in sticking to the truth—at least he didn't let much of it get away from him**

WHEN Eighty-nine, the noon train from the North, paused on this mid-August day at Citrusia, Florida—Citrusia, slumbering serenely in its supernal summer beauty and dreaming goldenly of the next winter tourist season—the one alighting passenger from the Pullman end stepped to the station platform from the parlor car, with portly briskness. The porter, wearing a well-tipped expression, threw in an extra dab of obsequiousness in helping him with his bags. "Gabe" Deece, the one summer-remaining jitneyman of the dozens who, at train time, line up their motor vehicles at the Citrusia station when the winter tourists' money is leaking, hauled the passenger two blocks to Vallombrosa Inn—the only Citrusia hotel open, at regular winter rates, in summer—and, blithely demanding a dollar for this small service, plainly was sorry that he had not exacted two when his fare, instead of protesting, tipped him a half dollar in addition.

The guest from Eighty-nine civilly shrugged away the pen which Vic Sparkman, the host of Vallombrosa Inn, dipped and held extended.

"Rather not register, if you don't mind," he wheezed pleasantly. "Errand here is somewhat—uh—well, scoutful, so to speak. Thinking of capturing some of your section's solar energy to start a—um—smokeless industry somewhere in this region. But prefer not to be quizzed about the plan—yet—by imaginative newspaper lads. New York's my headquarters. Name is——" and, with wheezy indistinctness, he mentioned a surname beginning with a B which the hotel man practically muffed for the reason that it was not a name nimbused by the aura of auriferousness. "That do?" the guest ended by inquiring. The host of Vallombrosa Inn allowed, with a smile, that it would.

After an hour of ablutionary renewal in the best room-with-bath in the house, the unregistered guest reappeared downstairs in a comfortably roomy-looking suit of expensively tailored Shantung, low-cut, white, buckskin shoes, a soft-bosomed, madras shirt unobtrusively pin striped, a blue, polka-dot bow tie passed through a soft collar of corded buff silk fastened at the base by a small platinum link, and a wide-brimmed leghorn straw hat banded by a blue-and-white scarf.

For a thickset man of fifty odd, with the unmistakable jowls of middle age, and reddish hair distinctly grizzled, there may have been, to the eye of case-hardened conservatism, a slight touch of the bizarre, or at least of fancy, in this sartorial ensemble. Still—if this be a point in mitigation—the same sort of modestly debonair apparel often drapes the drooping, corpulent forms of United States senators mercilessly pinned in Washington through sizzling summers.

"You can get me a car—comfortable car—with a driver that's awake—I presume?" the unregistered guest, glancing at an impressive-looking wrist watch, inquired upon reappearing at the desk. "I want to run down to Celestia. Celestia's about fifteen miles south of Citrusia, isn't it?"

With the hotel man's nod went a shrug and a pitying smile. Celestia? Why should any sentient human being—especially any human being decently installed in Citrusia—want to go to Celestia? In its sapphire setting of river and sea, Celestia, the rival winter resort of Citrusia, and as supernally lovely as Citrusia in every imaginable respect, naturally had been a loathsome settlement in the eyes of the slightly older Citrusia from the very day of its christening; and from that day the strife of the two towns for the pelf of the winter tourists had been as a battle between jungle moccasins.

"Car'll be around directly, sir," said the hotel man, stepping out of the telephone booth back of the desk; and the unregistered guest dropped into a wallowy, willow rocker by a front window and occupied himself with some letters which he drew from his breast pocket.

A young man with a symptomatic mustache and eager, interrogative eyes, who had been conning the hotel register at the other end of the desk, leaned close and spoke mufiledly to the hotel man.

"Say, Vic, who's his Northern nibs with all the flossy duds?—I don't see any fresh-inked name on the book," was the young man's remark.

"He didn't sign, Joe—and it ain't good hotel ethics to give the names of unregistered guests to you newspaper sharks," the host of Vallombrosa Inn, speaking low, replied.

"Hotel ethics—in the Land of Sunshine and Flowers!" fleered the journalist. "Come on, Vic—his name! I'm starving for stuff, to-day."

"No can do, Joseph," murmured the hotel man. "The party particularly said he didn't want to be buzzed by newspaper folks, and that——"

"Oh, he did, did he?" surprisedly demanded Joe. "Well, that makes him a Must-Can-Do. Listen here, Vic: I'm running the paper this week—the old man's over on the west coast, tarpon fishing. You know how the break's always against me when I'm bossing the sheet—everything deader'n a doornail! I want to slap a little chirk into the rag this time—but what a chance, with Citrusia sunk over its ears in the dog-days doldrums! I haven't lined up one live stickful yet, to-day. So out with this under-cover ol-timer's name and game, Vic!"

"You'd get me in wrong, son, if you tackled him for a paper talk," said the hotel man. "I've told you he don't want to be bothered by newspaper——"

"Can't get you in bad, can I, if I don't let on who I am or that I know his name or anything about him?" wheedled the editor in chief, pro tempore, of the Citrusia *Grapefruit*. "You tell me his name, Vic, and leave the rest to me. I'll gamble a couple of unripe guavas that there's a story back of that diked-out old dornick top's coming to Citrusia in August. Flamingos like that don't flit into Florida in mid-summer just to whiff the oleander fragrance—they're always after certain and sundry wums, or just one particular wum. So come clean, Vic—his name!"

"Oh, well," grumbled the close-herded hotel man, "you corner me into confessing that I didn't exactly catch his name, the old lad being kind of wheezy. Name begins with a B—Bagley, Bisbee, Bimby—something like those. It wasn't a big-money name though, or I'd have caught it right, all right," and the highly Florida-seasoned hotel man smiled saturninely. "As to his game, you can search me—I don't practice mind reading except in winter, when I've got to guess how much they've got before making out their bills. But he did wheeze something about capturing our solar energy—whatever that is!—and starting a smokeless industry—whatever again!—around here. He's a New Yorker—you know it from that rig!—and he's waiting now for a car to carry him to Celestia——"

"Celestia!—that cemetery! How come?" demanded the journalist, registering amazement. Then he sauntered detachedly to the window and plumped himself into a chair alongside that of the unregistered guest, who still seemed absorbed in the reading of letters.

"Fine little August day in Florida—eh, judge?" was Joe's neat opening remark.

The Shantung-clad guest lowered the letter he was reading and beamed benignantly upon Joe over the rims of his glasses.

"Surprisingly fine," he wheezed civilly, re-raising his letter.

"Why 'surprisingly,' judge?" politely inquired the journalist. Then he worked in a familiar Florida formula. "Perhaps you haven't heard, sir, that Florida, according to the official figures of the United States weather bureau, is the fourth coolest State in the country in summer?"

"You astonish me," said the unregistered guest, slightly rattling his letter.

"Tarrying a while in Citrusia, judge?" probed the *Grapefruit* young man, ignoring the hint.

The middle-aged man with the plastic jowls lowered his letter again, this time with an air as of surrender, and out of the corner of a shrewd, gray, basilisk eye he shot a swift measuring glance at the self-contained young journalist.

"That depends, young sir, upon many things," was his agreeably expansive reply. "Mainly it depends upon the outcome of an investigation which I am about to make with regard to the relative reasonableness and versatility—in the respect of rapidly changing its color, that is—of the Florida chameleon."

The *Grapefruit* young man sat taut on the edge of his chair.

"Versatility—color—chameleon!" he parroted, gulping slightly. "Yes, I think I see, sir. You mean——"

"For petrifying purposes—precisely!" the unregistered guest came to his aid. "I am in possession, perhaps I should explain, of a unique process for the petrification or mineralization of chameleons. Upon visiting, last year, at Champerico, on the west coast of Guatemala, the inventor of this secret process, I purchased the right to utilize it commercially, which I hope to do on an extensive scale, in Florida."

The journalist, relaxing in his chair, began to discern a tepidly amusing half column for his paper. It would deal, namelessly and not malevolently, with the queer human flotsam and jetsam floating about Florida hotels even in summer. A veiled and not unpleasant indication of Vallombrosa Inn ought to have a place in this bit of mild raillery What was that line of Milton's?—oh, yes:

> Thick as autumnal leaves that strow the brooks
> in Vallombrosa.

That could be made to read:

> Thick as congenital feebs that know the nooks
> in Vallombrosa.

Pretty neat, that! Entirely over Citrusia heads—but neat all the same.

"No doubt," the unregistered guest went on, "you have seen these petrified chameleons of Guatemala—all of them marketed by this one man in Champerico—in the better jewelry and art novelty shops. Probably you supposed these chameleons to have been carved out of jade or some similar substance, never imagining them to have been actual living, little lizards before being subjected to the petrifying process of the Champerico scientist. It was quite by accident, he informed me, that he chanced upon his ingenious method of inducing the many-hued Guatemalan chameleon to change quickly into any color in which he desired to perpetuate him, and of instantaneously fixing that tint upon him, by the application of the secret petrifying solution, for all time."

The *Grapefruit* young man smiled a yes-and-no smile, meant to encourage. This chameleon chant certainly would shape up into a fantastic little filler for the local page!

"The jewels—these mineralized chameleons are jewels in all essential respects—are in universal demand as pendants for ladies' neck chains and—the smaller ones particularly—as charms for men's watch chains," continued the unregistered guest. "My present purpose in Florida, then, is to determine whether the Florida chameleon—which, while not so vivid nor so varihued as the Guatemalan saurian, nevertheless has compensatory points of its own—whether the Florida chameleon can and will show the amenableness and versatility of its Central American cousin in swiftly changing its color at the behest of the petrifying operator."

The profound silence of the soothfully shadowy hotel exchange, when the unregistered guest ceased speaking, was only slightly broken by a smothered snort from the inn host, who, tilted far back in an office chair, seemed to have come upon something humorous in his Jacksonville newspaper.

"Judge," skillfully probed the journalist, "I chanced to be back of the desk, unseen, when you arrived here, so that I could not avoid hearing you mention something to the proprietor, Mr. Sparkman, about your purpose to utilize our solar energy for the establishment of a smokeless industry somewhere in this section—I am quoting you with approximate correctness, I hope, sir?"

"Perhaps I did indiscreetly say something of the sort," gravely replied the Shantung-clad guest, "with no idea, of course, that my careless words would ever be quoted at all."

"Then I am to infer, judge," pressed the keen young journalist, "that this smokeless industry, operated by solar energy, is to be an—er—institute devoted to the petrifaction of Florida chameleons for the jewelry and art novelty trade?"

"It is a valid inference, I think," promptly replied the unregistered guest, "that the petrifying of chameleons is a smokeless process and that nothing but solar energy, meaning sunshine, could act as an urge upon a chameleon frequently to change its color."

"Yonder is your car, sir." The hotel man, rising from behind the desk and pointing toward the street, terminated the talk.

"If you will excuse me now, sir," politely observed the unregistered guest as he rose and passed the journalist's chair, and he stepped briskly to the curb and entered the drawn-up touring car, the shirt-sleeved young driver of which studied with sardonic disdain the scenic investiture of his passenger for Celestia. The *Grapefruit* representative watched at the hotel window while the car stopped for three minutes at the telegraph office across the street. When, the passenger having resumed the spacious rear seat, he saw the car start southward for Celestia, the journalist, wearing a complaisant cat-and-canary smile, strolled back to the hotel desk.

"Get the needful item?" inquired the Vallombrosa host.

"Birdikin of an item!" purred the journalist called Joe. "Item what is—babesky!"

"In to-morrow's paper?"

"Sure thing—going to dash it off directly," and the journalist went his way.

His way took him, straight as a fish hawk in flight, to the telegraph office across the street, the manager-and-sole-operator of which, after nodding, stuck to his job at a sending key until he had transmitted the message which he held to the light in his hand.

"Howdy, Joey—what's new?" he then greeted the *Grapefruit* young man, impaling the just-transmitted message on a hook.

"New-looking one, for an oldish party—that one that wrote the wire you just sent—what?" was Joey's clever comeback.

"I'll say!" agreed the telegraph man. "Looks like a million dollars or a winter wireless wire tapper or sump'in,' don't he?"

"Buffaloes me a bit, trying to classify him, 'Lafe,'" said the journalist. "What's the signature to his wire?"

"Initials only—'B. J. B.,'" replied the telegrapher.

"You know me, Lafe, ol' son—how 'bout a swift, sidewise slant at that wire?" cajoled the journalist.

"Joe, you're a li'l' ol' raskil, d'you know that? But this is strictly between ourselves, un'stan'?" said the telegrapher, taking the message from the hook and handing it over.

"Addressed to 'Supic—S-u-p-i-c, New York,'" musingly read the journalist. "Employing a cable address for a wire from Florida—who but a feeb would do that?" He read on:

> Using Citrusia as strategic base. Choice lies 'twixt Citrusia and Celestia. Both ideal for purpose. Shall wire selection when made.
>
> B. J. B.

"Thanks, Lafe, for letting me have a peek." The *Grapefruit* cajoler handed back the message. "Codey-sounding dispatch, eh?"

"That's what I thought," bovinely replied the telegraph man. "Looks like the dressy old lad, maybe with the idea of investing coin in both burgs, thinks he can reconcile Citrusia and Celestia."

"Reconcile 'em—guess again, Lafe!" jeered the journalist.

Provided with the essential factors of a birdikin or babesky item, he then sought his typewriting machine in the cool little rear room of the *Grapefruit* office.

The babesky or birdikin item, stretched to something over half a column of the next morning's issue of the Citrusia *Grapefruit,* under the somewhat provocative or starting-something headline, "Celestia Can Have 'Em All," was a bit of writing that would scarcely have got past the lacerating blue pencil of the sage old owner and editor of the paper if, instead of tarpon fishing on the west coast, he had been on the job in Citrusia. It suffered in tone from the causeless embitterment and the overemphasis of the yet-unmellowed young writer, and in aiming at the Addisonian key of raillery the itemist not only missed the pitch but shot elusively over—or perhaps it was under—the apprehension of his audience.

It began with the somewhat ponderous announcement that either Citrusia or Celestia—the choice not yet having been definitely made—soon was to have its prosperity enormously augmented by the installation within its limits of a smokeless industry, operated by solar energy, having for its promising commercial purpose the petrifaction of Florida chameleons, the supply of which, of course, was inexhaustible. No names being named, the grave discourse of the unregistered guest on the subject of chameleons was given in part; and here was seized the chance to smuggle in the recondite allusion to the congenital feebs that know the nooks "Inn Vallombrosa."

Celestia, the itemist set down with somewhat too heavy a hand, considering his intention to be subtly jokeful, was the made-to-order community for all these summer-prowling feebs—whence the "Celestia Can Have 'Em All" headline. For Celestia, he pointed out, was the heaven-ordained site for the establishment of a petrifying plant. Celestia itself having been petrified from the day of its birth. Celestia, moreover—never itself having been able to work up enough speed to produce a little smoke—was strictly the one-and-only Florida place for a smokeless industry. As for solar energy, Celestia could provide oodles of that, seeing that the still-born town, as its one asset, had all the fierce sunshine there was—and thus he went on with elephantine nimbleness to the end.

The writer of this, reading it over in type many times the next morning, intensely approved of the Dean Swift style of his babesky or birdikin piece; nor was his opinion of its rapierlike effectiveness in the least changed because the Citrusians whom he met on his rounds, mere business men and such, alluded to it with guarded or manufactured smiles, few of them, it appeared from their reluctant comment, having succeeded in plumbing its exact or esoteric meaning, "except where it kidded Celestia," as some of them frankly confessed.

"Just been reading your piece for the fourth time," the host of Vallombrosa Inn remarked when Joe, the journalist, appeared at the hotel at noon. "Elegant, I'd call it, if I knew what it meant. What's it all about —astrology?"

"Ye—eh—that and the Einstein theory of relativity," cleverly countered Joe. "I wonder," he then permitted himself to speculate, "if the Smokeless Industrialist has read it?"

"Sure thing—he read it at breakfast this morning," said the hotel man. "I was sitting at my own table, back of his, but I noticed that his shoulders were shaking, and so, just for something to say, I asked him to let me in on the fun. Then, all chuckles, he showed me your piece about him. He said —if it's praise you're looking for—that you must be an extraordinarily bright and penetrating young newspaper man, but maybe he had his fingers crossed."

"Shows that I classified him correctly as a feeb, doesn't it, when he could chuckle over a barb like that?" composedly inquired the journalist.

"May—and may not," said the hotel man. "Celestia, it may interest you to know, hasn't got him classified that way. At nine o'clock this morning the three commissioners of Celestia rolled up in front of the inn in Celestia's big official Rolls-Royce, with the secretary of the Celestia chamber of commerce driving that swell ship, and they kidnaped your feeb from his breakfast table and hauled him down to their burg, where they kept him till ten minutes ago, when they brought him back in the same big bus. For a feeb, the old lad must have Celestia consid'ably hypnotized."

But the laugh, the journalist considered, was on the Celestians, the leading lights of which, in his opinion, were incurable victims of mental hookworm.

"Those Celestia simps ate up my story about the projected petrified-chameleon plant, I s'pose, and, taking it seriously, they want to grab the smokeless industry for their burg," was his unperturbed comment. "Where's the Solar Energist now?" he inquired.

"Dining room, at lunch," was the reply. "He's ordered a car again for the afternoon. Going to have a thorough look around Citrusia, I heard him tell the Celestia commissioners. 'What's the use of looking at Citrusia?' they asked him, but the old lad was stubborn about it and told them that Citrusia possessed even more important advantages than those of Celestia for his purpose; meaning, of course, his smokeless industry—eh?"

"Meaning, likewise, that the Petrifier sure has got those Celestia saps sewed up in a boob bag," was the *Grapefruit* young man's get-away comment as he sauntered out in search of local copy for the next day's paper. He was greeted, a few doors from the hotel, by a predatory-looking, lean man, lounging in front of a real-estate office.

"Been reading that go-get-the-dictionary thing of yours about the eccentric capitalist at the inn, Joe," said the realtor. "I've been noticing him coming in and out of there. Queer or not queer, he looks like the class to me. I wonder if he'd be open to an argument about Citrusia real estate?"

"Might try," replied the journalist, who, for reasons of no importance here, hated this real-estate man with a civil-seeming masked ferocity. "His middle name's money all right. Wouldn't be surprised if you succeeded in peddling a chunk or so of Citrusia to him."

"What's the rest of his name—besides money?" inquired the realtor, licking his lips.

"Busby—Bucephalus J. Busby," was the offhand reply. "He's about finished lunch now and you'll probably find him in the inn exchange. I'll wait here while you offer him a few Citrusia sites—I'd like to hear how you make out."

The realtor, darting across the street and into the refreshingly cool hotel exchange, found the Shantung-draped guest huddled deep in a willow rocker, reading a New York newspaper, and he approached him with the incredible intrepidity of the Florida land dealer.

"Mr. Busby from New York, I believe," he made his tasty opening, seating himself beside the unregistered guest. "I'm told you're profoundly impressed by Citrusia, Mr. Busby—which shows your judgment, sir. We've got the livest town on the east coast north of Miami, and in due time we're going to run rings around Miami. You mustn't pay any attention, Mr. Busby, to that small-time screed about you in the paper this morning—these newspaper people have got to have something to fill their sheet with. Well, as I was saying, about Citrusia—I'm offering a few choice, restricted Citrusia properties that I'm sure will interest—pardon me, I forgot to give you my name; name's Tamerlane J. Talbot—here's my business card—office right across the street from here. Speaking of your home city, Mr. Busby, it might surprise you to know how many choice Citrusia parcels I've sold to parties from New York who, like yourself, sir——"

The unregistered guest, emitting a manufactured cough, raised a staying hand.

"I have been at some pains, Mr.—uh—Talbot, did you say?—some pains to refer to New York merely as my present headquarters, and not as my home city," he remarked in a soberly judicial tone. "You might, perhaps, be disappointed—others, I may say, have been—if you were informed that my home city is Pottawatomie, Kansas; and, perhaps again, it might inflict needless distress upon you if you were told that it was in Pottawatomie, Kansas, that I practiced for many years the profession of a chiropodist."

"A chiropodist!" huskily echoed the real-estate man. Being a Florida land man, however, he made a quick recovery. If there seemed to be something inherently incongruous as between chiropody and capital, there yet was no valid reason why this particular chiropodist should not have become a capitalist. "Well, sir," the realtor self-possessedly went on, "we've got investors in Citrusia from every State in the——"

"Quite so, quite so," politely interrupted the unregistered guest. "Reverting, then, to the—um—choice Citrusia parcels of which you speak, those, I fear, are for the present, at least, somewhat beside my purpose. But if you should happen to have on your list a quarter section, say, of suitable salt-swamp land——"

"Salt-swamp land!" ejaculated the realtor with a certain gurgling effect.

"Suitable salt-swamp land," composedly repeated the unregistered guest. "If this seems a singular inquiry, permit me to elucidate. I have already noticed—with the eye of a trained ornithologist, perhaps I may be permitted to observe—the extremely large-billed pelicans which fly in such great numbers over your magnificent river. You may not be aware of the fact—it has been kept, I believe, a trade secret—that the so-called 'boards,' or sound-producing chromatic keys, of all really fine xylophones are nothing more nor less than the scientifically hollowed-out bills of pelicans. The manufacture of xylophones, since that instrument has been adopted by the leading symphony orchestra of the world, has become an important industry, and it has occurred to me that, if I could purchase at a reasonable figure a tract hereabouts of salt-swamp land, suitable for the breeding of these remarkably large-billed Florida pelicans, I might undertake to establish here——"

"Yessir, yessir—I get you—another smokeless industry!" hoarsely cut in the real-estate man. "Have to ask you to excuse me now—I see a man I'm waiting for going into my office!" and he raced, with a slightly zigzag effect as from dizziness, for the door of Vallombrosa Inn, whence, appearing to gather himself together, he sped across the street to wherethe temporary editor in chief of the Citrusia *Grapefruit* stood leaning against a palmetto in desultory conversation with the secretary of the Citrusia chamber of commerce.

"Sell him?" inquired the journalist.

"*Sell* him!" rasped the realtor. "Say, somebody ought to sell that simp a reserved padded cell in the Chattahoochie nut coop! And say, you, what the devil did you mean by stacking me up against a hoof doctor from Pottawatomie, Kansas? That's what he says he was, but if you're asking me he's an escaped——"

"Maybe,Tam," cruelly put in the sleepy-looking secretary of the Citrusia chamber of commerce, "he was merely giving you a good time, like he did Joe here yesterday, as some of us have been thinking?"

"Giving *me* a good time!" spluttered the wounded Florida realtor. "Say, I'd like to see the——"

"Think I'll have a word or so with the gentleman myself," significantly remarked the secretary of the Citrusia chamber of commerce, and he strolled across the street and entered the shadowy inn exchange.

" 'Lo, Tam, why so het up?" inquired, walking into the shade of the palmetto at that moment, the out-in-front real-estate man of Citrusia Beach, which lies opposite Citrusia on the peninsula. "Anybody been stepping on you?"

" 'Lo, Jeff—no, nobody's been stepping on me," swiftly replied Tamerlane, "but I'm stepping on myself on account of a bum deal I gave myself yesterday. Here I've got a set-up—capitalist from New York—man rolling in millions—right across the street at the inn——"

"You mean that elderly looking speedster inhabiting the Broadway scenery?" inquired the Citrusia Beach land dealer, suddenly wide awake. "Say, who is that dashing old bird? I spotted him being driven around over our way last evening, and I——"

"Bucephalus J. Busby, of New York—that's the gentleman's name," the Citrusia realtor consciencelessly passed the buck. "He's here to pick up everything in sight, real-estately speaking, in and around Citrusia—he might even want some of that bum beach stuff of yours—and——"

"Say, is he over at the inn now, Tam?" the realtor from across the river, on his toes, interrupted.

"Yep—just left him there," replied Tam. "What I was kicking myself about when you came up, Jeff, was this: I've already got Mr. Busby—and, boy, he's rotten with it, I'm telling you!—got him worked up to the buying point in half a dozen swell properties on my list, and all big propositions at that; but only yesterday—just my bedinged luck!—I peddled to a piker from Cincinnati that punk eighty-acre piece of shell-mound stuff out near the new golf links that I could have sold to Mr. Busby, easy as losing my hat in a hurricane, for at least twenty thoustand bucks more than the Cincinnati small-timer gave me——"

"Tell me the rest of it later, Tam—I'm going to visualize that good thing myself while the visibility remains good!" cut in the already-moving realtor from Citrusia Beach, and he hurried across the street and disappeared under the Moorish door arch of Vallombrosa Inn.

"Leaving me out of it, you ain't any Class-Z liar yourself," observed the journalist, who, still leaning reflectively against the palmetto, had been listening in.

"Well," said the Citrusia realtor, grinning, "I had to get hunk with somebody for having wasted my priceless time on that lunatic across the street, and Jeff was the first fathead to come along."

"Told you he was a hoof doctor from Pottawatomie, did he, Tam?" musingly inquired the *Grapefruit* young man.

"Yes, and that's not all he told me!" resentfully broke out Tamerlane. "Say, if you call that petrified-lizard thing he sprung on you a hop trance, what d'you think of breeding Florida pelicans to make xylophone plunkity-plunk keys out of their bills as a smokeless industry——"

"I'm kind o' beginning to think, seeing you're asking me," moodily cut in the journalist, "that maybe this here nonregistering guest of the inn may have been handing somebody—I won't say who just yet—well, a package——"

"Say," suddenly interrupted Tamerlane, pointing across the street, "what's all this flirtation that's going on between that pelican-and-petrified-lizard bug of ours and these Celestia chieftains? This is the second time this morning that the three Celestia commissioners, with that swell-up pup of a Celestia chamber of commerce secretary driving that too-darned-showy bus of theirs, have shown up at the inn to carry that dolled-up old drooler down to their burg. There he is now, getting into their fool fifteen-thousand-buck car with 'em—and sa-ay! lookit Jim Halpin a-hanging on to the jowly nut's arm trying his blamedest to keep him from going riding with the Celestia crowd! And tell me, Joe, what d'you s'pose those Celestia birds are laughing so hard about?"

Joe the journalist could not help but see, as he leaned, watchful and gloomy, against the palmetto, that the Celestia birds were laughing with great enjoyment at the frantic but wholly ineffectual effort which Mr. Halpin, the frenzied-looking secretary of the Citrusia chamber of commerce, was making to restrain the unregistered guest of Vallombrosa Inn from entering Celestia's superb official automobile. The unregistered guest, with pleasant deprecatory shrugs and meant-to-be-soothing phrases, at length politely but firmly released himself from the Citrusia secretary's arm hold and stepped into the rear seat of the Celestia car between two of the Celestia commissioners. The competent-looking secretary of the Celestia chamber of commerce, at the wheel, stepped on the clutch, and the fine automobile, filled with hearty and slightly ironic Celestia laughter, leaped from the curb and swept southward.

Accompanied by the sulky and speechless real-estate operator from Citrusia Beach, Mr. James Halpin, the sleepy-looking but usually far from sleepy-acting secretary of the Citrusia chamber of commerce, walked depressedly across the street from Vallombrosa Inn to where the *Grapefruit* young man, now darkly apprehensive, still leaned against the palmetto. Mr. Halpin was pale with chagrin or fury or something.

"You and your dam'-fool petrified-lizard imbecilities!" he huskily addressed the journalist called Joe. "Throwing all of us, with your pinheaded newspaper junk, off the scent of the best proposition for Citrusia that ever——"

The journalist feebly mumbled something that sounded like "Whazz ma'r?"

"What's the matter?" stormily echoed his accuser. "Well, you've lost for Citrusia, and handed to Celestia, just about one million dollars in money—not in mud or marbles or marshmallows, but *money!*—by being gay and comical and witty, according to your infantile idea of those things, with one of the biggest men in his industry in America—that's what's the matter!"

The *Grapefruit* young man, raked by a terrible fear, stood mute.

"And now Celestia not only has the everlasting gloat over Citrusia," his hoarse arraigner stormed on, "but the ground is going to be broken at once in Celestia for a great industry that could and would have been Citrusia's, if those of us that've got at least a little brains hadn't been thrust off the trail by your childish——"

"Industry? What industry are you hollering about? Some smokeless industry that will——" began the journalist called Joe, who, at bay, nevertheless was impelled by the need to defend himself somehow.

"Yes, it's a smokeless industry all right," sardonically cut in the secretary. "But you'd never guess what industry it is. That kind of deep thinking would be too severe a strain upon you. Perhaps, though, if I put it to you in the form of a question, you might possibly be able to give the answer—give it now when it is too late and Celestia has grabbed the prize! I ask you, therefore: What is the third most important industry in the United States of America? An industry wholly without belching chimneys and therefore smokeless? And an industry wholly dependent upon solar energy, which in plain language is just sunshine, for its entire product?"

Then, and then only, did the preposterously simple truth break upon the journalist called Joe.

Three days later, at a directors' meeting in New York of The Supreme Pictures Corporation—cable address, "Supic, New York"—the moneyed gentlemen awaited with impatience the arrival at the great square table of Byron J. Bingley—known to film fans the wide world over as "Byron J. Bingley presents——" As general manager of the concern, he was to make his verbal report as to certain negotiations which he had been conducting in Florida. Having been apprised in advance by wire that Mr. Bingley's Florida errand had been successfully concluded, they rose to their feet as one man and clapped loudly when the heavy-set man with the plastic jowls and the grizzled reddish hair entered the room.

"Nothing much to tell, gentlemen," modestly wheezed Mr. Bingley when a listening silence fell upon the special meeting of the directors. "Celestia, as I wired you, is to be our magnificent Florida home. I have here," taking a document from his breast pocket, "the deed, with a clear-as-crystal title, to that Celestia tract, so admirably suited to our purpose, which took my eye to the exclusion of everything in Florida, when I spent the month of December in Celestia last year. A noble property for moving-picture purposes, gentlemen. Five hundred and forty acres, every foot cleared except for ornamental palmettos and pines—the tract extending clean through the peninsula from river to sea, with a thousand-foot frontage on both sea and river; a fine shell road passing by what will be our main gate on the river side, and, on the ocean end, a sea beach as hard as iron and smoother than concrete for our cars to operate on; tropical scenery everywhere; the splendid homes of Celestia, as Mission and Moorish as those of California, hospitably open to our performers and camera men; and, when a scenario calls for mountains, North Carolina only a night's ride away."

"Good eye, Bing!" broke in the heaviest bondholder among the directors. "But we're keen to hear what that Celestia crowd stung you for the tract. We derived, from your telegram that you got sort of a bargain——"

"Bargain," said Mr. Bingley, taking in the entire table with a jowly smile of self-deprecation, "is right. It will be recalled, I think, that, when I broke off negotiations with the Celestia people last winter, the rock-bottom price they'd named me for the property was a hundred thousand flat?"

The directors' affirmative nods indicated that it was so recalled.

"Well, gentlemen," went on Mr. Bingley, "it gratifies me to announce that it was my good fortune to obtain a marked—I might say an extraordinary—reduction of that figure."

"The price, B. J.—the price!" chorused the directors.

"The price, gentlemen," wheezed Mr. Bingley, "was our consent to establish our industry in Celestia. Celestia has given the property to us, free, gratis, as a gift in fee simple, on our so undertaking."

The buzz following this sensational announcement did not die down for ten minutes.

"But look here, B. J.," inquired the main spokesman for the directors when the talk had begun to subside, "how the dickens did you manage the thing? Those Florida folks, as I happen to know from having bought a winter place down there, don't make a habit of giving properties away."

"Nothing mysterious about it," was Mr. Bingley's characteristically minimizing answer. "Instead of going to Celestia this time, I went to Citrusia. I wired you from there, I believe, that I was making Citrusia my strategic base? Well, that's all. I do not have to tell you of the feeling that exists between rival Florida resorts set closely together. When Celestia discovered—I aided them in the discovery—that I was looking around Citrusia—which I wasn't—as the maybe Florida home for our plant, Celestia came and got me. The first time they came and got me their price had dropped to fifty thousand, in reply to which I told them that, after all, Citrusia had the only tract that would fit our purpose. Then, after conferences, powwows, a mass meeting, and hell to pay generally in Celestia, Celestia came after me the second time, and on this agreeable occasion the figure had fallen from fifty thousand to nothing."

"How 'bout this, B. J.?" inquired, smiling, one of the directors, taking a clipping from his pocketbook and passing it across the table. "A newspaper man in Jacksonville, friend of mine, sent it to me. Sounds as if you enjoyed yourself a little in Citrusia."

Mr. Bingley glanced recognizingly at the clipping's headline—"Celestia Can Have 'Em All"—and smiled reminiscently.

"Motley's the only wear when you find yourself in a jam," he commented in passing back the clipping. "There was no need for me to make known my purposes to Citrusia. If I had done that, I'd have been torn to ribbons in the combat between Citrusia and Celestia. So I took refuge in the cap and bells. Bright, energetic lad, the boy who wrote that piece. I'm going to remember him; might use him in our publicity department. Not penetrative, but imaginative—which is what we need for the press work. I'm going to write a letter to the secretary of the Citrusia chamber of commerce, by the way, explaining that Citrusia never had a chance to become the Florida home of The Supreme Pictures. He seemed to suppose the newspaper lad's little piece for the paper so embittered my young life that I turned from Citrusia to Celestia. I don't want the boy to suffer under such a flighty accusation."

Mr. Halpin, the secretary of the Citrusia chamber of commerce, generously showed Mr. Bingley's exonerating letter to the journalist called Joe when it arrived a week later.

"Well," pleasedly remarked the *Grapefruit* young man, "that helps a little, but not much. Solar energy and smokeless industry—and I never woke up till you showed me a diagram and a blue print! I still think, Mr. Halpin, that there must be a lot of cork under my hair!"

"Mebbe so, mebbe so, son," partially acquiesced the secretary. "But so long, as it now proves, that it's not a million dollars' worth of cork, you should worry!"

*"The Yap from Ypsilanti," by Mr. Cullen, in the next number.*

# The Hidden Places

By Bertrand W. Sinclair

*Author of "One Good Turn," "Poor Man's Rock," Etc.*

**Two wrongs do not make a right, but two great misfortunes may lead a man and a woman into great happiness. In the story of Hollister and Doris Cleveland, Mr. Sinclair develops a theme whose power is undeniable—the hunger of the lonely. And you already know how well the author is qualified to tell of the wilds of British Columbia, where the drama is acted. To both story and setting there is a sweep which will make you forget everything else, as every good tale should.**

***(A Four-Part Story—Part I.)***

## CHAPTER I.

HOLLISTER stood in the middle of his room staring at the door without seeing the door, without seeing the bulky shadow his body cast on the wall in the pale glow of a single droplight. He was seeing everything, and seeing nothing, acutely, quiveringly conscious and yet oblivious to his surroundings by reason of the poignancy of his thought. A feeling not far short of terror had folded itself about him like a shrouding fog.

For weeks he had seen it looming over him, and he had schooled himself to disregard a great deal which his perception was too acute to misunderstand. He had struggled desperately against the unescapable, recognizing certain significant facts and in the same breath denying their accumulated force, in sheer self-defense.

A small dressing table topped by an oval mirror stood against the wall beside his bed. He sat down before the dressing table and forced himself to look steadfastly, appraisingly, at the reflection of his face in the mirror.

He shuddered and dropped his eyes. This was a trial he seldom ventured upon. He could not bear that vision long. No one could. That was the fearful implication which made him shrink. He, Robert Hollister, in the flush of manhood, with a body the symmetry and vigor of which other men had known envy, a mind that functioned alertly, a spirit as near indomitable as the spirit of man may be, was like a leper among his own kind—he had become a something that filled other men with pitying dismay when they looked at him, that made women avert their gaze and withdraw from him in spite of pity.

Hollister snapped out the light and threw himself on his bed. He had known physical suffering, the slow, aching hours of tortured flesh, bodily pain that had racked him until he had wished for death as a relief—but that had been when the flame of vitality burned low, when the will to live had been snapped by bodily stress.

Now the mere animal instinct to live was a compelling force within him. He was young and strong, aching with his desire for life in its fullest sense. And he did not know how he was going to live and endure the manner of life he had to face, a life that held nothing but frustration and denial of all that was necessary to him, which was making him suffer as acutely as he had ever suffered in the field, under the knives of surgeons, in the shambles of the front line or the ether-scented dressing stations. There is morphine for a tortured body, but there is no opiate for agony of the spirit, the sharp-toothed pain that stabs at a lonely heart with its invisible lancet.

In the darkness of his room, with all the noisy traffic of a seaport city rumbling under his windows, Hollister lay on his bed and struggled against the terrifying depression which had seized him. He was no more captain of his soul than any man born of woman has ever been when he descends into the dark places. But he knew that he must shake off that feeling, or go mad, or kill himself.

It was not because life held out any promise to Hollister that he lived, nor was it a physical fear of death, nor any moral scruple against self-destruction. He clung to life because instinct was stronger than reason. He had to live. To live on and on, a pariah among his fellows because of his disfigurement. A man with a twisted face, a gargoyle of a countenance. To be denied companionship, love, to know that so many things which made life beautiful were always just beyond his reach. To be merely endured.

The sweat broke out on Hollister's face when he thought of all that. To-night the full realization of what it meant engulfed him with horror.

After a time he shook off the first paralyzing grip of this unnamable terror which had seized him with clammy hands, fought it down by sheer resolution. He was able to lie staring into the dusky spaces of his room and review the stirring panorama of his existence for the past four years. There was nothing that did not fill him with infinite regret—and there was nothing which by any conceivable effort he could have changed. He could not have escaped one of those calamities which had befallen him. He could not have left undone a single act that he had performed.

Hollister shut his eyes. Immediately, like motion pictures projected upon a screen, his mind began to project visions of the past. He saw himself kissing his wife good-by. He saw the tears shining in her eyes. He felt again the clinging pressure of her arms, her cry that she would be so lonely. He saw himself in billets, poring over her letters. He saw himself swinging up the line with his company, crawling back with shattered ranks after a hammering, saw himself repeating this over and over again till it seemed like a nightmare in which all existence was comprised in blood and wounds and death and sorrow, enacted at stated intervals, to the rumble of guns.

He saw himself on his first leave in London, when he found that Myra was growing less restive under his absence, when he felt proud to think that she was learning the lesson of sacrifice and how to bear up under it. He saw his second Channel crossing with a flesh wound in his thigh, when there seemed, to his hypersensitive mind a faint perfunctoriness in her greeting. It was on this leave that he first realized how the grim business he was engaged upon was somehow rearing an impalpable wall between himself and this woman whom he still loved with a lover's passion after four years of marriage.

And he could see, in this mental cinema, whole searing sentences of the letter he received from her just before a big push on the Somme in the fall of seventeen—that letter in which she told him with childlike directness that he had grown dim and distant and that she loved another man. She was sure he would not care greatly. She was sorry if he did. But she could not help it. She had been so lonely. People were bound to change. It could not be helped. She was sorry—but——

And Hollister saw himself later lying just outside the lip of a shell crater, temporarily blind, helpless, his face a shredded smear when he felt it with groping fingers. He remembered that he lay there wondering, because of the darkness and the strange silence and the pain, if he were dead and burning in hell for his sins.

After that there were visions of himself in a German hospital, in a prison camp, and at last the armistice, and the Channel crossing once more. He was dead, they told him, when he tried in the chaos of demobilization to get in touch with his regiment, to establish his identity, to find his wife. He was officially dead. He had been so reported, so accepted eighteen months earlier. His wife had married again. She and her husband had vanished out of England. And with his wife had vanished his assets, his estate, by virtue of a prewar arrangement which he had never revoked.

He beheld himself upon the streets of London, one of innumerable stray dogs, ruined, deserted, disfigured, a bit of war's wreckage. He was simply numbed and bewildered. But that was before he grew conscious of what it meant to a sensitive man, a man in whom all warm human impulses flowed strongly, to be penniless, to have all the dependable foundations of his life torn from under his feet, to be so disfigured that people shunned him.

He had to gather up the broken pieces of his life, fit them together, go on as best he could. He had not foreseen all the strange shifts he would be put to, the humiliations he would suffer, the crushing weight of hopelessness which gathered upon him by the time he arrived on the Pacific coast, where he had once lived, and to which he now turned to do as men all over the war-racked earth were doing in the winter of 1919—cast about in an effort to adjust himself, to make a place for himself in civil life.

All the way across the continent of North America he grew more and more restive under the accumulating knowledge that the horrible devastation of his features made a No Man's Land about him which few had the courage to cross. Now, upon the evening of his third day in Vancouver, a blind and indescribable fear seized upon him, a sickening conviction that, although living he was dead, dead in so far as the common, casual intimacies of daily intercourse with his fellows went.

Lying on his bed, Hollister flexed his arms, arched his chest, and fingered the muscular breadth of it in the darkness. He could feel within himself the surge of vast stores of energy. His brain functioned with a bright, bitter clearness. He could feel—ah, that was the hell of it. That quivering response to the subtle nuances of thought! A profound change had come upon him, yet, essentially, he, the man, was unchanged. Except for those terrible scars, he was as he had always been.

For a moment there came over him the wild impulse to rush out into the street, crying:

"You fools! Because my face is torn and twisted makes me no different from you. I still feel and think. I am as able to love and hate as you. Was all your talk about honorable scars just prattle, to mislead the men who risked the scars? Is all your much-advertised kindliness and sympathy for war-broken men a bluff?"

He smiled sadly. They would say he was mad.

Something rose chokingly in his throat. Into his eyes a slow, scalding wetness crept like a film. He set his teeth in one corner of his pillow.

## CHAPTER II.

When Hollister was eighteen years old he had been briefly troubled by an affection of his eyes brought on from overstudy. His father, at the time, was interested in certain timber operations on the coast of British Columbia. In these rude camps, therefore, young Hollister spent a year. During that twelve months books were prohibited. He lived in the woods, restored the strength of his eyes amid that restful greenness, hardened a naturally vigorous body by healthy outdoor labor with the logging crews.

He returned home to go on with his university work in eastern Canada with unforgetable impressions of the Pacific coast, a boyish longing to go back to that region where the mountains receded from the sea in wave after wave of enormous height, where the sea lapped with green lips at the foot of the ranges and thrust winding arms back into the very heart of the land, and where the land itself, delta and slope and slide-engraved declivities, was clothed with great, silent forests, upon which man, with his axes and saws, his machinery, his destructiveness in the name of industry, had as yet made little more impression than the nibbling of a single mouse on the rim of a large cheese.

When he graduated he did return on a thirty-day vacation, which the lure of the semiwild country prolonged for six months—a whole summer in which he resisted the importunities of his father to take his part in the business upon which rested the family fortune. Hollister never forgot that summer. All life spread before him in a vast illusion of unquenchable joyousness. There was a rose-pink tinge over those months in which he fished for salmon and trout, climbed the frowning escarpments of the coast range, gave himself up to the spell of a region which is still potent with the charm of the wilderness untamed. There had always lingered in his receptive mind a memory of profound beauty, a stark beauty of color and outline, an unhampered freedom, opportunity as vast as the mountains that looked from their cool heights down on the changeful sea and the hushed forests brooding in the sun and rain.

So now he had come back again, after seven years, scarcely knowing why he came, except that the coast beckoned with a remote gesture—and that he desired to get as far as possible from the charnel house of Europe, and that he shrank from presenting himself among the acquaintances of his boyhood and the few distant relatives left him upon the Atlantic seaboard.

His father had died shortly after Hollister married. He had left his son property aggregating several thousand dollars and a complicated timber business disorganized by his sudden death. Hollister was young, sanguine, clever in the accepted sense of cleverness. He had married for love—urged thereto by a headlong, unquestioning, uncritical passion. There were no obstacles.

His passion was returned. There was nothing to make him ponder upon what a devastating, tyrannical force this emotion which he knew as love might become, this blind fever of the blood under cover of which nature works her ends, blandly indifferent to the consequences.

Hollister had been happy. He was ambitious. He had thrown himself with energy into a revival of his father's business when it came into his hands. His needs expanded with his matrimonial obligations. Considered casually, his future was the future of a great many young men who begin life under reasonably auspicious circumstances. That is to say, he would be a success financially and socially to as great an extent as he cared to aspire. He would lead a tolerably pleasant domestic existence. He would be proud of his wife's beauty, her charm; he would derive a soothing contentment from her affection. He would take pleasure in friendships. In the end, of course, at some far-off misty milepost, he would begin to grow old. Then he would die in a dignified manner, full of years and honors, and his children would carry on after him.

Hollister failed to reckon with the suavities of international diplomacy, with the forces of commercialism in relation to the markets of the world. The war burst upon and shattered the placidity of his existence very much as the bombs from the first Zeppelins shattered the peace and security of London and Paris.

He reacted to the impetus of the German assault as young men of his class uniformly reacted. There was in Hollister's mind no doubt or equivocation about what he must do. But he did not embark upon this adventure joyously. He had a great deal to lose. But he felt that he must go. He was not, however, filled with the witless idea that service with the expeditionary force was to be an adventure of some few months, a brief period involving some hardships and sharp fighting, but with an allied army hammering at the gates of Berlin as a grand finale. The slaughter of the first encounters had filled him with the conviction that he should put his house in order before he entered that bloody arena out of which he might not emerge.

So that by the time he crossed the Channel the first time he had disentangled himself from his business at a great loss in order to have all his funds available for his wife in case of the ultimate disaster.

Myra had accompanied him to England, had deferred their separation to the last hour. It had been so hard to part.

It scarcely seemed possible that four years had gone winging by since then. Yet in certain moods it seemed to Hollister as if an eternity had passed.

He did not know where Myra was. He, himself, was here in Vancouver, alone, a stranger, a single speck of human wreckage cast on a far beach by the receding tides of war. He had no funds worth considering; but money was not as yet an item of consideration. He was not disabled. Physically he was more fit than he had ever been. The delicate mechanism of his brain was unimpaired. He had no bitterness—no illusions. His intellect was acute enough to suggest that in the complete shucking off of illusions lay his greatest peril. Life as it faced him, the individual, appeared to be almost too grim a business to be endured without hopes and dreams. He had neither. He had nothing but moods.

He walked slowly down Granville Street in the blackest mood which had yet come upon him. It differed from that strange feeling of terror which had taken him unaware the night before. He was still as acutely aware of the barrier which his disfigurement raised between him and other men. But with that morbid awareness there rose also now, for the first time, a resentment against the smug folk who glanced at him and hurriedly averted their eyes.

The day was cold and sunny, a January morning with a touch of frost in the air. Men passed him walking rapidly, clad in greatcoats. Women tripped by, wrapped in furs, eyes bright, cheeks glowing. And as they passed, singly, in chattering pairs, in smiling groups, Hollister observed them with a growing fury. They were so thoroughly insulated against everything disagreeable. A great war had just come to a dramatic close, a war in which staggering numbers of men had been sacrificed body and soul to enable these people to walk the streets in comfortable security. They seemed so completely unaware of the significance of his disfigured face. It was simply a disagreeable spectacle from which they turned with brief annoyance.

Most of these men and women honored the flag. Without doubt they were all agreed that it was a sacred duty to fight for one's country. How peculiar and illogical then, he reflected, to be horrified at the visible results of fighting for one's country. The thing had had to be done. A great many men had been killed. A greater number had lost their legs, their arms, their sight. They had suffered indescribable mutilations and disabilities in the national defense. These people were the nation. Those who passed him with a shocked glance at his face must be aware that fighting involves suffering and scars. It appeared as if they wished to ignore that. Hollister imagined them privately thinking he should wear a mask.

After all, he was a stranger to these folk, although he was their countryman and a person of consequence until the war and Myra and circumstances conspired against him.

He stifled the resentment which arose from a realization that he must expect nothing else, that it was not injustice so much as stupidity. He reflected that this was natural. A cynical conclusion arose in his mind. There was no substance, after all, in this loose talk about sympathy and gratitude and the obligation of a proud country to those who had served overseas. Why should there be? He was an individual among other individuals who were unconsciously actuated by rampant individualism, except in moments of peril, when stark necessity compelled them to social action. Otherwise it was every man for himself. Yes, it was natural enough. He *was* a stranger to these people. And doubtless the grotesque disarrangement of his features appalled them.

He deliberately clamped down the lid upon such reflections, and bethought himself of the business which brought him along the street. Turning off the main thoroughfare, he passed half a block along a cross street and entered an office building. Ascending to the fourth floor, he sought an elaborate suite of offices which bore upon the ground glass of the entrance door this legend:

LEWIS & COMPANY,
Specialists in B. C. Timber. Investments.

He inquired for Mr. Lewis, gave his card to a young woman who glanced at him once and thereafter looked anywhere but at him while he spoke. After a minute of waiting he was ushered into a private office.

Mr. Lewis was a robust man, a few years older than Hollister. The cares of a rapidly developing business and certain domestic ties had prevented Mr. Lewis from offering himself upon the altar of his country. The responsibility of eight-per-cent investments intrusted to his care was not easily shaken off. Business, of course, was a national necessity. However, since the armistice, Mr. Lewis had ceased to be either explanatory or inferentially apologetic—even in his own thoughts—for his inability to free himself from the demands of commerce during a critical period.

In any case, he was there, sound in wind and limb, a tall, square-shouldered, ruddy man of thirty-five, seated behind an oak desk, turning Hollister's card over in his fingers with an anticipatory smile. When he saw Hollister, blankness replaced the smile. A sort of horrified wonder gleamed in his eyes. Hollister perceived that his appearance shocked the specialist in B. C. timber.

"You have my card. It is several years since we met. I dare say you find me unrecognizable," Hollister said bluntly. "Nevertheless, I can identify myself to your satisfaction."

A peculiarity of Hollister's disfigurement was the immobility of his face. The shell which had mutilated him, the scalpels of the German field surgeons who had perfunctorily repaired the lacerations, had left the flesh in a rigid mold. He could neither recognizably smile nor frown. Out of this expressionless mask his eyes glowed, blue and bright, having escaped injury. They were the only key to the mutations of his mind.

Mr. Lewis looked at him, looked away, and then his gaze came slowly back as if drawn by some fascination against which he struggled in vain.

"I'm—I'm afraid I shouldn't have—have recognized you, as you say," he managed to utter, at last. "Have you—ah——"

"I've been overseas," Hollister answered the unspoken question.

"Most unfortunate," Mr. Lewis murmured. "But your scars are honorable. A brother of mine lost an arm at Loos."

"The brothers of a good many people lost more than their arms at Loos," Hollister returned dryly. "But that is not why I called. You recollect, I suppose, that when I was out here last I bought a timber limit in the Toba from your firm. When I went overseas I instructed you to sell. What was done in that matter?"

Mr. Lewis' countenance cleared at once. He was on his own ground again, dealing with matters in which he was competent, in consultation with a client whom he recalled as a person of consequence. Money talked in arrogant tones that commanded respect.

He pressed a button.

"Bring me," he ordered the clerk who appeared, "all correspondence relating to this matter," and he penciled a few sentences on a slip of paper.

He delved into the papers that were presently set before him.

"Ah, yes!" he said. "Lot 2027 situated on the south slope of the Toba valley. Purchased for your account July, 1912. Sale ordered October, 1914. We had some correspondence about that early in 1915, while you were in London. Do you recall it, Mr. Hollister?"

"Yes. You wrote that the timber market was dead, that any sale possible must be at a considerable sacrifice. Afterward, when I got to the front, I had no time to think about things like that. But I remember writing you to sell, even at a sacrifice."

"Yes, yes. Quite so," Mr. Lewis agreed. "I recall the whole matter very clearly. Conditions at that time, were very bad, you know. Early in 1917 there was a chance to sell, at a considerably reduced figure. But I couldn't get in touch with you. You didn't answer our cable. I couldn't take the responsibility of a sacrifice sale."

Hollister nodded. In 1917 he was a nameless convalescent in a German hospital—officially he was dead. He had forgotten this holding of timber in British Columbia. He was too full of bitter personal misery to trouble about money.

"Failing to reach you we waited until we should hear from you—or from your estate." Mr. Lewis cleared his throat as if it embarrassed him to mention that contingency. "In war—there was that possibility, you understand. We did not feel justified; so much time had elapsed. There was risk to us in acting without verifying our instructions."

"So this property is still to be marketed? The carrying charges, as I remember, were small. I presume you carried them."

"Oh, assuredly," Mr. Lewis asserted. "We protected your interests to the best of our ability."

"Well, find me a buyer for that limit as soon as you can," Hollister said abruptly. "I want to turn it into cash."

7 A P

"We shall set about this at once," Mr. Lewis said. "It may take a little time—conditions, as a result of the armistice, are again somewhat unsettled in the logging industry. Aeroplane spruce production is dead—dead as a salt mackerel—and fir and cedar slumped with it. However, we shall do our best. Have you a price in mind, Mr. Hollister, for a quick sale?"

"I paid ten thousand for it. On the strength of your advice as a specialist in timber investments," he added with a touch of malice. He had taken a dislike to Mr. Lewis. He had not been so critical of either men or motives in the old days. He had remembered Lewis as a good sort. Now he disliked the man, distrusted him. He was too smooth, too sleek. "I'll discount that twenty per cent for a cash sale."

Mr. Lewis made a memorandum.

"Very good," said he, raising his head with an inquiring air, as if to say: "If that is all——"

"If you will kindly identify me at a bank"—Hollister rose from his chair—"I shall cease to trouble you. I have a draft on the Bank of B. N. A. I do not know any one in Vancouver."

"No trouble, I assure you," Lewis hastened to assent—but his tone lacked heartiness, sincerity.

It was only a little distance to the bank, but Lewis insisted on making the journey in a motor car which stood at the curb. It was plain to Hollister that Mr. Lewis disliked the necessity of appearing in public with him. He introduced Hollister, excused himself on the plea of business pressure, and left Hollister standing before the teller's wicket.

He put the money, which the teller paid out to him, in his pocket and walked out on the street. It was a busy corner on a humming thoroughfare. A current of humanity flowed past him on the sidewalk. Standing there for a minute, Hollister felt again the slow rising of his resentment against these careless, fortunate ones. He could not say what caused that feeling. A look, a glance—the inevitable shrinking. He was morbidly sensitive. He knew that, knew it was a state of mind that was growing upon him. But from whatever cause that feeling of intolerable isolation gave way to an inner fury.

As he stood there he felt a wild desire to shout at these people, to curse them, to seize one of these dainty women by the arms, thrust his disfigured face close to hers and cry: "Look at me as if I were a man, not a monstrosity. I'm what I am, so that you could be what you are. Look at me, damn you!"

He pulled himself together and walked on. He wondered if that inner ferment would drive him insane.

He went back to the second-rate hotel where he had taken refuge, depressed beyond words, afraid of himself, afraid of the life which lay in fragments behind him, and spread away before him in terrifying drabness. Yet he must go on living. To live was the dominant instinct. But life promised nothing.

It was not reward or recognition of service performed that Hollister craved. He did not want to be pensioned or subsidized or to have medals pinned on him. What he wanted was chiefly to forget the war and what the war had visited upon him and others like him. Hollister suffered solely from that sense of being held outside the warm circle of human activities, fellowships, friendliness. If he could not overcome that barrier which people threw up around themselves at contact with him, if he could not occasionally know the sound of a friendly voice he felt that he would very soon go mad.

On the landing at the end of the narrow corridor off which his room opened he met a man in uniform whom he recognized—a young man who served under him in the Forty-fourth, who had won a commission on the field. He wore a captain's insignia now. Hollister greeted him by name.

"Hello, Tommy!"

The captain looked at him. His face expressed nothing whatever. Hollister waited for that familiar shadow of distaste to appear.

"Your voice," Rutherford remarked at length, "has a familiar sound. Still, I can't say I know you. What's the name?"

"Bob Hollister. Do you remember the bottle of Scotch we pinched from the Black major behind the brick wall on the Albert road? Naturally you wouldn't know me—with this face."

"Well," Rutherford said, as he held out his hand, "a fellow shouldn't be surprised at anything any more. I understood you'd gone west. Your face *is* mussed up a bit. Rotten luck, eh?"

Hollister felt a lump in his throat. It was the first time for months that any human being had met him on common ground. He experienced a warm feeling for Rutherford. And the curious thing about that was that out of the realm of the subconscious rose instantly the remembrance that he had never particularly liked Tommy Rutherford. He was one of the wild men of the battalion. When they went up the line Rutherford was damnably cool and efficient, a fatalist who went about his grim business unmoved. Back in rest billets he was always pursuing some woman, unearthing surplus stores of whisky or wine, intent upon dubious pleasures, a handsome, self-centered, debonair animal.

"My room's down here," Hollister said. "Come in and gas a bit—if you aren't bound somewhere."

"All right. I came up here to see a chap, but he's out. I have half an hour or so to spare."

Rutherford stretched himself on Hollister's bed. They lit cigarettes and talked. And as they talked Rutherford kept looking at Hollister's face, until Hollister at last said to him:

"Doesn't it give you the willies to look at me?"

Rutherford shook his head.

"Oh, no. I've got used to seeing fellows all twisted out of shape. You seem to be fit enough otherwise."

"I am," Hollister said moodily. "But it's a devil of a handicap to have a mug like this."

"Makes people shy off, eh? Women particularly. I can imagine," Rutherford drawled. "Tough luck, all right. People don't take much stock in the fellows that got smashed."

For half an hour they chatted more or less one-sidedly. Rutherford had a grievance which he took pains to air. He was on duty at Hastings Park, having been sent there a year earlier to instruct recruits, after recovering from a wound. He was the military man par excellence. War was his game. He had been anxious to go to Siberia with the Canadian contingent which had just departed. And the high command had retained him here to assist in the inglorious routine of demobilization. Rutherford was disgruntled. Siberia had promised new adventure, change, excitement.

The man, Hollister soon perceived, was actually sorry the war was over—that his occupation was gone. He talked of resigning and going to Mexico, to offer his sword to whichever proved the stronger faction. It would be a picnic after the western front. A man could whip a brigade of those greasers into shape and become a power. There ought to be good chances for loot. He promised to look Hollister up again before he went away.

The world actually seemed cheerful to Hollister, after Rutherford had gone—until in moving about the room he caught sight of his face in the mirror.

## CHAPTER III.

About ten days later Tommy Rutherford walked into Hollister's room at eight in the evening.

"It's a hard world, old thing," he complained. "Here was I all set for an enjoyable winter. Nice people in Vancouver. All sorts of fetching affairs on the tapis. And I'm to be demobilized myself next week. Chucked out into the blooming street with a gratuity and a couple of medals. Damn the luck."

He remained absorbed in his own reflections for a minute, blowing smoke rings with meticulous care.

"I wonder if a fellow *could* make it go in Mexico?" he drawled.

Hollister made no comment.

"Oh, well, hang it, sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof," he remarked with an abrupt change of tone. "I'm going to a hop at the Granada presently. Banish dull care and all that, for the time being, anyway."

His gaze came to an inquiring rest on Hollister.

"What's up, old thing?" he asked lightly. "Why so mum?"

"Oh, nothing much," Hollister answered.

"Bad thing to get in the dumps," Rutherford observed sagely. "You ought to keep a bottle of Scotch handy for that."

"Drink myself into a state of mind where the world glitters and becomes joyful, eh? No, I don't fancy your prescription. I'd be more apt to run amuck."

"Oh, come now," Rutherford remonstrated. "It isn't so bad as that. Cheer up, old man."

"Oh, hell!" Hollister exploded.

After which he relapsed into sullen silence, to which Rutherford, frankly mystified and somewhat inclined to resent this self-contained mood, presently left him.

Hollister was glad when the man went away. He had a feeling of relief when the door closed and retreating footsteps echoed hollowly down the hall. He had grasped at a renewal of Rutherford's acquaintance as a man drowning in a sea of loneliness would grasp at any friendly straw. And Rutherford, Hollister quickly realized, was the most fragile sort of straw. The man was a profound, nonthinking egotist, the adventurer pure and simple, whose mentality never rose above grossness of one sort or another, in spite of a certain outward polish. He could tolerate Hollister's mutilated countenance because he had grown accustomed to horrible sights—not because he had any particular sympathy for a crippled, mutilated man's misfortune, or any understanding of such a man's state of feeling. The evil that befell other men left him rather indifferent. That was all. When Hollister once grasped Rutherford's attitude he almost hated the man.

He sat staring out the window. A storm had broken over Vancouver that day. Tonight it was still gathering force. The sky was a lowering slate-colored mass of cloud, spitting squally bursts of rain that drove in wet lines against his window and made the street below a glistening area shot with tiny streams and shallow puddles that were splashed over the curb by rolling motor wheels. The wind droned its ancient, melancholy chant among the telephone wires. Now and then in a momentary lull of it, and a brief cessation of the city noises, Hollister could hear, far off, the beat of the Gulf seas bursting on the beach at English Bay, snoring in the mouth of False Creek.

He sat pondering over the many-horned dilemma upon which he hung impaled. So far as Myra went, he recognized his domestic tragedy as a natural consequence. He did not know, he was unable to say if his wife had simply been a weak and shallow woman, left too long alone, thrown too largely on her own resources in an environment so strongly tinctured by the high-pitched and reckless spirit generated by the war. He had always known that his wife—women generally were the same he supposed—was dominated by emotional urges, rather than cold reason. Women were like that.

A peculiar obtuseness concealed from him, until now, that men also were much the same. He was, himself. When his feelings and his reason came into conflict it was touch and go which should triumph. The fact remained that for a long time the war had separated them as effectually as a divorce court. Hollister had always had a hazy impression that Myra was the sort of woman to whom love was necessary, but he had presumed that it was the love of a particular man, and that man himself. This, it seemed, was a mistake.

The accident of a misleading report had permitted her to follow her bent with a moral sanction.

That she had bestowed herself and some forty thousand dollars of his money on another man was not the thing Hollister resented. He resented only the fact that her glow of love for him had not endured, that it had gone out like an untended fire. But for some inscrutable reason that had happened. Very well. He accepted that.

But he did not accept the unuttered social dictum that he should be kept at arm's length because he had suffered a ghastly disarrangement of his features while acting as a shield behind which the rest of society rested secure.

No one said that he was a terrible object which should remain in the background along with family skeletons and unmentionable diseases. He was like poverty and injustice —present but ignored. And this being shunned and avoided, as if he were something which should go about in furtive obscurity, was rapidly driving Hollister to a state approaching desperation.

Except for the distortion of his face, he returned as he had gone away, a man in full possession of his faculties, his passions, his strength. His mind was too alert, his spirit too sensitive, his body too crammed with vitality to see life go swinging by and have no hand in its manifestations and adventures.

Yet he was growing discouraged. His scarred face seemed to dry up in others the fountain of all friendly intercourse. If he were a leper or a man convicted of some hideous crime his isolation could not be more complete. He sweated under this. How he was going to make his life even tolerably worth living was a question that harassed him with disheartening insistence as he watched through his window the slanting lines of rain and listened to the mournful cadences of the wind.

"I must get to work at something," he said to himself. "If I sit still and think much more——"

He did not carry that last sentence to its logical conclusion. Deliberately he strove to turn his thought out of the depressing channels in which it flowed and tried to picture what he would set about doing.

Not office work—he could not hope for any inside position such as his experience easily enabled him to fill. He knew timber, the making and marketing of it from top to bottom. But he could not see himself behind a desk directing or selling. His face would frighten clients. Very likely he would have to accept the commonest sort of labor, in a mill yard, or on a booming ground, among workers not too sensitive to a man's appearance.

Staring through the streaming window, Hollister looked down on the traffic flow in the street, the hurrying figures that braved the storm in pursuit of pleasure or of necessity, and while that desperate loneliness gnawed at him, he felt once more a sense of utter defeat, of hopeless isolation—and for the first time he wished to hide, to get away out of sight and hearing of men.

It was a fugitive impulse, but it set his mind harking back to the summer he spent holidaying along the British Columbia coast long ago. The tall office buildings, with yellow window squares dotting the black walls, became the sun-bathed hills looking loftily down on rivers and bays and inlets that he knew. The wet floor of the street itself became a rippled arm of the sea stretching far and silent between wooded slopes, where deer and bear and all the furtive wild things of the forest went their accustomed way.

Hollister had wandered alone in those hushed places, sleeping with his face to the stars, and he had not been lonely. He wondered if he could do that again.

He sat nursing those visions, his imagination pleasantly quickened by them, as a man sometimes finds ease from care in dreaming of old days that were full of gladness. He was still deep in the past when he went to bed. And when he rose in the morning the far places of the B. C. coast beckoned with a more imperious gesture, as if in those solitudes lay a sure refuge for such as he.

And why not, he asked himself? Here in this pushing seaport town, among the hundred and fifty thousand souls eagerly intent upon their business of gaining a livelihood, of making money, there was not one who cared whether he came or went, whether he was glad or sad, whether he had a song on his lips or the blackest gloom in his heart. None of these hale, unmaimed citizens cared to be annoyed by the sight of him, of what had happened to him.

And he could not much longer endure this unapproachableness, this palpable shrinking. He was in as evil case as a man chained to a rock and dying of thirst while a clear, cold stream flowed at his feet.

Yet, the more he thought about it the more he craved the refuge of silence and solitude. If he could not escape from himself at least he could withdraw from this feast at which he was a death's-head. And so he began to cast about him for a place to go, for an objective, for something that should save him from being purely aimless.

In the end it came into his mind that he might go and look over this timber in the valley of the Toba River, this last vestige of his fortune which remained to him by pure chance. He had bought it as an investment for surplus funds. He had never even seen it. He would have smiled, if his face had been capable of smiling, at the irony of his owning ten million feet of Douglas fir and red cedar—material to build a thousand cottages—he who no longer owned a roof to shelter his head, whose cash resources were only a few hundred dollars.

Whether Lewis sold the timber or not he would go and see it. For a few weeks he would be alone in the woods, where men would not eye him askance, nor dainty, fresh-faced women shrink from him as they passed.

## CHAPTER IV.

The steamer backed away from a float upon which Hollister was the sole debarkee. She swung in a wide semicircle, pointed her bluff bow down the Inlet, and presently all that he could see of her was the tip of her masts over a jutting point and the top of her red funnel trailing a pennant of smoke, black against a gray sky.

Hollister stood looking about him. He was clad like a logger, in thick Mackinaws and heavy boots, and the texture of his garments was appropriate to the temperature. He seemed to have stepped into another latitude—which in truth he had, for the head of Toba Inlet lies a hundred and forty miles northwest of Vancouver and the thrust of that narrow arm of the sea carries it thirty miles into the glacial fastnesses of the coast range. The rain that drenched Vancouver became snow here. The lower slopes were green with timber which concealed the drifts that covered the rocky soil. A little higher, certain clear spaces bared the whiteness, and all the treetops and the drooping boughs, carried a burden of clinging snow.

Higher still lifted grim peaks capped with massive snow banks that even midsummer heat could never quite dispel. But these upper heights were now hidden in clouds and wraiths of frost fog, their faces shrouded in this winter veil which—except for rare bursts of sunshine or sweeping northwest wind—would not be lifted till the vernal equinox.

It was very cold, and very still, as if winter had laid a compelling silence on everything in the land. Except the faint slapping of little waves against the ice-incrusted, rocky shore, and the distant, harsh voices of some wheeling gulls, there was no sound nor echo of a sound as he stood listening.

Yet Hollister was not oppressed by this chill solitude. In this setting silence was appropriate. Only it was unexpected, for Hollister had for so long lived amid blaring noises, the mechanical thunder and lightning of the war, the rumble of industry, the shuffle and clatter of crowds. He had forgotten what it was like to be alone—and in the most crowded places he had suffered the most grievous loneliness.

For the time being he was unconscious of his mutilation, since there was no one by to remind him by look or act. He was only aware of a curious interest in what he saw, a subdued wonder at the majestic beauty and the profound hush—as if he had been suddenly transferred from a place where life was maddeningly, distractingly clamorous to a spot where life was mute.

The head of Toba is neither a harbor nor a bay. One turns out of the island-studded Gulf of Georgia into an arm of the sea a mile in breadth. The cliffs and mountains grow higher, more precipitous, mile by mile until the Inlet becomes a chasm with the salt water for its floor. On past frowning points one goes, around slow curves, boring farther and farther into the mainland through a passage like a huge tunnel, the roof of which has been blown away. Then suddenly there is an end to the sea. Abruptly, a bend is turned and great mountains bar the way, peaks that lift from tidewater to treeless heights, formidable ranges bearing upon their rocky shoulders the lingering remains of a glacial age. The Inlet ends there, the seaway barred by these frowning declivities.

Hollister remembered the head of Toba after a fashion. He had the lay of the land in his mind. He had never seen it in midwinter, but the snow, the misty vapors drifting along the mountainsides did not confuse him.

From the float now he perceived two openings in the mountain chain. The lesser, coming in from the northwest, was little more than a deep and narrow gash in the white-clad hills. On his right opened the broader valley of the Toba River, up which he must go.

For a space of perhaps five minutes Hollister stood gazing about him. Then he was reminded of his immediate necessities by the chill that crept over his feet—for several inches of snow overlaid the planked surface of the landing float.

Knowing what he was about when he left Vancouver, Hollister had brought with him a twenty-foot Hudson Bay freight canoe, a capacious, shoal-water craft with high topsides. He slid this off the float, loaded into it sundry boxes and packages, and taking his seat astern, paddled inshore to where the rising tide was ruffled by the outsetting current of a river.

Here, under the steep shoulder of a mountain, rows of piles stood gaunt above the tide flats. When Hollister had last seen the mouth of the Toba those same piles had been the support of long boom sticks within which floated hundreds of logs. On the flat beside the river there had stood the rough shacks of a logging camp. Donkey engines were puffing and grunting in the woods. Now the booming ground was empty, save for those decaying, teredo-eaten sticks, and the camp was a tumble-down ruin when he passed.

He wondered if the valley of the Toba was wholly deserted, if the forests of virgin timber covering the delta of that watercourse had been left to their ancient solitude. But he did not stop to puzzle over this. In ten minutes he was over the sandy bar at the river's mouth. The sea was hidden behind him. He passed up a sluggish waterway lined by alder and maple, covered with dense thickets, a jungle in which flourished the stalwart salmon berry and the thorny sticks of the devil's club. Out of this maze of undergrowth rose the tall brown columns of Douglas fir, of red cedar, of spruce and hemlock with their drooping boughs.

Sloughs branched off in narrow laterals, sheeted with thin ice except where the current kept them open, and out of these open patches flocks of wild ducks squattered with a whir of wings. A mile upstream he turned a bend and passed a Siwash rancherie. Brown-faced children peered shyly from behind stumps. He could see rows of split salmon hung by the tail to the beams of an open-fronted smokehouse. Around another bend he came on a buck deer standing knee-deep in the water, and at sight of him the animal snorted, leaped up the bank, and vanished as silently as a shadow.

Hollister marked all these things without ceasing to ply his paddle. His objective lay some six miles upstream. But when he came at last to the upper limit of the tidal reach he found in this deep, slack water new-driven piling and freshly strung boom sticks and acres of logs confined therein; also a squat motor tugboat and certain lesser craft moored to these timbers. A little back from the bank he could see the roofs of buildings.

He stayed his paddle a second to look with a mild curiosity. Then he went on. That human craving for companionship which had gained no response in the cities of two continents had left him for the time being. For that hour he was himself, sufficient unto himself. Here probably a score of men lived and worked. But they were not men he knew. They were not men who would care to know him—not after a clear sight of his face.

The silent woods, the gray river, the cloud-wrapped hills seemed friendly by comparison with mankind—mankind which had marred him and now shrank from its handiwork. So he passed by this community in the wilderness, not because he wished to, but because he must.

Within half a mile he struck fast water, long, straight reaches up which he gained ground against the current by steady strokes of the paddle, shallows where he must wade and lead his craft by hand. So he came at last to the Big Bend of the Toba River, a great S curve where the stream doubled upon itself in a mile-wide flat that had been stripped of its timber and lay now an unlovely vista of stumps, each with a white cap of snow.

On the edge of this, where the river swung to the southern limit of the valley and ran under a cliff that lifted a thousand feet sheer, he passed a small house. Smoke drifted blue from the stovepipe. A pile of fresh-chopped firewood lay by the door. The dressed carcass of a deer hung under one projecting eave. Between two stumps a string of laundered clothes waved in the down-river breeze. By these garments Hollister knew a woman must be there. But none appeared to watch him pass. He did not halt, although the short afternoon was merging into dusk, and he knew the hospitality of those who go into lonely places to wrest a living from an untamed land. But he could not bear the thought of being endured rather than welcomed. He had suffered enough of that. He was in full retreat from just that attitude. He was growing afraid of contact with people, and he knew why he was afraid.

When the long twilight was nearly spent he gained the upper part of the Big Bend and hauled his canoe out on the bank. A small flat ran back to the mouth of a cañon, and through the flat trickled a stream of clear water. Hollister built a fire on a patch of dry ground at the base of a six-foot fir. He set up his tent, made his bed, cooked his supper, and sat with his feet to the fire, smoking a pipe.

After four years of clamor and crowds he marveled at the astonishing contentment which could settle on him here in this hushed valley, where silence rested like a fog. His fire was a red spot with a yellow nimbus. Beyond that ruddy circle valley and cliff and clouded sky merged into an impenetrable blackness. Hollister had been cold and wet and hungry. Now he was warm and dry and fed. He lay with his feet stretched to the fire. For the time he almost ceased to think, relaxed as he was into a pleasant, animal well-being. And so presently he fell asleep.

In winter, north of the forty-ninth parallel, and especially in those deep clefts like the Toba, dusk falls at four in the afternoon, and day has not grown to its full strength at nine in the morning. Hollister had finished his breakfast before the first gleam of light touched the east. When day let him see the Alpine crevasses that notched the northern wall of the valley he buckled on a belt that carried a sheath ax, took up his rifle, and began first of all a cursory exploration of the flat on which he camped.

It seemed to him that in some mysterious way he was beginning his life all over again —that life which his reason, with cold, inexorable logic, had classified as a hopeless ruin. He could not see wherein the ruin was lessened by embarking upon this lone adventure into the outlying places. Nevertheless, something about it had given a fillip to his spirits. He felt that he would better not inquire too closely into this; that too keen self-analysis was the evil from which he had suffered, and which he should avoid. But he said to himself that if he could get pleasure out of so simple a thing as a canoe trip in a lonely region there was hope for him yet. And in the same breath he wondered how long he could be sustained by that illusion.

He had a blue print of the area covering the Big Bend. That timber limit which he had lightly purchased long ago, and which rather unaccountably went begging a purchaser, lay south and a bit west from where he set up his camp. He satisfied himself of that by the blue print and the staking description. The northeast corner stake should stand not a great way back from the river bank.

He had to find a certain particularly described cedar tree, thence make his way south to a low cliff at one extreme of which he should find a rock cairn with a squared post in its center. From that he could run his boundary lines with a pocket compass, until he located the three remaining corners.

Hollister found cedars enough, but none that pointed the way to a low cliff and a rock cairn. He ranged here and there, and at last went up the hillside which rose here so steeply as to be stiff climbing. It bore here and there a massive tree, rough-barked pillars rising to a branchy head two hundred feet in the air. But for the most part the slope was clothed with scrubby hemlock, and thickets of young fir and patches of hazel out of which he stirred a great many grouse and once a deer.

But if he found no stakes to show him the boundaries of his property he gained the upper rim of the high cliff which walled the southern side of the Big Bend and all the valley opened below him. Smoke lifted in a pale spiral from the house below his camp. Abreast of the log boom he had passed in the river he marked the roofs of several buildings, and back of them, again, clearings in the logged-over land made white squares against the dusky green of the surrounding timber. He perceived that a considerable settlement had arisen in the lower valley, that the forest was being logged off, that land was being cleared and cultivated.

There was nothing strange in this. All over the earth the growing pressure of population forced men continually to invade the strongholds of the wilderness. Here lay fertile acres, water, forests to supply timber, the highway of the sea to markets. Only labor, patient, unremitting labor, was needed to shape all that great valley for cultivation. Cleared and put to the plow it would produce abundantly.

Hollister ranged the lower part of the hillside until hunger drove him back to camp. And, as it sometimes happens that what a man fails to come upon when he seeks it with method and intent he stumbles upon by accident, so now Hollister coming heedlessly downhill found the corner stake he was seeking. With his belt ax he blazed a trail from this point to the flat below, so that he could find it again.

He made no further explorations that afternoon. He spent a little time in making his camp comfortable in ways known to any outdoor man. But when day broke clear the following morning he was on the hill, compass in hand, bearing due west from the original stake. He found the second without much trouble. He ran a line south and east and north again and so returned to his starting point by noon with two salient facts outstanding in his mind.

The first was that he suspected himself of having bought a poke which contained a pig of doubtful value. This, if true, made plain the difficulty of resale, and made him think decidedly unpleasant things of Lewis & Co., Specialists in B. C. Timber. The second was that some one, within recent years, had cut timber on his limit. And it was his timber. The possessive sense was fairly strong in Hollister, as it usually is in men who have ever possessed any considerable property. He did not like the idea of being cheated or robbed. In this case there was superficial evidence that both these things had happened to him.

So when he had cooked himself a meal and smoked a pipe he took to the high ground again to verify or disprove these unwelcome conclusions. In that huge and largely inaccessible region which is embraced within the boundaries of British Columbia, in a land where the industrial lifeblood flows chiefly along two railways and three navigable streams, there are many great areas where the facilities of transportation are much as they were when B. C was a field exploited only by trappers and traders. Settlement is still but a fringe upon the borders of the wilderness. Individuals and corporations own land and timber which they have never seen, sources of material wealth acquired cheaply, with an eye to the future. Beyond the railway belts, the navigable streams, the coastwise passages where steamers come and go, there lies a vast hinterland where canoe and pack sack are still the mainstay of the traveler.

In this almost primeval region the large-handed fashion of primitive transactions is still in vogue. Men traffic in timber and mineral stakings on the word of other men. The coastal slopes and valleys are dotted with timber claims which have been purchased by men and corporations in Vancouver and New York and London and Paris and Berlin, bought and traded "sight unseen" as small boys swap jackknives. There flourishes in connection with this, on the Pacific coast, the business of cruising timber, a vocation followed by hardy men prepared to go anywhere, any time, in fair weather or foul. Commission such a man to fare into such a place, to cruise such-and-such areas of timber land, described by metes and bounds, and this resourceful surveyor-explorer will disappear, to return, in the fullness of weeks, bearded and travel worn. He will place in your hands a report containing an estimate of so many million feet of standing fir, cedar, spruce, hemlock, with a description of the topography and an opinion on the difficulty or ease of the logging chance.

On the B. C. coast a timber cruiser's report comes in the same category as a bank statement or a chartered accountant's audit of books; that is to say, it is unquestionable, an authentic statement of fact.

Within the boundaries defined by the four stakes of the limit Hollister owned there stood, according to the original cruising estimate, eight million feet of merchantable timber, half fir, half red cedar. The Douglas fir covered the rocky slopes and the cedar lined the gut of a deep hollow which split the limit midway. It was classed as a fair logging chance, since from that corner which dipped into the flats of the Toba a donkey engine with its mile-long arm of steel cable could snatch the logs down to the river, whence they would be floated to the sea and towed to the Vancouver sawmills.

Hollister had been guided by the custom of the country. He had put a surplus fund of cash into this property in the persuasion that it would resell at a profit, or that it could ultimately be logged at a still greater profit. And this persuasion rested upon the cruising estimate and the uprightness of Lewis & Co., Specialists in B. C. Timber, Investments, Et cetera.

But he had a practical knowledge of timber himself, acquired at first hand. He had skirted his boundaries and traversed the fringes of his property and he saw scrubby, undersized trees where the four-foot trunks of Douglas fir should have lifted in brown ranks. He had looked into the bisecting hollow from different angles and marked magnificent cedars—but too few of them. This, taken with the fact that Lewis had failed to resell, even at a reduced price when standing timber had doubled in value since the beginning of the war, inspired Hollister with grave doubts, which, however, he could not establish until he went over the ground and made a rough estimate for himself.

This other matter of timber cutting was one he could settle in short order. It roused his curiosity. And no matter though despair had recently colored his mental vision, the sense of property right still functioned unimpaired. To be marred and impoverished and shunned as if he were a monstrosity were accomplished facts which had weighed upon him, an intolerable burden. He forgot that now. There was nothing much here to remind him. He was free to react to this new sense of outrage, this new evidence of mankind's essential unfairness.

In so far as concerned the toll taken of his timber by these unwarranted operations, there was little to grieve over, he discovered before long. He had that morning found and crossed, after a long, curious inspection, a chute which debouched from the middle of his limit and dipped toward the river bottom, apparently somewhere above his camp. He knew that this shallow trough built of slender poles was a means of conveying shingle bolts from the site of cutting to the water that should float them to market. Earlier he had seen signs of felling among the cedars, but only from a distance. He was not sure he had seen right until he discovered the chute.

So now he went back to the chute and followed its winding length until it led him into the very heart of the cedars in the hollow. Two or three years had elapsed since the last tree was felled. Nor had there ever been much inroad on the standing timber. Some one had begun operations there and abandoned the work before enough timber had been cut to half repay the labor of building that long chute.

Nor was that all. In the edge of the workings the branches and litter of harvesting those hoary old cedars had been neatly cleared from a small, level space. And on this space, bold against the white carpet of snow, stood a small log house.

Hollister pushed open the latched door and stepped into the musty desolation of long-abandoned rooms. The house was neatly made, floored with split cedar, covered by a tight roof of cedar shakes. Its tiny-paned windows were still intact. Within, it was divided into two rooms. There was no stove and there never had been. A rough fireplace of stone served for cooking. An iron bar crossed the fireplace and on this bar still hung the fire-blackened pothooks. On nails and shelves against the wall pans still hung and dishes stood thick with dust. On a homemade bunk in one corner lay a mattress which the rats had converted to their own uses, just as they had played havoc with papers scattered about the floor and the oilcloth on the table.

Hollister passed into the other room. This had been a bedroom, a woman's bedroom. He guessed that by the remnants of fabric hanging over the windows, as well as by a skirt and a sunbonnet which still hung from a nail. Here, too, was a bedstead with a rat-ruined mattress. And upon a shelf over the bed was ranged a row of books, perhaps two dozen volumes, which the rats had somehow respected—except for sundry gnawing at the bindings.

Hollister took one down. He smiled—that is to say his eyes smiled and his features moved a little out of their rigid cast. Fancy finding the tales of August Strindberg, the dramatist, that genius of subtle perception and abysmal gloom, here in this forsaken place! Hollister fluttered the pages. Writing on the flyleaf caught his eye. There was a date and below that:

Doris Cleveland—Her Book

He took down the others one by one, an Illiad, a Hardy novel, "The Way of All

Flesh" between "Kim," and "The Pilgrim Fathers," a volume of "Swinburne" rubbing shoulders with a California poet who sang of gibbous moons, "The Ancient Lowly" cheek by jowl with "Two Years Before the Mast." A catholic collection—with strong meat sandwiched between some of the rat-gnawed covers. And each bore on the flyleaf the same name inscribed on the first, written in a clear, firm hand.

Hollister put the last volume back in place and stood staring at the row. Who was Doris Cleveland and why had she left her books to the rats?

He gave over his wonder at the patently unanswerable, went out into the living room, glanced casually over that once more, and so to the outside where the snow crisped under his feet now that the sun had withdrawn behind the hills. About the slashed area where the cedars had fallen, over the stumps and broken branches and the low roof of the cabin the virgin snow laid its softening whiteness, and the tall trees inclosed the spot with living green. A hidden squirrel broke out with brisk scolding, a small chirruping voice in a great silence. Here men had lived and worked and gone their way again. The forest remained as it was before. The thickets would soon arise to conceal man's handiwork.

Hollister shook off this fleeting impression of man's impermanence, and turned downhill lest dark catch him in the heavy timber and make him lose his way.

## CHAPTER V.

A wind began to sigh among the trees as Hollister made his way downhill. Over his evening fire he heard it grow to a lusty gale that filled the valley all night with moaning noises. Fierce gusts scattered the ashes of his fire and fluttered the walls of his tent as though some strong-lunged giant were huffing and puffing to blow his house down.

At daylight the wind died. A sky banked solid with clouds began to empty upon the land a steady downpour of rain. All through the woods the sodden foliage dripped heavily. The snow melted, pouring muddy cataracts out of each gully, making tiny cascades over the edges of every cliff. Snow banks slipped their hold on steep hillsides high on the north valley wall. They gathered way and came roaring down out of places hidden in the mist. Hollister could hear these slides thundering like distant artillery. Watching that grim façade across the river he saw, once or twice during the day, those masses plunge and leap, ten thousand tons of ice and snow and rock and crushed timber, shooting over ledge and precipice to end with fearful crashing and rumbling in the depth of a steep-walled gorge.

He was tied to his camp. He could not stir abroad without more discomfort than he cared to undergo. Every bush, every bough, would precipitate upon his head and shoulders showers of drops at the slightest touch. He sat by his fire in the mouth of the tent and smoked and thought of that comfortable cabin up in the cedar hollow, and of Doris Cleveland's books. He began by reflecting that he might have brought one down to read. He ended before nightfall of a dull, rain-sodden day with a resolution to move up there when the weather cleared. A tent was well enough, but a house with a fireplace was better.

The rain held forty-eight hours without intermission. Then, as if the clouds had discharged their aqueous cargo and rode light as unballasted ships, they lifted in aerial fleets and sailed away, white in a blue sky. The sun, swinging in a low arc, cocked a lazy eye over the southern peaks, and Hollister carried his first pack load up to the log cabin while the moss underfoot, the tree trunks, the green blades of the salal, and the myriad stalks of the low thickets were still gleaming with the white frost that came with a clearing sky.

He began with the idea of carrying up his blankets and three or four days' food. He ended by transporting up that steep slope everything but his canoe and the small tent. It might be, he said to himself, as he lugged load after load, just a whim, a fancy, but he was free to act on a whim or a fancy, as free as if he were in the first blush of careless, adventurous youth—freer, because he had none of the impatient hopes and urges and dreams of youth. He was finished, he told himself in a transient mood of bitterness.

Why should he be governed by practical considerations? He was here, alone in the unsentient, uncritical forest. It did not matter to any one whether he came or stayed. To himself it mattered least of all, he thought. There was neither plan nor purpose nor joy in his existence, save as he conceived the first casually, or snatched momentarily at the other in such simple ways as were available to him here—here, where at least there was no one and nothing to harass him, where he was surrounded by a wild beauty that comforted him in some fashion beyond his understanding.

When he had brought the last of his food supply up to the cabin he hauled the canoe back into a thicket and covered it with the glossy green leaves of the salal. He folded his tent in a tight bundle and strung it to a bough with a wire, out of reach of the wood rats.

These tasks completed, he began his survey of the standing timber on his limit. At the best he could only make a rough estimate, less accurate than a professional cruiser's would be, but sufficient to satisfy him. In a week he was reasonably certain that the most liberal estimate left less than half the quantity of merchantable timber for which he had paid good money. The fir, as a B. C. logging chance, was all but negligible. What value resided there lay in the cedar alone.

By the time he had established this the clear, cold, sunny days came to an end. Rain began to drizzle half-heartedly out of a murky sky. Overnight the rain changed to snow, great, flat flakes eddying soundlessly earthward in an atmosphere uncannily still. For two days and a night this ballet of the snowflakes continued, until valley and slope and the high ridges were two feet deep in downy white.

Then the storm which had been holding its breath broke with singular fury. The frost bared its teeth. The clouds still volleyed, but their discharge now filled the air with harsh, minute particles that stung bare skin like hot sand blown from a funnel. The wind shrieked its whole tonal gamut among the trees. It ripped the clinging masses of snow from drooping bough and exposed cliff and flung it here and there in swirling clouds. And above the treble voices of the storm Hollister, from the warm security of the cabin, could hear the intermittent rumbling of terrific slides. He could feel faint tremors in the earth from the shock of the arrested avalanche.

This elemental fury wore itself out at last. The wind shrank to chill whisperings. But the sky remained gray and lowering, and the great mountain ranges—white again from foot to crest, save where the slides had left gashes of brown earth and bare granite —were wrapped in winter mists and obscuring vapors that drifted and opened and closed again. Hollister could stir abroad once more.

His business there was at an end. But he considered with reluctance a return to Vancouver. He was not happy. He was merely passive. It did not matter to any one where he went. It did not matter much to himself. He was as well here as elsewhere, until some substantial reason or some inner spur roweled him into action. And here it was as if the dusky woods and those grim, aloof peaks accepted him for what he was, discounting all that misfortune which had visited him in the train of war. He knew that was sheer fantasy, but a fantasy that lent him comfort.

So he stayed. He had plenty of material resources. He had reckoned on staying perhaps a month. He found now that his estimate of a month's staples was away over the mark. He could subsist two months. With care he could stretch it to three, for there was game on that southern slope, deer and the white mountain goat and birds. He hunted the grouse at first, but that gave small return for ammunition expended—although the flesh of the blue and willow grouse is pleasant fare. When the big storm abated he looked out one clear dawn and saw a buck deer standing in the open. At a distance of sixty yards he shot the animal, not because he hankered to kill, but because he needed meat. So under the cabin eave he had quarters of venison.

There was a soothing pleasantness about a great blaze crackling in the stone fireplace. And he had Doris Cleveland's books. It was better than a bedroom off the blank corridor of a second-rate hotel and the crowded streets that were more merciless to a stricken man than these silent places. Eventually he would have to go back. But for the present —well, he occupied himself wholly with the present, and he did not permit himself to look far beyond.

From the deerskin he cut a quantity of fine strips and bent into oval shape two tough sticks of vine maple. Across these he strung a web of rawhide, thus furnishing himself with a pair of snowshoes which were a necessity now that the snow lay everywhere knee-deep and in many places engulfed him to the waist when he went into the woods.

It pleased him to go on long snowshoe hikes. He reached far up the ridges that lifted one after another behind his timber. Once he gained a pinnacle, a solitary outstanding hummock of snow-bound granite rising above all the rest, rising above all the surrounding forest. From this summit he gained an eagle's view. The long curve of Toba Inlet wound like a strip of jade away down to where the islands of the lower Gulf spread with channels of the sea between. He could see the twin Redondas, Cortez, Raza; the round blob that was Hernando—a picturesque nomenclature that was the inheritance of Spanish exploration before the time of Drake. Beyond the flat reaches of Valdez, Vancouver Island, an empire in itself, lifted its rocky backbone, a misty purple against the western sky. He watched a steamer, trailing a black banner of smoke, slide through Baker Pass.

Out there men toiled at fishing, the woods echoed with the ring of their axes and the thin twanging of their saws. There would be the clank of machinery and the hiss of steam. But it was all hidden and muffled in those vast distances. He swung on his heel. Far below, the houses of the settlement in the lower Toba sent up blue wisps of smoke. To his right, ran with many a twist and turn the valley itself, winding away into remote fastnesses of the coast range, a strip of level, fertile timbered land, abutted upon by mountains that shamed the Alps for ruggedness, mountains gashed by slides, spilt by gloomy crevasses, burdened with glaciers which in the heat of summer spewed foaming cataracts over cliffs a thousand feet sheer.

> Where the hill heads split the tide
>   Of green and living air,
> I would press Adventure hard
>   To her deepest lair.
>
> I would let the world's rebuke
>   Like a wind go by
> With my naked soul laid bare
>   To the naked sky.

Out of some recess in his memory where they had fixed themselves long before, those lines rose to Hollister's lips.

A week had passed. Once more the blustery god of storms asserted his dominion, leaving the land, when he passed, a foot deeper in snow. If he had elected to stay there from choice, Hollister now kept close to his cabin from necessity, for passage with his goods to the steamer landing would have been a journey of more hardships than he cared to undertake. The river was a sheet of ice except over the shallow rapids. Cold winds whistled up and down the Toba.

So he sat in the cabin and read Doris Cleveland's books one after another, verse, philosophy, fiction, and when physical inaction troubled him he cut and split and piled firewood far beyond his immediate need. Enforced leisure made too wide a breach in his defense, and through that breach the demons of brooding and despondency were quick to enter. When neither books nor self-imposed tasks about the cabin served, he would take his rifle in hand, hook on the snowshoes, and trudge far afield in the surrounding forest.

On one of these journeys he came out upon the rim of the great cliff which rose like a wall of masonry along the southern edge of the flats in the Big Bend. Hollister had a pair of very powerful binoculars. He gazed from this height down on the settlement, on the tiny black objects that were men moving against a field of white. He had often wondered about these people, buried, like himself, in this snow-blanketed and mountain-ringed remoteness. What manner of folk were they? But it had not seriously occurred to him that by two or three hours' tramping he could answer these idle speculations at firsthand.

But this day, under a frosty sky in which a February sun hung listless, Hollister turned his glasses on the cabin of the settler near his camp. He was on the edge of the cliff, so close that when he dislodged a fragment of rock it rolled over the brink, bounded once from the cliff's face, and after a lapse that grew to seconds struck with a distant thud among the timber at the foot of the precipice. Looking down through the binoculars it was as if he sat on the topmost bough of a tall tree in the immediate neighborhood of the cabin, although he was fully half a mile distant. He could see each garment of a row on a line.

And while he stared, a woman stepped out of the doorway and stood looking, turning her head slowly until at last she gazed steadily up over the cliff brow as if she might be looking at Hollister himself. He sat on his haunches in the snow, his elbows braced on his knees, and trained the powerful lenses upon her. In a matter of half a minute her gaze shifted, turned back to the river. She shrugged her shoulders, or perhaps it was a shiver born of the cold, and then went back inside.

Hollister rested the binoculars upon his knee. His dark-blue eyes, undimmed beacons amid the wreckage of his features, were burning and gleaming with a strange fire. The woman who had been standing there staring up the hillside, with the sun playing hide and seek in her yellow hair, was Myra Hollister, his wife.

## CHAPTER VI.

Hollister sat in the snow, wrestling with all the implications of this incredible discovery. He kept watch with the glasses ready to fix upon the woman if she emerged again. But she did not reappear. The cold began to chill his body, to stiffen his limbs. He rose at last and made his way along the cliff, keeping always a close watch on the house below until he came abreast of his own quarters and turned reluctantly into the hollow where the cedars masked the log cabin.

He cooked a meal and ate his food in a mechanical sort of abstraction, troubled beyond measure, rousing himself out of periods of concentration in which there seemed, curiously, to be two of him present—one questioning and wondering, the other putting forward critical and sneering answers, pointing out the folly of his wonder.

In the end he began to entertain a real doubt not only of the correctness of his sight, but also of his sanity. For it was clearly impossible, his reason insisted, that Myra would be pioneering in those snowy solitudes, that she should live in a rude shack among stumps on the fringe of a wilderness. She had been a creature of luxury. Hollister could not conceive a necessity for her doing so. Having so arranged his affairs, when he went to France, that she had access to and complete control of his fortune, the official report of him as killed in action had allowed her to reap the full benefit of this control. When she left London, if indeed she had left London, with her new associate in the field of emotion she had had at least forty-five thousand dollars in negotiable securities.

And if so—then why?

Hollister's reason projected him swiftly and surely out of pained and useless speculation into forthright doing. From surety of what he had seen he passed to doubt, to uneasiness about himself—for if he could not look at a fair-haired woman without seeing Myra's face then he must be going mad. He must know, beyond any equivocation.

There was a simple way to know and that way Hollister took while the embers of his noonday fire still glowed red on the hearth. He took his glasses and went down to the valley floor.

It would have been a simple matter and the essence of directness to walk boldly up and rap at the door. Certainly he would not be recognized. He could account for himself as a traveler in need of matches, some trifling thing to be borrowed. The wilderness is a destroyer of conventions. The passer-by needs to observe no ceremony.

But Hollister wished to see without being seen. He did not know why. He did not attempt to fathom his reluctance for open approach. In the social isolation which his disfigurement had inflicted upon him, Hollister had become as much guided by instinct in his action and impulses as by any coldly reasoned process. He was moved to his stealthy approach now by instinct.

He drew up within fifty yards of the house, moving furtively through thickets that screened him, and took up his post beside a stump. He peered through the drooping boughs of a clump of young cedar. There, in perfect concealment, hidden as the deer hides to let a roving hunter pass, Hollister watched with a patience which was proof against cold, against the discomfort of snow that rose to his thighs. For an hour he waited. Except for the wavering smoke from the stovepipe the place might have been deserted. And at last the door opened and the woman stood framed in the opening.

She poised for an instant on the threshold, looking across the river. Her gaze pivoted slowly until it encompassed the arc of a half circle, so that she faced Hollister squarely. He had the binoculars focused on her face. It seemed near enough to touch. Then she took a step or two gingerly in the snow, and stooping, picked up a few sticks from a pile of split wood. The door closed upon her once more. Hollister turned upon the instant, retraced his steps across the flat, gained the foot of the steep hill and climbed step by step with prodigious effort in the deep snow until he reached the cabin.

He had reaffirmed the evidence of his eyes, and was no longer troubled by the vague fear that a disordered imagination had played him a disturbing trick. He had looked on his wife's face beyond a question. She was here in the flesh, this fair-haired, delicate-skinned woman. Here, in a rude cabin on the brink of a frozen river, chance had set her neighbor to him. He said to himself that it did not matter. How *could* it matter now?

But he found that it did matter in a way that he had not reckoned upon. For he discovered that he could not ignore her presence there. He could not thrust her into the outer darkness beyond the luminous circle of his thoughts. She haunted him with a troublesome insistence. He had loved her. She had loved him. If that love had gone glimmering there still remained memory, from which he could not escape, of all they had been to each other through a time when they desired only to be all things to each other. These thoughts arose like ghosts out of forgotten chambers in his mind. He could not kill memory, and memory tortured him. He made every effort to shake off this new besetment, this fresh assault upon the tranquillity he had attained. But he could not abolish recollection.

He would tramp far along the slopes and when he looked too long at some distant peak he would think of Myra. He would sit beside his fireplace with one of Doris Cleveland's books in his hand and the print would grow blurred and meaningless. In the glow of the coals Myra's face would take form and mock him with a seductive smile. One of the gallery of his mind pictures would come trooping again, and in each the chief figure was that fair-haired woman who had been his wife.

Hollister had never been a sentimental fool. He did not love this woman whose nearness so disturbed him. Sometimes he hated her consciously, with a volcanic intensity that made his fingers itch for a strangling grip upon her white throat. She had ripped up by the roots his faith in life and love at a time when he sorely needed that faith, when the sustaining power of some such faith was his only shield against the daily impact of bloodshed and suffering and death, of all the nerve-shattering accompaniments of war. Yet he suffered from the spur of her nearness, those haunting pictures of her which he could not bar out of his mind, those revived memories of past tenderness, of her clinging to him with soft arms and laughter on her lips.

Slowly a resolution formed in his memory-ridden brain, shadowy at first, recurring again and again with insistent persuasion, until it no longer frightened him as it did at first, no longer made him shrink and feel a loathing of himself.

She was his wife. She had ceased to care for him. She had given herself to another man. No matter. She was still his. Legally, beyond any shadow of a doubt. The law and the church had joined them together. Neither man nor God had put them asunder.

Then, if he wanted her, why should he not take her?

Watching the house day after day, hours at a stretch, Hollister brooded over this new madness. But it no longer seemed to him madness. It came to seem fit and proper, a matter well within his rights. He postulated a hypothetical situation: If he, officially dead, resurrected himself and claimed her, who was there to say him nay if he demanded and exacted a literal fulfillment of her solemn marriage covenant. She herself? Hollister snapped his fingers. The man she lived with? Hollister dismissed him with an impatient gesture.

The elemental man, which is never wholly extinguished, which merely lurks unsuspected under centuries of cultural veneer to assert itself when slowly acquired moralities shrivel in the crucible of passion, now began to actuate Hollister with a strange cunning. He would repossess himself of this fair-haired woman. And she should have no voice in the matter. Very well. But how?

That was simplicity itself. No one knew such a man as he was in the Toba country. All these folk in the valley below went about unconscious of his existence in that cabin well hidden among the great cedars. All he required was the conjunction of a certain kind of weather and the absence of the man—and falling snow to cover the single track that should lead to this cabin, to bury the footprints that should lead away. The absence of the man was to avoid a clash; not because Hollister feared that; simply because in his mind the man was not a factor to be considered, except as the possibility of his interference could be most easily avoided. If he did interfere he might have to kill him, and that was a complication he did not wish to invoke. Somehow he felt no grudge against this man, no jealousy.

The man's absence was a common occurrence. Hollister had observed that nearly every day he was abroad in the woods with a gun. For the obscuring storm, the obliterating snowfall, he would have to wait.

All this, every possible contingency, took form as potential action in his mind—with neither perception nor consideration of consequences. But this plan was scarcely formed in Hollister's brain before he modified it. He could not wait for that happy conjunction of circumstances which favored action. He must create his own circumstances. This he readily perceived to be the better plan. When he sought a way it was revealed to him.

A few hundred yards above the eastern limit of the flat where his canoe was cached there jutted into the river a low, rocky point. From the river back to the woods the wind had swept the bald surface of this little ridge clear of snow. He could go down over those sloping rocks to the glare ice of the river. He could go and come and leave no footprints, no trace. There would be no mark to betray, unless a searcher ranged well up the hillside and so came upon his track.

And if a man, searching for this woman, bore up the mountainside and came at last to the log cabin—what would he find? Only another man who had arisen after being dead and had returned to take possession of his own. Hollister threw back his head and burst into sardonic laughter. It pleased him, this devastating jest which he was about to perpetrate upon his wife and her lover.

From the seclusion of the timber behind this point of rocks he set himself to watch through his glasses the house down the river. The second day of keeping this vigil he saw the man leave the place, gun in hand, cross on the river ice, and vanish in the heavy timber of that wide bottom land. Hollister did not know what business took him on these recurrent absences; hunting, he guessed, but he had noted that the man seldom returned before late in the afternoon, and sometimes not till dusk.

He waited impatiently for an hour. Then he went down to the frozen river. Twenty minutes' rapid striding brought him to the door of the house.

The place was roughly built of split cedar. A door and a window faced the river. The window was uncurtained, a bald square of glass. The sun had grown to some little strength. The air that morning had softened to a balminess like spring. Hollister had approached unseen over snow softened by this warmth until it had lost its frosty crispness underfoot. Now through the uncurtained window his gaze marked a section of the interior, and what he saw stayed the hand he lifted to rap on the door.

A man, young, smooth-faced, dark almost to swarthiness, sat on a bench beside a table on which stood the uncleared litter of breakfast. And Myra sat also at the table with one corner of it between them. She leaned an elbow on the board and nursed her round chin in the palm of that hand while the other was imprisoned between the two clasped hands of the man. He was bending over this caught hand, leaning eagerly toward her, speaking rapidly.

Myra sat listening. Her lips were slightly parted. Her eyelids drooped. Her breast rose and fell in a slow, rhythmic heave. Otherwise she was motionless and faintly smiling, as if she were given up to some blissful languor. And the man spoke on, caressing her imprisoned hand, stroking it, looking at her with the glow of conquest in his hot eyes.

Hollister leaned on the muzzle of his grounded rifle, staring through the window. He could see their lips move. He could hear faintly the tense murmur of the man's voice. He saw the man bend his head and press a kiss on the imprisoned hand.

He turned softly and went down the bank to the river and walked away over the ice. When he had put five hundred yards between himself and the house he turned to look back. He put his hand to his face and wiped away drops of sweat, a clammy exudation that broke out all over his body very much as if he had just become aware of escaping by a hair's breadth some imminent and terrible disaster. In truth, that was precisely his feeling—as if he had been capering madly on the brink of some fearful abyss which he could not see until it was revealed to him in a terrifying flash.

He shivered. His ego groveled in the dirt. He had often smiled at theories of dual personality. But, standing there on the frozen stream with the white hills looming high above the green-forested lowlands, he was no longer sure of anything, least of all whether in him might lurk a duality of forces which could sway him as they would. Either that, or he had gone mad for a while, a brief madness born of isolation, of brooding over unassuaged bitterness.

Perhaps he might have done what he set out to do, if the man had not been there. But he did not think so now. The brake of his real manhood had begun to set upon those wild impulses before he drew up to the door and looked in the window. What he saw there only cleared with a brusque hand the cobwebs from his brain.

Fundamentally, Hollister hated trickery, deceit, unfairness, double-dealing. In his normal state he would neither lie, cheat, nor steal. He had grown up with a natural tendency to regard his own ethics as the common attribute of others. There had somehow been born in him, or had developed as an intrinsic part of his character early in life, a childlike, trustful quality of faith in human goodness. And that faith had begun to reel under grievous blows dealt it in the last four years.

Myra was not worth the taking, even if he had a legal and moral right to take her—not that he attempted to justify himself now by any such sophistry. She could not be faithful, it seemed, even to a chosen lover. The man into whose eyes she gazed with such obvious complaisance, was not the man she lived with in that house on the river bank. Hollister had watched him through the glasses often enough to know. He was a tall, ruddy-faced man, a big man and handsome. Hollister had looked at him often enough, reckoning him to be an Englishman, the man Myra married in London, the man for whom she had conceived such a passion that she had torn Hollister's heart by the brutal directness of her written avowal. Hollister had watched him swinging his ax on the woodpile, going off on those long tramps in the bottom land. He might be within gunshot of the house at this moment.

Hollister found himself pitying this man. He found himself wondering if it had always been that way with Myra, if she were the helpless victim of her own senses. There were women like that. Plenty of them. Men, too. He could not doubt that.

What a muddle life was, Hollister reflected sadly, looking down from the last opening before he plunged into the cedar grove that hid the log cabin. Here, amid this wild beauty, this grandeur of mountain and forest, this silent land, virginal in its winter garment, human passion, ancient as the hills themselves, functioned in the old, old way.

But he did not expend much thought on mere generalizations. The problem of Myra and her lovers was no longer his problem, their passions and pains were not his. Hollister understood very clearly that he had escaped an action that might have had far-reaching consequences. He was concerned with his escape and also with the possible recurrence of that strange obsession or mood or madness or whatever it was that had so warped his normal outlook that he could harbor such thoughts and plan such deeds. He did not want to pass through that furnace again.

He had had enough of the Toba Valley. No, he modified that. The valley and the sentinel peaks that stood guard over it, the lowlands duskily green and full of balsamy odors from the forest, were still goodly places to be. But old sins and sorrows and new, disturbing phases of human passion were here at his elbow to dispel the restful peace he had won for a little while. He must escape from that.

But to go, now, was not a simple matter. The river was frozen, that watery highway closed. But he solved the problem by knowledge gained in those casual wanderings along the ridge above the valley. He knew a direct way of gaining the inlet head on foot.

So he spent a last night before the fireplace, staring silently into the dancing blaze, seeing strange visions in the glowing coals, lying down to heavy, dreamless sleep at last in his bunk.

At daybreak he struck out westward along the great cliff that frowned on the Big Bend, his blankets and a small emergency supply of food in a bulky pack upon his shoulders. When the sheer face of the cliff ran out to a steep, scrubbily timbered hillside he dropped down to the valley floor and bore toward the river through a wide flat. Here he moved through a forest of cedar and spruce so high and dense that no ray of sun ever penetrated through those interlocked branches to warm the earth in which those enormous trunks were rooted. Moss hung in streamers from the lower boughs. It was dusky there in full day. The wild things of the region made this their sanctuary.

For a time, in this shadowy temple of the pagan gods, Hollister was forced to depend on a pocket compass to hold a course in the direction he wished to go. But at last he came out in a "slashing," a place where loggers had been recently at work. Here a donkey engine stood black and cold on its skids, half-buried in snow. Beyond this working, a clear field opened, and past the field he saw the outlines of the houses on the river bank and he bore straight for these to learn upon what days the steamer touched the head of Toba and how he might best gain that float upon which he had disembarked two months before.

## CHAPTER VII.

Hollister stowed his pack in the smoking room and stood outside by the rail watching the Toba Valley fall astern, a green fissure in the white rampart of the Coast Range.

Chance, the inscrutable arbiter of human destinies, had directed him that morning to a man cutting wood on the bank of the river close by that cluster of houses where other men stirred about various tasks, where there must have been wives and mothers, for he saw a dozen children at play by a snow fort.

"Steamer?" the man answered Hollister's inquiry. "Say, if you want to catch her you just about got time. Two fellows from here left a while ago. If you hurry maybe you can catch 'em. If you catch 'em before they get out over the bar they'll give you a lift to the float. If you don't you're stuck for a week. There's only the one rowboat down there."

Hollister had caught them.

He took a last thoughtful look. Over the vessel's bubbling wake he could see the whole head of the inlet deep in winter snows, a white world coldly aloof in its grandeur. It was beautiful, full of the majesty of serene distances, of great heights. It stood forth clothed with the dignity of massiveness, of permanence. Hollister looked a long time, for he was not sure he would see it again. He had a canoe and a tent cached in that silent valley, but for these alone he would not return. Neither the ownership of that timber which he now esteemed of doubtful value nor the event of its sale would require his presence there.

He continued to stare with an absent look in his eyes until a crook in the inlet hid those white escarpments and outstanding peaks, and the inlet walls—themselves lifting to dizzy heights that were shrouded in rolling mist—marked the limit of his visual range. The ship's bell tinkled the noon hour. A white-jacketed steward walked the decks proclaiming to all and sundry that luncheon was being served. Hollister made his way to the dining saloon.

The steamer was past Salmon Bay when he returned above decks to lean on the rail, watching the shores flit by, marking with a little wonder the rapid change in temperature, the growing mildness in the air as the steamer drew farther away from the gorge-like head of Toba with its aerial ice fields and snowy slopes. Twenty miles below Salmon Bay the island-dotted area of the Gulf of Georgia began. There a snowfall seldom endured long, and the teeth of the frost were blunted by the eternal rains. There the logging camps worked full blast the year around, in sunshine and drizzle and fog. All that region bordering on the open sea bore a more genial aspect and supported more people and industries in scattered groups than could be found in any of those lonely inlets.

Hollister had eaten his meal at a table with half a dozen other men. In the saloon probably twoscore others applied themselves, with more diligence than refinement, to their food. There was a leavening of women in this male mass of loggers, fishermen, and what not. A buzz of conversation filled the place. But Hollister was not a participant. He observed casual, covert glances at his disfigured face, that disarrangement of his features and marring of his flesh which made men ill at ease in his presence. He experienced a return of that depression which had driven him out of Vancouver. He was as he was. He would always be like that. The finality of it appalled him.

After a time he became aware of a young woman leaning, like himself, on the rail a few feet distant. He experienced a curious degree of self-consciousness as he observed her. The thought crossed his mind that presently she would look at him and move away. When she did not, his eyes kept coming back to her with the involuntary curiosity of the casual male concerning the strange female. She was of medium height, well-formed, dressed in a gray tailored suit. Under the edge of a black velvet turban her hair showed glossy brown in a smooth roll. She had one elbow propped on the rail and her chin nestled in the palm. Hollister could see a clean-cut profile, the symmetrical outline of her nose, one delicately colored cheek above the gloved hand, and a neck piece of dark fur.

He wondered what she was so intent upon for so long, leaning immobile against that wooden guard. Would she presently bestow a cursory glance upon him and withdraw to some other part of the ship? Hollister found himself wishing to hear her voice, to speak to her, to have her talk to him. But he did not expect any such concession to a whimsical desire.

Nevertheless, the unexpected presently occurred. The girl moved slightly. A purse slipped from under her arm to the deck. She half turned, seemed to hesitate. Instinctively, as a matter of common courtesy to a woman, Hollister took a step forward, picked it up. Quite as instinctively he braced himself, so to speak, for the shocked look that would gather like a shadow on her piquant face.

But it did not come. The girl's gaze bore imperturbably upon him as he restored the purse to her hand. The faintest sort of smile lurked about the corners of a pretty mouth. Her eyes were a cloudy gray. They seemed to look out at the world with a curious impassivity. That much Hollister saw in a fleeting glance.

"Thanks very much," she said pleasantly.

Hollister resumed his post against the rail. His movement had brought him nearer, so that he stood now within arm's length, and his interest in her had quickened, become suddenly intense. He felt a queer thankfulness, a warm inward gratefulness, that she had been able to regard his disfigurement unmoved. He wondered how she could. For months he had encountered women's averted faces, the reluctant glances of mingled pity and distaste which he had schooled himself to expect and endure but which he never ceased to resent. This girl's uncommon self-possession warmed Hollister like an unexpected gleam of sunshine out of a sky banked deep with gloomy clouds. Presently, to his surprise, the girl spoke to him.

"Are we getting near the Channel Islands?"

She was looking directly at him, and Hollister was struck afresh with the curious quality of her gaze, the strangely unperturbed directness of her eyes upon him. He made haste to answer her question.

"We'll pass between them in another mile. You can see the western island a little off our starboard bow."

"I should be very glad if I could, but I shall have to take your word for its being there."

"I'm afraid I don't quite understand."

A smile spread over her face at the puzzled tone.

"I'm blind," she explained, with what struck Hollister as infinite patience. "If my eyes were not sightless, I shouldn't have to ask a stranger about the Channel Islands. I used to be able to see them well enough."

Hollister stared at her. He could not associate those wide, gray eyes with total darkness. He could scarcely make himself comprehend a world devoid of light and color, an existence in which one felt and breathed and had being amid eternal darkness. Yet for the moment he was selfish enough to feel glad. And he said so, with uncharacteristic impulsiveness.

"I'm glad you can't see," he found himself saying. "If you could——"

"What a queer thing to say," the girl interrupted. "I thought every one always regarded a blind person as an object of pity."

There was an unmistakably sardonic inflection in the last sentence.

"But you don't find it so, eh?" Hollister questioned eagerly. He was sure he had interpreted that inflection. "And you sometimes resent that attitude, eh?"

"I dare say I do," the girl replied after a moment's consideration. "To be unable to see is a handicap. At the same time, to have pity drooled all over one is sometimes irritating. But why did you say you were glad I was blind?"

"I didn't mean that. I meant that I was glad you couldn't see *me*," he explained. "One of Fritz's shells tore my face to pieces. People don't like to look at the result. Women particularly. You can't see my wrecked face, so you don't shudder and pass on. I suppose that is why I said that the way I did."

"I see. You feel a little bit glad to come across some one who doesn't know whether your face is straight or crooked? Some one who accepts you sight unseen, as she would any man who spoke and acted courteously? Is that it?"

"Yes," Hollister admitted. "That's about it."

"But your friends and relatives?" she suggested softly.

"I have no relatives in this country," he said. "And I have no friends anywhere, now."

She considered this a moment, rubbing her cheek with a gloved forefinger. What was she thinking about, Hollister wondered?

"That must be rather terrible at times. I'm not much given to slopping over, but I find myself feeling sorry for you—and you are only a disembodied voice. Your fix is something like my own," she said at last. "And I have always denied that misery loves company."

"You were right in that, too," Hollister replied. "Misery wants pleasant company. At least that sort of misery which comes from isolation and unfriendliness makes me appreciate even chance pleasant companionship."

"Is it so bad as that?" she asked quickly. The tone of her voice made Hollister quiver, it was so unexpected, so wistful.

"Just about. I've become a stray dog in this old world. And it used to be a pretty good sort of a world for me in the old days. I'm not whining. But I do feel like kicking. There's a difference, you know."

He felt ashamed of this mild outburst as soon as it was uttered. But it was true enough, and he could not help saying it. There was something about this girl that broke down his reticence, made him want to talk, made him feel sure he would not be misunderstood.

"There *is* a great difference," the girl agreed. "Any one with any spirit will kick if there is anything to kick about. And it's always shameful to whine. You don't seem like a man who *could* whine."

"How can you tell what sort of man I am?" Hollister inquired. "You just said that I was only a disembodied voice."

She laughed, a musical, low-toned chuckle that pleased him.

"One gets impressions," she answered. "Being sightless sharpens other faculties. You often have very definite impressions in your mind about people you have never seen, don't you?"

"Oh, yes," he agreed. "I dare say every one gets such impressions."

"Sometimes one finds those impressions are merely verified by actual sight. So there you are. I get a certain impression of you by the language you use, your tone, your inflections—and by a something else which in those who can see is called intuition, for lack of something more definite in the way of a term."

"Aren't you ever mistaken in those impressionistic estimates of people?"

She hesitated a little.

"Sometimes—not often. That sounds egotistic, but really it is true."

The steamer drew out of the mouth of Toba Inlet. In the widening stretch between the mainland and the Redondas a cold wind came whistling out of Homfray Channel. Hollister felt the chill of it through his Mackinaw coat, and was moved to thought of his companion's comfort.

"May I find you a warm place to sit?" he asked. "That's an uncomfortable breeze. And do you mind if I talk to you? I haven't talked to any one like you for a long time."

She smiled assent. "Ditto to that last," she said. "You aren't a Western man, are you?" she continued as Hollister took her by the arm and led her toward a cabin abaft the wheelhouse on the boat deck, a roomy lounging place unoccupied save by a fat woman taking a midday nap in one corner, her double chin sunk on her ample bosom.

"No," he said. "I'm from the East. But I spent some time out here once or twice, and I remembered the coast as a place I liked. So I came back here when the war was over and everything gone to pot—at least where I was concerned. My name is Hollister."

"Mine," she replied, "is Cleveland."

Hollister looked at her intently.

"'Doris Cleveland—her book,'" he said aloud. It was to all intents and purposes a question.

"Why do you say that?" the girl asked quickly. "And how do you happen to know my given name?"

"That was a guess," he answered. "Is it right?"

"Yes—but——"

"Let me tell you," he interrupted. "It's queer, and still it's simple enough. Two months ago I went into Toba Inlet to look at some timber about five miles up the river from the mouth. When I got there I decided to stay a while. It was less lonesome there than in the racket and hustle of a town where I knew no one and nobody wanted to know me. I made a camp, and in looking over a stretch of timber on a slope that runs south from the river I found a log cabin——"

"In a hollow full of big cedars back of the cliff along the south side of the Big Bend?" the girl cut in eagerly. "A log house with two rooms, where some shingle bolts had been cut—with a bolt chute leading downhill?"

"The very same," Hollister continued. "And in this cabin there was a shelf with a row of books and each one had written on the flyleaf: 'Doris Cleveland—Her Book.'"

"My poor books," she murmured. "I thought the rats had torn them to bits long ago."

"No. Except for a few nibbles at the binding. Perhaps," Hollister said whimsically, "the rats knew that some day a man would need those books to keep him from going crazy, alone there in those quiet hills."

"They did that for you?" she asked.

"Yes. They were all the company I had for two months. So you lived up there?"

"Yes. It was there I had my last look at the sun shining on the hills. I dare say the most vivid pictures I have in my mind are made up of things there. Why, I can see every peak and gorge yet, and the valley below with the river winding through, and the beaver meadows in the flats—all those slides and glaciers and waterfalls—cascades like ribbons of silver against green velvet. I loved it all—it was so beautiful."

She spoke a little absently, her voice lingering on the words. And after a momentary silence she went on:

"We lived there nearly a year, my two brothers and I. I know every rock and gully within two miles of that cabin. I helped to build that little house. I used to tramp around in the woods alone. I used to sit and read, and sometimes just dream, under those big cedars, on hot summer afternoons. The boys thought they would make a little fortune in that timber. Then one day when they were felling a tree a flying limb struck me on the head. After less than two hours of being unconscious I woke up, and I couldn't see anything. I was blind—like that almost." She snapped her fingers. "On top of that my brothers discovered that they had no right to cut timber there. Things were going badly in France, too. So they went overseas. They were both killed in the same action, on the same day. My books were left there because no one had the heart to carry them out. And you found them, and enjoyed having them to read? Isn't it curious how things that seem so incoherent, so unnecessary, so disconnected, sometimes work out into an orderly sequence, out of which evil comes to some and good to others? If we could only forestall chance. Blind, blundering, witless chance!"

Hollister nodded, forgetting that the girl could not see. For a minute they sat silent. He was thinking how strange it was that he should meet this girl whose books he had been poring over all these weeks. She had a mind, he perceived. She could think, and express her thoughts in sentences as clean-cut as her face. She made him think, thrust him face to face with an abstraction. Blind, blundering, witless chance! Was there nothing more than that? What else was there?

"You make me feel ashamed of myself," he said at last. "Your luck has been worse than mine. Your handicap is greater than mine—at least you must feel it so. But you don't complain. You even seem quite philosophic about it. I wish I could cultivate that spirit. What's your secret?"

"Oh, I'm not such a marvel," she said, and the slight smile came back to lurk around the corners of her mouth. "There are times when I rebel—oh, desperately. But I get along very nicely as a general thing. One accepts the inevitable. I comfort myself with the selfish reflection that if I can't see a lot that I would dearly love to see I am also saved the sight of things that are mean and sordid and disturbing. If I seem cheerful I dare say it's because I'm strong and healthy and have grown used to being blind. I'm not nearly so helpless as I may seem. In familiar places and within certain bounds, I can get about nearly as well as if I could see."

The steamer cleared the Redondas, stood down through Desolation Sound, and turned her blunt nose into the lower gulf just as dark came on. Hollister and Doris Cleveland sat in the cabin talking. They went to dinner together, and if there were curious looks bestowed upon them Hollister was too engrossed to care and the girl, of course, could not see those sidelong, unspoken inquiries. After dinner they found chairs in the same deck saloon and continued their conversation until ten o'clock, when drowsiness born of a slow-rolling motion of the vessel, drove them to their berths.

The drowsiness abandoned Hollister as soon as he turned in. He lay wakeful, thinking about Doris Cleveland. He envied her courage and fortitude, the calm assurance with which she seemed to face the world which was all about her and yet hiddden from her sight.

She was traveling alone. For several months she had been living with old friends of the family on Stuart Island, close by the roaring tide race of the Euclataw Rapids. She was returning there, she had told Hollister, after three weeks or so in Vancouver.

The steamer would dock about daylight the following morning. When Hollister had offered to see her ashore and to her destination she had accepted without any reservation. It had comforted Hollister's sadly bruised ego to observe that she even seemed a trifle pleased.

"I have once or twice got a steward to get me ashore and put me in a taxi," she had said. "But if you don't mind, Mr. Hollister."

And Hollister most decidedly did not mind. Doris Cleveland had shot like a pleasant burst of colorful light across the grayest period of his existence, and he was loath to let her go.

He dropped off to sleep at last, to dream, strangely enough and with astonishing vividness, of the cabin among the great cedars with the snow banked white outside the door. He saw himself sitting beside the fireplace poring over one of Doris Cleveland's books. And he was no longer lonely, because he was not alone.

He smiled at himself, remembering this fantasy of the subconscious mind, when the steward's rap at the door wakened him half an hour before the steamer docked.

TO BE CONTINUED.

## INCREASING THE CABINET

ONCE again it is planned to add to our list of cabinet officers—this time in the shape of a secretary of public welfare as head of a new Federal administrative department designed to include in its activities work now scattered through a dozen government bureaus functioning as parts of the various departments. The creation of such a cabinet portfolio, as constituting the first big gun fired in the battle to reduce conflict of Federal departmental activities at Washington, could not be other than welcome.

President Harding's plan for this new department calls for its subdivision into four main branches of work, having to do with: (a) Education—covering teaching of vocations, physical welfare, and general scholastic activities; (b) Public Health—covering research work, sanitation and hospitalization; (c) Social Service—referring to general philanthropic work; (d) Veteran Service Administration—covering pensions, insurance, rehabilitation of soldiers' health, et cetera. Each of these four main divisions will be under the charge of an assistant secretary.

Regarding various conflicts of governmental activity which the new portfolio would be the means of doing away with, it is to be noted, for instance, that some of the public health service has hitherto been in the department of the interior and much of it in other departments, while there has operated in the treasury department a separate public health service. Again, the veteran service division of the new department would take over work administered under the jurisdiction of such bureaus as that of war risk insurance, the Federal board for vocational education of soldiers, the public health service and the department of the interior. Nor is it only in regard to governmental activities that an obviating of conflicts would be effected, through the new department. There are, for example, one hundred and fifty-four national organizations doing uplift and philanthropic work of the same kind. To quote General Sawyer, intrusted by President Harding with the founding of the new department, these uplift organizations "are all quite willing that they be used in the conduct of the proposed social service division of the department of public welfare if all these affairs can be assembled under a competent director who will say what is necessary and what is right." Such a proceeding would doubtless relieve many good people somewhat tried by the seeking of financial aid by different duplicated activities in the past. Incidentally touching on the financial phase of the whole matter, it is of interest to mark that the maintenance cost, for the fiscal year 1921, of the dozen governmental bureaus whose work the department of public welfare has planned to take over is put at seven hundred and one million six hundred and seventy-one thousand two hundred and thirty dollars—a cost which should be materially reduced by the proposed concentration of the work under the administration of one department.

# The Pirouette Stroke

## A STORY OF GALLOPING TOWN

By Charles Neville Buck

*Author of "The One-Goal Man," "Sauce for the Gander," Etc.*

**They say a thing worth doing is worth doing well but there was one thing Compton did too well for his own good**

"THERE are certain traditions and catch-phrase myths about every game that are pure bunk," declared Mr. Maxwell, screwing up the features of a face so restless and flexible that I could not help thinking absurdly of a chimpanzee I used to know.

The statement came with a categorical ring which experience had taught us to interpret as a preface to anecdote, so we settled ourselves in anticipatory readiness—and just then a negro bell boy arrived to murmur, "Wanted on the long distance, Mr. Maxwell." The speaker heaved himself out of his porch chair with spry energy and a sigh of resignation under persecution, and his features worked almost as if he were making faces at the far-away interrupter.

Twice already that morning he had been so torn from his diversions—once when he was on the Number Eighteen green with a chance to tie his match by dropping that putt, and once again when he was conducting that post-mortem on the Kirkwood veranda, which to intense golfing natures is the necessary aftermath of a close game.

Now he excused himself to follow the colored boy away, and the rest of us settled down to await his return.

There were a half dozen of us in the group, and you might gauge relative values by summarizing them as two planets, three satellite stars, and a sort of stray meteorite. The planets of the metaphor were naturally girls and the satellites men. June Pellters had two attendant votaries, while Mary Mallory had only one star wheeling in her orbit, and I myself was an unattached onlooker.

We sat on the long veranda of the Kirkwood at Camden and, spread like a gracious repast before our eyes, lay the formalized grounds with their hollies, magnolias, and chinaberries; their jasmine and wistaria tumbling into tides of yellow and lilac bloom. As a boundary to this ran the brown road along which went a cheery frequency of galloping ponies under saddle, and beyond that the portion of the fairway that led off from the clubhouse on the links.

It was February, but here in the long-leaf pine country of South Carolina it was not winter, and we who were weather refugees from the North acknowledged it gratefully, as we sat indolently silent, waiting for the return of Mr. Maxwell and accepting as interlude the cascading music of mocking birds and the "Good-cheer—cheer, cheer!" of a red cardinal.

We all knew that Maxwell, who had simply slipped into informal acquaintanceship with all of us and who had been introduced to none, was *the* Joe Maxwell of "the Street," and that these mosquitolike buzzings of telephone wires from New York voiced the perplexity of factors and brokers carrying on, in his absence, some affair of such consequence that they were unwilling to assume the full responsibility.

The hotel had droned with an undercurrent of excited gossip about the portentousness of this telephoning for two days. Yet Maxwell would not have struck you as a magnate by any proclamation of personality or appearance. He was a wiry, rather smallish man, not old, yet oldish of appearance, carelessly dressed, who moved and talked with a nervous, birdlike manner totally at variance with the reputed coolness and boldness of his decisions.

Now he came back. His plastic face was grinning affably, it almost seemed foolishly, as he heaved himself into his chair again and demanded: "What was I talking about? Oh, yes, I know—I was saying that every sport has traditions based on bunk. Now, for example, take polo."

In Camden it is usually safe to take polo as a topic. They play it and talk it there and, as we sat sunning ourselves and forgetting winter, most of us knew, by name and reputation, the ponies that cantered by along the road.

"We are told that the well-made pony follows the ball of its own volition," he ran on vivaciously; "we have it on the authority of all the pretty stories. With satin nostrils distended and eyes flashing battle fire the horse half of the Centaur keeps on the ball, proof against all deflection and quite independent of the man half. One can almost hear the eager beast apostrophizing the willow sphere and murmuring as it gallops, 'Where thou goest, there also will I go.'" Mr. Maxwell broke off and twisted his face, hunching himself down in his chair until he sprawled on his shoulder blades. "Well," he added. "Of course that's all sheer bunk. No pony ever yet followed the ball undirected."

No point-blank contradiction followed this iconoclasm, but something like a murmur of protest was audible, and Mr. Maxwell waved his hand as though inviting argument.

"All bosh, hokus-pokus—first-class bunkerino," he declared, "though some people believe it. Some people believe anything, for the matter of that."

Young George Gorin knitted his brows in a sort of meditative dissent. George had only played polo for two or three years, though his game would have beguiled you into believing him a veteran. If he went on as he had started and could afford the pace, he would some day be International type himself. Perhaps if one put aside his idolatry for June Pellters, which even his well-bred reserve failed to dim to the public gaze which had no concern in it, George Gorin's love of horses and horsemanship might have been called his ruling passion. As it was, every one knew of his love for June, or perhaps it might be nearer the truth to say that every one but June knew it. She was so inured to male adulation that one couldn't read behind the surface expression of her eyes, and we had all decided that George had as yet made no declaration.

"I've seen ponies on the field," declared young Gorin stoutly, "that certainly *looked* as if they knew the game, in and out, and played it of their own accord. I've never owned one like that," he made rueful admission, "because they come high and I've never been able to afford them, but I've been mounted sometimes by other fellows on the sort I mean."

"I think, George," I suggested, "those were such well-made ponies that they responded like delicate mechanism to your almost unconscious guidance—to the touch of the bridle hand, the signal of knee and heel, the bending of the body. Of course there are some of that kind. As to the pony's actually following the ball on its own, I incline to agreement with Mr. Maxwell. Certainly I shouldn't want one. He would take the game away from his rider and play hob with teamwork. I knew of two international horses that understood so darned much polo they wouldn't take human advice at all. They had to be retired."

Maxwell chuckled.

"Met a man that knew too much polo once, too," he asserted. "At least he was so fancy with one stroke that it came near proving his ruin."

He paused and we urged him on, actuated by the amused light of reminiscence in his eye.

"You know how sometimes a man will work on his hardest stunt until it gets to be the best thing he does," he said. "Take Dev Milburn, for example, with his near-side forward drive. He's such a wizard at it that he prefers it to a simple off-side swing." Mr. Maxwell straightened up in his chair enough to illustrate by gesture. "Well, this fellow I'm speaking of had a copyrighted stroke of his own, too, and it just missed landing him in the penitentiary for a protracted stay.

"It was a quartering shot that every other man I ever saw would play as a backhander—ball being carried along by the enemy, you see, and well toward the sideboards; he would be after it to send it back and shoot it toward the center of the field—you understand. He would get up, but instead of backhanding he would ride a bit wide and just as he raised his mallet swing his pony to a pirouette that brought it up on its hind legs. Then as the pony came round on that pirouette and landed, the mallet head would crack home and this fellow would be taking the ball on his own course before interference got up. It was a flashingly spectacular thing—a grand-stand stunt par excellence, always good for a salvo of applause, and he gloried in it."

"Do they send men to Sing Sing for grandstanding?" I inquired. "I'd call that rather sumptuary."

Again Maxwell laughed.

"This fellow played polo as an avocation. His vocation was finance. Worked for me, as a matter of fact, and turned out a crook. He pulled a neat specialty in embezzlement that put a painful crimp into me and wrung a whimper out of me, too. I had to make good with the other losers—but nobody made good to me. I thirsted accordingly for his gore and unleashed the dogs of the law on his trail—but he showed 'em all a clean pair of heels, and vanished—absolutely."

"But the pirouette stroke?" questioned young Gorin eagerly. "By gad, I'm going to practice that myself!"

"I was in Cairo a few years back—just before the war broke, to be exact," went on the narrator meditatively. Then he stopped and sat musing and, as a matter of prompting him, I murmured: "That so? As it happens, I was, too."

"I crossed the Kasr-el-Nil Bridge to the Khedival Club to see a polo match between a British regiment and a team of visiting foreigners from Nice," Mr. Maxwell resumed. "The game—a spirited one it proved, too—was running in favor of the British officers—until the visitors rallied in the last chukker, and tied the score. One fellow won that game against the soldiers. He did it in the last minute of play by a flash of glaring brilliancy, taking the ball away from the enemy with a pirouette stroke that only one man, I ever saw, was capable of making—and until I saw that stroke, though I'd seen the fellow at a distance, I hadn't even suspected him."

"He was your embezzler?"

Maxwell nodded and grinned. "My embezzler so altered that his mother wouldn't have known him. But I knew him then. A strawberry mark on the right cheek, and six fingers on the left hand couldn't have identified him more surely than that highly specialized wallop. That night I met him at a confetti fete at Shepheard's Hotel. He was basking in his glory and kudos, and for the moment we found ourselves standing alone at the American Bar.

"Of course, he knew me right enough, but was brazening it out, feeling secure in his own altered appearance. Then I said, 'There's just one man in the world that has that stroke down like that.' He turned a bit clammy about the gills, but he laughed and said: 'Who? Some one else besides me, you mean?' and I said: 'No—not some one else. You yourself.' That was all, but the next day he had slipped out of Cairo—disappeared—*spurlos versenkt*, and I never saw him again."

I lighted a cigar.

"That's a bit of a coincidence," I asserted. "I said I was in Cairo about that time. As it happened I must also have seen that game—at least I saw one won by such a pirouette stroke—and I had never seen its like before. Do you chance to remember whether the game you mention and the confetti fête were on St. Patrick's day?"

"They were," said Mr. Maxwell, "and I have no doubt——"

What it was that he had no doubt of remained untold, for again a negro boy approached and interrupted deferentially, "Mr. Maxwell, you're wanted on the long distance." That message must have been more urgent than its predecessors for we next saw Mr. Maxwell piling into the station bus to catch the afternoon train North.

It is probable that the story would have been promptly forgotten had we not, in our idleness, fallen into discussion of it. One or two of the hearers even went to the uncharitable length of intimating that Mr. Maxwell had fabricated the whole narrative for the sheer pleasure of making talk. The point is that George Gorin did not forget that part relating to the stroke, but set himself the hard task of mastering it.

I have said that young Gorin showed flashes of polo genius which promised him a great future on the field and I, as an old stager at the game though none too brilliant of achievement, conceived the idea of developing the boy to his fulfillment. While I was giving thought to his future under polo colors, all of us found ourselves speculating more or less on his future in the bigger game; the game in which June Pellters would award or withhold the prize. Sometimes when he came back from horseback rides with her through the pine-wood bridle paths he wore a compression about his lips and a dumb tenseness in his engaging eyes that intimated a heart racked between alternating high and low tides of hope and despair

Quite early, every morning, George Gorin mounted one of his ponies and, companioned by Miss Pellters, went over to the practice field which lies in a level pine-screened cove across the railroad track. Just now the long-leafed and tall-columned trees were decked with climbing jasmine and would soon be whitened with Cherokee roses, and the girl loved the morning perfume as the boy loved the zest of his practice. How he progressed with his practice and his other greater undertaking we could only guess. To me he mentioned in confidence his secret practice of the pirouette stroke, but reported nothing as to the graver matter into which, I dare say, he was throwing all his boyish ardor and deep-hearted sincerity.

I could tell, though, from a word or two he dropped in his talk that in his own mind his hopes as a lover and his practice of that pirouette stroke had become so interwoven, that he almost believed he must accomplish the lesser as a sort of symbol of succeeding in the greater.

Nonsense? Yes, of course, yet natural enough for a youngster whose heart was riding to the tumult of a gallop with the race in doubt. Love and imagination deal in the figurative, and I could see that, should he fail in learning to do and do well that particular polo stroke in which, so far as we knew, only one man had successfully specialized, he would lose heart in a wooing that was not as yet running with a sure smoothness.

It was an early spring that year with the blossom tide running ahead of schedule and the polo was still that of more or less informal play with the tournament season still some weeks ahead. Consequently the ranks of the practice squads were open to those visitors who came qualified for the sport, and newcomers who could ride and hit were made welcome.

Then Compton appeared.

His coming, as an eligible bachelor to a place where unattached men were scarce enough, created something of a flurry about the inn, and on that first evening after his arrival, which was a dance night, I saw him standing at the door of the ballroom, looking with a kindling eye at June Pellters.

One must have noticed Aleck Compton since he was one of those men who set you at once guessing. First off you guessed at his age, because of the silvered temples, but a second glance assured you of a youthfulness that could hardly go higher than the first foothills of middle age. The straight carriage of the tall figure and the almost ceremonious finish of manner and gesture were arresting, too, though superficial, and he was undeniably a handsome fellow, tanned like a saddle skirt, spare to the razor edge of fitness, and dressed with the care of discrimination.

I don't know who introduced him to June, but he had soon accomplished a presentation, and whenever young Gorin cut in on him in fox trot or one-step, he cut back. June seemed pleasurably amused:

His eyes were taking fire and she flung him look for look.

In short, before the evening was over Compton's manner had proclaimed him, to all the ladies present, a man who had come as a challenger.

Young Gorin was not one to sulk under punishment, but after the orchestra had closed up their instrument cases, I came upon him alone in the moonlit gardens, and his face was unhappy.

"Competition is the life of trade—and love, George," I said, rallying him with poor taste, perhaps; but I did it only as I bawled him out on the polo field to rouse his fighting blood to keener effort.

He pulled himself together and laughed, but the mirth was forced. "Competition," he paraphrased, " 'is the only thing we ain't got nothing but.' " Then he added more seriously, "It's not the competition. This fellow has the edge on me. He's rich as Crœsus they say—and charming. Evidently it's love at first sight with him—and——"

He paused until I prompted, "And what?"

Again he laughed, rather miserably. "I was just beginning to feel hopeful," he confided. "And along he comes with tricks I can't match—and I'm afraid he's going to play a pirouette stroke on me! I wonder if he plays polo, too?"

I said good night and left him to his thoughts. He was not faint-hearted, but he was undoubtedly despondent, and in such an edge-dulling mood I was glad there was no tournament game set for to-morrow in which I should have to depend on him.

But the next afternoon there was a practice game, under flawless skies, and an inspiriting gallery was out at the Number Two field to see it.

George Gorin rode up on his brown pony and his face was dark. I understood the reason well enough when I saw a long car of racy lines and expensive model roll silently up and park, and made out that it was Compton in polo togs who slipped out from behind the steering wheel, and that the girl at his side was June Pellters.

George had wondered whether his rival played polo. Now he knew. Compton not only played, but played uncommonly well. The fellow could ride all over a horse, and when he skied his first long shot the side lines christened him "Big Bertha."

"My word!" exclaimed Jamie McGregor, the pony trader rapturously. "Them boches didn't 'ave no supergun bombarding Paris! They 'ad this bird bashin' shells with 'is bloomin' stick!"

George Gorin went off his game entirely, and played like one of those lads that blow in with newly made breeches, newly bought mallets, and an experience newer than either.

The next morning it was I who rode horseback with June Pellters, and I'm afraid in my stress of advocacy, I rather overplayed my hand.

"I understand," I said casually, but nastily, "that this newcomer, Mr. Compton, is by way of being a plutocrat."

The girl lifted her fine lashes inquiringly but with tepid interest.

"Is he?" she asked. "I hadn't heard."

Perhaps she found me sulky and churlish, for after we had ridden a while in silence she met my eyes full and honestly and I saw, in her own, something that I liked. I don't mean the beauty of them, for that I had never questioned. What I do mean is the straight sincerity and the right thinking that showed in her face as she spoke slowly and seriously to me.

"I know why you honored me with an invitation to ride this morning, Mr. Calvin," she announced. "You wanted to tell me what you thought of me for letting George Gorin 'eat his heart out'—not that he's doing it or that I'm letting him, but doubtless that's the way you think of it. Isn't that true?"

I laughed in spite of myself.

"To answer your question might incriminate me," I parried. "I will admit this much. I love the boy and I want to see him loved. If that be treason——" I broke off and waved my riding crop.

"Before we go any farther," she said, and her lovely eyes flashed ominously, though her voice remained quiet, "you must, of course, give me your word that George hasn't sent you; that you're acting only as a volunteer. I shouldn't like it, you know, if he'd picked you out to play John Alden for him."

"If you'd known George as long as I have," I answered a shade stiffly, "I don't think you'd find that question necessary."

"I hardly thought it was—but I wanted to be sure." And in the relief of her eyes I found genuine pleasure. Then suddenly she demanded:

"Why is it that you seem worried about Mr. Compton?" She did not add that he was only one of a number, but even if she had I should have known that it was not vanity but candor that spoke.

"Because," I responded, "he's the only one that George has felt that way about. George says this fellow is going to play the pirouette stroke on him. One must grant that he carries a certain formidableness about him."

June smiled, and for a while as our ponies walked she sat meditatively regarding the forward-pointed ears of her mount. Then she looked up.

"After all, I rather like your doing this," she declared. "I know that when you say you love George, you mean it—and I know, too"—she hesitated a moment, then added stanchly—"that when you want him to win out with me, you pay me the greatest compliment. It shows that you think I'd do."

"Do!" I exclaimed. "My dear girl, I didn't come out to pay compliments, but naturally, your love would be an accolade."

"Thank you," she acknowledged and blushed charmingly. I didn't blame the boy for loving that girl.

After a little she said gravely: "George has asked me to marry him. Did you know that?"

"No," I said. "I thought he'd rather been standing fearsomely hesitant, like a diver afraid to take the plunge."

"The fault of indecision's mine," she affirmed. "I had no answer ready. I don't know."

"At all events, I'm glad," I declared, "that it isn't settled against him."

"People seem to think that when a girl hesitates with a definite answer—to that question—it's because she's fickle and can't read her own heart," she went on. "And yet it's not a question to be answered lightly. Somehow I can't manage to think of life entirely without George—and yet there are other times—full of doubt. I may be slow to make up my mind, Mr. Calvin, but when I *do* make it up, there won't be any doubt, there won't be any reservation—that's all I can say."

"It's enough," I answered gravely. "But how about Compton? This is just between ourselves of course, or I should be impertinent to ask. Is he—to the feminine eye, I mean—so charming?"

"I can't even answer that," she told me with a candid directness of gaze, after a moment of thought. "At times he seems to have a sort of occult magnetism."

She paused, then, almost as though she regarded the statement as savoring of confession, she added, "I might as well be absolutely honest. The doubts about George have seemed stronger since he came—but if that means anything, I'd better know it before than after, hadn't I?"

I said I thought she had.

Several afternoons later there was a shifting of men on our two practice teams in an effort to get the Blues and Whites more permanently lined up for tournament preparation, and when we rode out across the sideboards to play for prize mallets, with a fringe of cars behind the safety zone that gave us a touch of tournament excitement, the newcomer, Compton, was acting as temporary captain of the Whites, while I was commanding the Blues.

Compton had George Gorin as his number one, and as every one knows it is the cardinal duty of the number one to ride off the opposing back, to stick to him like a leech to its vein or like ivy to its wall and cumber him out of all usefulness. That day I was captaining my squad from the position of back, and that meant that George was delegated to devote himself to my undoing as a goal defender.

June had driven out with Gorin that afternoon, and he seemed in high spirits, but I knew he would have given a readier loyalty to any other commander.

None the less, he was on his mettle, and the pony under him seemed to understand, and dance in anticipation, and when the ball was dribbled out of the line-up, it was the White number one who sent it clear of the scrimmage and the White captain who received it from his mallet and skied it toward the goal posts which I, as Blue back, was defending.

I put spurs to my mount, under the stress of that sharp onset, and saw George shoot out of the wheeling cluster and come thundering after me. His task now was to overtake and crowd me off from backhanding. That, of course, was his duty and he did it—but as he rode me off and carried me wide with his shoulder pressed into my midriff, he saw the ball lying fair to his stroke, and he straightened up, rising in his stirrups to swing like a young Vulcan on the sphere.

Technically it was insubordination, for Compton was pelting up just behind him, and Compton would have had the next stroke for goal. George should, if one were inclined to apply martinet rulings, have left the ball where it lay and remembered that he was of the defense and not of the offense. Yet it was a natural thing to do, and Compton's yell, "Leave it alone," came too late.

You see, Gorin was keyed up to showing his captain that the mediocre polo he had played on that other day was not the top of his game, and his shot was a handsome one. It would have hung up a goal for the Whites within thirty seconds after the gong had sounded had the sphere not struck one of the posts and taken its bounce the wrong way. Then I slipped away from his chancery and by sheer good luck got in and backhanded the thing out of that territory where it spelled imminent peril for the Blues.

The period went on, and the fast initial pace held its fierce tempo with such evenness of matching that when seven and a half minutes of pell-mell galloping and wheeling had lathered our mounts and heightened our pulses, we rode back to a scoreboard which was as yet unmarked.

Compton fell in beside me as we trotted back to the sideboards for the intermission, and I could see that he was angry, though he said nothing. Indeed he only nodded in a seeming of acceptance when George rode up knee to knee with him and avowed frankly, "I'm sorry, sir. I didn't hear you shout to me to leave it alone until it was too late."

Now, if the captain had wished to reprimand his number one, this was the proper time to do so, and George gave him full opportunity. He let that logical moment pass and chose another which carried an unnecessary sting of humiliation for Gorin. To me it seemed calculated and I thought Compton embraced a mean opportunity for tyrannizing.

It was after the stableboys had led out fresh ponies for the second period that the

White captain jogged his gray mare over to George, who was chatting from his saddle with June Pellters.

"Sorry to speak here, Mr. Gorin," he said crisply, "but the bell will ring in a moment. The number one, sir, should ride off the opposing back. It's not his place to take the ball away from the man in possession. That time it cost us a goal, I think."

George flushed, but in the Argonne and on the polo field, he had been schooled to discipline, and now he bit back his anger at the supercilious tang in the voice that rebuked him.

"I'm sorry, sir," he said. "I shouldn't have played the ball but the temptation was strong and I yielded. I didn't realize you were right behind me."

Compton nodded coldly. Then it was that he did a thing which made my own duty of holding my tongue a hard one.

"Please give me your stick, sir," commanded the White captain, "and play this period without it. That way you won't be tempted to forget the single duty of riding off."

It was done before the girl, mind you, and in the presence of myself, the captain of the opposition. It was done to this young fellow who, as I have said, had the makings of an International Cup player, by a man who was by no means his equal at the game. In effect he was sent into play unarmed as an advertisement that he could not be trusted to subordinate his own spectacular impulses to the good of his team--and yet Compton had never seen him play as he had it in him to play.

Now I have seen a number one sent into an important tournament game without his mallet, but that was because he was playing interference against a back who was a wizard, and it was deemed advisable to sink everything else in the effort to keep the magician pocketed and helpless. In that policy there was no implied rebuke to the disarmed player. He was simply sent out to ride off and forget that hitting entered into the game.

I was back for the Blues to-day, and I could claim no such distinction as required that precaution. No, it was merely the same thing as taking a stick of candy away from a child who cannot be trusted with it, and for an instant, as I looked at young George Gorin, whose face had gone pale and whose eyes had hardened to a cold glitter, I thought that, then and there, he would swing himself from his saddle and pull Compton down, too.

But after a moment, and before he had spoken, Gorin commanded himself and bowed his acquiescence.

"Very well, sir," he said, and surrendered his stick.

There was a side light to the occurrence which I think neither George nor the girl marked, though I either saw it or imagined it. When Gorin had stiffened and seemed about to demand an accounting, I fancied that across Compton's own eyes passed a momentary flicker like a flinching of the heart—and in my own private judgment I wrote him down as having the hidden streak of yellow in his nature, that sometimes goes with an outwardly aggressive boldness of bearing.

We progressed to the sixth period—and in these preliminary events we only played six chukkers to the game—with the scoreboard reading five to five. That it should have been so even at that stage tells the story of how stubbornly the Blues and Whites had locked horns. The boys of the two squads had seemed to forget that they were only divisions of the same club, and a sort of berserk fury of combat had settled on them that made for reckless riding and the taking of wild chances. That tie must be broken before the final whistle blew, and the time was growing short.

The ball had been skied by Compton with a straightaway drive, and he was after it on an outstretched run. I was calling on my bay for the last ounce of his stamina and the top note of his fleetness to outfoot George Gorin, slip free of his interference, and beat Compton to the ball.

I was a shade faster mounted than George, that chukker, so I shook him off and was overtaking Compton. I was passing him, using, I felt sure, the needful care not to cross him, and I'm still certain it was his own pony that swerved. At all events I know that there came a stunning shock of collision; that I somersaulted clear of the mess and found myself sitting unhurt on the field in time to see that somehow Compton was under his own fallen mount and that my pony had piled on his.

It was an ugly thing to look at: his own beast struggling with the instinct of the well-made polo pony to keep off the prostrate man, and yet forced to roll on him by the impact of the other fallen horse. Then they pulled the ponies up and away, but Compton lay limp and unmoving. I thought for an instant that one of those rare fatalities that mar the prettiest of all games had occurred and that a man had been killed.

But he wasn't killed. After a little they brought him back to his senses and he was helped off the field, and the doctor announced that beyond a bruising and a headache, to-morrow would find him unmarred.

Inasmuch as this was a practice game after all, with only a minute more of play, it was decided to let it end there with the score still standing five all—but the rivalry held over at white heat, and when the next game came hostilities would be resumed to the same hard-riding tune of recklessness and determination.

Compton insisted on dancing with June that evening though he danced with no one else, and though his handsome face was still pale from his fall, and discolored with showy bruises.

That was all right, of course, if he wanted to do it; yet I couldn't get away from the impression that he was capitalizing his accident, and I disliked it. It was as if he said in a subtler language than that of words, "I am badly shaken and my head is splitting. Another man would be stretched out in bed —but there's a chance to dance with you, and dance with you I will."

I may be a hard-boiled egg, but I think that when the doctor had vetted me and given me a clean bill of health there on the field that in Compton's place I'd have clambered back into the pigskin and made some sort of bluff at sticking out that extra minute. I've seen a fellow do it with a broken ankle when he had to be lifted up and couldn't touch one stirrup. They had to cut the boot off his swollen foot afterward. But it's easy to criticize a man one dislikes.

The next morning I found George Gorin alone on the practice field working like mad on his pirouette stroke. For a few moments after I'd reined up, and before he saw me, I watched him, and I'm bound to say he seemed to have come pretty near learning the trick which had assumed for him an emblematical meaning beyond its importance. Some two times out of three he succeeded in making a go of the effort.

It was rather characteristic of George that, though he had drilled himself to this degree of proficiency, he had never tried that stroke on the field or spoken of it except to June and myself. If he got it mastered to a point where he could trust it to his own satisfaction, he would keep it bottled up and never uncork it until it was needed—some moment in a last period, perhaps, when the issue hung trembling.

He saw me, nodded, and rode over.

"June didn't come out this morning," I observed, and at once his brows came together in an expression of bleak hopelessness.

"She rides oftener with Compton than with me now," he said. "That tumble he took, seems to have made a hero of him." He grinned sheepishly as he added: "It was his own fashion of pirouetting, I guess."

"Come now," I expostulated. "That fall at least wasn't planned by him. It wasn't like his taking your mallet away. You behaved very well, George, about that."

"What else could I do?" he questioned simply. "He was technically right. I'd given him a handle to swing me by, and I couldn't go about accusing the swine of using it for his personal advantage."

He paused and I saw from the black wrath in his eyes how the thing had festered. In a moment he added, "Some time he'll give me something that I can take hold of, and then——"

"Then?" I questioned, and the answer burst from him with torrential feeling.

"Then I'll swing *him*—and God save me from killing him!"

"George," I suggested quietly, "go steady, old boy. I've analyzed this fellow. Like the rascal whose stroke you're practicing, he's got one trick and that's a grand-stand front. He fills the eye. He's fascinating, but one dazzling accomplishment isn't enough, you know, when all is said and done."

"Fascination's enough," he retorted, "if it wins out with June. It isn't going to make me happier to tell myself that she'll spend her life afterward learning that she's been swindled."

That was true. June was as honest as daylight and worth any man's fight. She was square with herself and with others, but she wasn't proof against mistake, and this man was gaining headway. What she had at first admitted as a sort of magnetism to be questioned and perhaps discounted was growing in power; drawing her closer and faster. George was slipping back.

The afternoon came when the Blues and Whites met again, and they met with a disproportionate valuation set on the winning of that game. Men who were close friends met as though the division into two squads had been the enlistment under hostile flags, but the line-up was not quite the same as before. George Gorin was playing on my Blue team now and for him I had swapped a fellow whom I didn't greatly like, but to whom Captain Compton had taken a great fancy.

The Cherokee roses had burst into a white foam everywhere. The nightingales were pouring out a molten overflow of song, and the long-leaf pines were waving their gracious plumes against the flawless serenity of sky. We played that game on the number one field, reserved for events of true consequence, and its unmarked turf spread like emerald velvet, fringed with bright color by the gay dress of the women and the white flannels of men.

Every pony and every bit of tack was rubbed and polished to fling back the light.

I'm not going into the whole detail of that game or its strategy, except to say that I gave my place of back over to George Gorin, and took command at the position of number three myself. One might describe every chapter and have something vigorous to say of each, but I'll pass on to the part that brought the verdict, only summarizing what went before by stealing the words of a great sporting reporter and declaring that every man was "riding and hitting hell bent for glory" that afternoon.

A thing happened that hadn't happened on the Camden field for twenty years before. The end of the eighth chukker—for we played the whole length that day—brought a tied score which called for an added period, and that added period terminated in another deadlock, which called for a second extra session.

You can guess to what fine-drawn tension the resolve was stretched by that time. Every man was tired, but didn't know it. Every man was keyed to something a shade beyond his best of effort, and every one was mounted on that pony which he trusted most implicitly to meet a supreme demand.

And with some minute or so before the time for the ending gong the tenth chukker had brought no score to either side.

Then I got the ball at center field and carried it up with three strokes close to the posts. I was riding fast and seemed to have shaken loose all interference. My blood was singing like a kettle song in my veins, and I felt that I carried the victory on my mallet head—but overconfidence undid me. My shaft twisted a trifle in my grip on the fourth stroke and carried the ball a few inches outside instead of inside the posts. On the knock-out Compton took it and carried it away from his own danger zone with a brilliantly skied first stroke. He outraced pursuit to land second and third straight shots which placed the sphere close up to our own line. There it lay awaiting one more wallop to end things against us—for in extra periods to decide a tie, the first score made brings the finish whistle.

That was when George got up to the firing line. He seemed to have actually lifted his pony off the turf and made it sail in free air, but when he had raced between Compton and the ball, he did not backhand. He wheeled instead, bringing his mount to its hind legs, pirouetted and then as the forefeet struck the turf, soft as a kitten's paws, the mallet head struck the ball, hard as a sledge.

Compton's goal assault was broken up as mine had been, and the ball came double-quicking back, George himself carrying it with the field trailed out fanlike behind him and no one near enough to challenge him—except one man.

That one man was Compton hanging close to the hind quarters of the flying chestnut, which George rode out, whip and spur. Compton was gaining and clawing with his stick head on each of his opponent's strokes in the effort to hook mallets—but finding himself each time still out of reach, though each time nearer.

Then, with the sphere again approaching his goal posts, Compton gave up hooking and called on his brown pony for a turn of home-stretch speed, and the pony responded with a magnificent gallantry that shot him thundering by George into a handy lead. I had been too far off side to get into that race, but I was close enough to read the men's faces, and I saw Compton grin with an expression which seemed to say. "Now, I'll show you how to do it!"

Then he, too, forbore to backhand, and lifted his pony to wheel it on its hind feet as he stroked on the pirouette!

Just as he swung his mallet through, something happened. It looked like a spasmodic jerk of the arm to me; one of those unaccountable accidents that sometimes happen even to the expert, a muscular twitch of some sort that spoils accuracy. Whatever it was it undid the stroke. He missed the ball, and before he could wheel his horse again, George had slipped in and slammed home a goal—and the day was won.

It was when we all stood sweating at the side lines and when I read disappointment in the eyes of June Pellters, that I realized my young friend, George Gorin, though he had won his pirouette game, had lost the other. Of course, she congratulated him, but you could see that her heart had ridden with the white shirts, and for that there could be only one reason.

So an hour later I took Captain Compton by the arm and, as the two of us lighted cigars, I looked him steadily in the eyes.

"You fellows put up a grand argument," I said, "and I must confess that you had the game won, if you hadn't pulled your last stroke."

"Pulled my stroke," he repeated with a puzzled smile, and I made my glance more direct because it was, after all, a hard thing to say.

"Yes," I responded, sticking to my point. "George has been practicing that pirouette stroke in secret for weeks, but yours was a more finished article than his, or would have been, if you hadn't checked it in mid-course."

"I'm afraid I don't quite get you," he protested, but I saw that under his skin an angry glow was beginning to burn, and in his eyes I caught again that riffle that I had diagnosed before as a flinching of his soul.

"You saw our young friend try a stroke that few people know," I said brazenly. "You called him down and took away his stick the other day for yielding to the impulse to make a spectacular play. To-day you yielded to that same impulse—or almost did. You saw him make the pirouette stroke and started to show him how to do it better—then you realized that you mustn't play that stroke—and so you pulled it."

"I mustn't play what stroke? Why? You talk in riddles." Now he was plainly incensed.

"The pirouette stroke—because it would proclaim you as the one man who is master of it," replied I, taking up his questions in their order. "As to talking in riddles, I thought that might be more considerate. Do you prefer that I make myself more explicit as to why you don't want to be known as that man—or do you prefer to leave Camden this evening and let the thing rest between ourselves?"

For an instant I thought he would knock me down. Of course, he ought to have done so, because I hadn't recognized or suspected him until to-day, and I was, after all, gambling on his manner of reception to tell me surely whether I was hitting a bull's-eye or making a bull. His demeanor told me beyond doubt.

That evening he left, and stood not upon the order of his going.

"And he was arranging a motor trip for to-morrow, too," said June to me, with perplexed eyes. I made no immediate answer, merely shaking my head in affected mystification. "If he's as unreliable as that," I hazarded, at last, "he would seem to be a sort of bad risk, don't you think?"

She sat for a while in deep meditation, and at last she flung up her chin. "Not a bad risk," she made answer. "A total loss, I should say."

## A NEW WAY TO GET IN TROUBLE

A PROMINENT motion-picture actor recently got "in bad" in an original way. During the making of a picture angry words passed between this gentleman and the director. When it came time for him to appear before the camera the actor still was heated up to the boiling point. The action of the scene called for the angry player to make some remarks, which he did—taking the director for his subject and speaking in so low a voice that his fellow players couldn't understand what he was saying. The picture was finished and released to the exhibition houses. All went well until a party of deaf mutes, experts at lip reading, saw it. They complained to the manager of the house about the perfectly awful language one of the actors was using.

# The Girl in Tears

By William Slavens McNutt

*Author of "A Slice of the Moon," "The Man and the Clan," Etc.*

**For a man supposedly burned out by the war the weary McFall seemed able to make a suspicious amount of sparks fly around New York**

BOB McFALL leaned forward in his chair and absent-mindedly poked at the coals in the open grate with a pair of tongs.

"I think the war burned me out," he said wearily.

Andy Benson, slumped deep in a leather lounge chair, exhaled a stream of cigarette smoke and laughed.

"Tough," he commiserated mockingly. "Poor old man! Twenty-eight years old; single; handsome; indecently healthy; ten thousand berries a year income from A 1 real estate and securities, even if you don't do a lick of work; successful illustrator; making twenty to twenty-five thousand a year drawing pretties when you get tired of having a good time; popular; full of pep; no strings on you; five-year lease on a fine home here in New York and you can afford not to live in it if your feet get to itching and you want to go somewhere else! Pockets full of dough, veins full of blood and nothing on your mind but hair! Burned out? Hell!"

McFall grinned reluctantly and shrugged his big shoulders. "I ought to know better than to expect sympathy from a newspaper man," he said. "You birds are all cynics."

"Cynics? How do you make it out?" Benson flipped his cigarette into the fire and sat up. The light of argumentative battle was bright in his eye. "That's a fine old bromidic falsity, this idea that newspaper men are cynics. Rot! Cynicism is the hallmark of this year's cub. Good newspaper men of long experience are the most credulous people in the world in addition to being the greatest optimists. They know that anything within the scope of the imagination can happen and ultimately will. They have faith in the good in humanity because they deal so much with evil and they know how exceptional a quality evil is. That's why evil is news, you poor simp. A murder is news because most men are not murderers; a wife who runs away with some other guy and leaves her husband and children in the lurch is news because very few women do it; a cashier who robs the bank is news because most cashiers are honest.

"Cynics? Bunk! You get a little touch of spring fever and start maundering about the war having burned you out—you with everything in the world a guy could want in the way of present possessions and future prospects—and because I don't ask you to come sob on my shoulder, you call me a cynic. Yeh! You don't need sympathy; what you need is a good stiff dose of sulphur and molasses and a few rounds of golf. 'Burned out!' That's a line!"

McFall chuckled good-naturedly. He rose and crossed the room, playfully ruffling Benson's hair as he passed him. His three-story brick house with a studio on the top floor, fronted on Waverley Place. McFall stopped by a front window and stared thoughtfully into the street. It was a little after eleven o'clock in the evening. The performance at the Greenwich Village Theater was just over. Some of the crowd were passing the house, loitering to prolong the enjoyment of a walk in the soft May night.

The light from a high moon added a faint radiance of romance to the strong glow from the electric street lights. Some ragged children were frolicking on the curb. A limousine roared imperiously through the quiet block. In the soft glow of its interior lights McFall saw the flushed, happy face of a smiling woman in an evening wrap; the figure of a man in a Tuxedo beside her. On their way uptown, McFall guessed; a cabaret; dancing. The suggestion caused a picture of the city at night to appear in his imagination. He saw the lights and crowds in Times Square, the midnight shows, the dancing clubs—all the opportunities for amusement and pleasure that human ingenuity can arrange.

He beheld it all with his mind's eye. Any part or all of it was his for the taking. As Benson had said, he had money, youth, health, popularity. His friends were many and from all walks of the city's life, the theater, the sporting world, the financial district; writers, artists and a cordial few of the social elect. Standing there by the window, he heard the fair promise of the city and the promise left him cold. The faces of many friends passed in review in his imagination and roused no hope of pleasure or contentment in their company.

As he stared into the street, dreaming, vivid pictures of the past appeared in quick succession on the screen of memory. He saw himself in 1911 at the age of eighteen, a husky, eager boy, leaving his home in Washington State to study art in Paris. His father, a moderately wealthy lumberman, had planned a business career for his son, but young McFall was born with an eye that saw the world in pictures and a hand that ached to fix the things he saw in line and color.

He saw himself on the march with the Foreign Legion in 1914; a private in that famous organization; a flash then of the struggle at Verdun; a confused and fiery bit on Dead Man's Hill, a world of flames and smoke, of dancing earth and flying steel; a blinding end-of-the-world flash and roar that seemed like a fearful explosion within his brain—and peace. Next, a cot in the citadel of Verdun, the vast, dim warren of rooms and tunnels under the hill; the sense of a bandaged body and the odor of antiseptics; a movement on a stretcher, a nightmare ride in an ambulance; a bunk in a swaying box car filled with wounded; a huge station faintly lit with weird blue lights, a whirl in another ambulance along smooth, quiet streets, and then the long, drowsy rest in the great hospital at Neuilly on the edge of Paris.

Then, the home-coming, late in 1916. The tremendous popularity of his drawings, the first real front-line stuff to show in the United States. The experience of being lionized, of being the premier "man who."

The entrance of the United States into the war; his time at a training camp; his assignment as captain of an infantry company in a regiment of the Rainbow Division. The trip across again; the training; the first go at the fighting in the quiet trench sector at Baccarat; the short, savage stand in support of Gourand in the Champagne; the victorious smash across the Ourcq in the heat of late July; the swift success at St. Mihiel, when he had walked the flat plain in the early morning mist with the once formidable Mont Sec at his left, no longer an impregnable fortress but merely a steep hill scarred with abandoned gun pits, trenches, and dugouts; the fierce work at Exermont in the Argonne; the swift confusion of the final drive to the very hills above Sedan; the day of the armistice in the well-smashed, gray old city of Buzancy. Then, the march of occupation up through Brandeville and Montmedy into Belgium; through the lovely delivered city of Arlon. Finally Luxembourg, conquered Germany, and the Rhine!

What a succession of agonies and pleasures it had been! What lifetimes of terror and triumph, of misery and exultation, of sorrow and joy, had been boiled down by the heat of the great conflict into an essence of experience held in the small vessel of those few years!

Recollections of Andy Benson were mixed with all those memories. Andy had been there from the beginning. McFall had known him in the gay three years of his student life before the war when Andy was working on the Paris edition of the New York *Herald*. During the first two years of the war Andy had served as war correspondent, then through a year of driving an ambulance in an American field-service unit. When the United States got in he secured a commission as a captain in G. 2—the intelligence department. McFall had seen much of him, before the United States came in and afterward. Their paths had crossed many times. McFall felt a surge of affection for the stocky young reporter lounging in the easy-chair. Good old Andy! He had been through it all. He knew. McFall felt that he must know. He turned and looked at him.

"Don't you ever feel it, Andy?" he asked.

"Feel what?" Andy's inquiry was half smothered by a yawn.

"That everything worth while is over with," McFall explained, crossing the room again to stand before the dying fire.

"Sure," Andy admitted cheerfully. "Feel that way lots of times. What of it? It's not so. It doesn't hurt me to feel that way, but I'd hate to believe that what I felt was true. It's just a mood."

McFall sighed. "I can't pass it off that easy," he said. "I've tried to argue myself out of it, but I can't make it stick. It's something more than just spring fever, Andy. I think I'm old enough not to be seriously disturbed by a passing mood. This thing is more than that, old-timer."

"Shoot!" Andy invited. "What's it all about?"

"If I knew, I might do something to help myself," McFall said. "I don't know what it's all about. It began right after the armistice. As soon as the war was over I began to get restless. Boy! I was r'arin' to get home. At least that's what I thought I was r'arin' about. I was wild to get home and get to work. Thought when I got back and got started working I'd be all right again.

"Well! I got home in April, 1919. Got demobbed and started in to work. My stuff caught on again right away and everything was rosy. You know what? Within two months I was the most miserable man in town. Just plain restless. Felt I'd go crazy if I stayed around town any longer. I thought it over and decided that I'd acquired a taste for adventure during the war and the best thing for me to do was to gratify it. Nothing holding me down, so I started out.

"I got a roving assignment from the *Colonial Weekly* people and cut loose. Rambled around over Japan and China. Got up into Siberia with the Kolchak bunch just when they were getting it in the neck and came back in the retreat with them. Fussed around the Philippines. Loafed down through the South Sea Islands. Had a lot of adventures that should have been interesting and I was bored to death all the while I was gone. Everything was as flat and dull as stale, warm beer. I couldn't get a kick out of anything. I came back here and settled down. Tried to get interested in my work; in things around town. Everything's as dull to me as a rainy Sunday on the farm. What's the answer?"

"Oh, reaction after the war," Benson said. "It'll wear off."

McFall threw out his hands in a gesture of impatience. "Wear off! he exclaimed. "This is May, 1921. The war's been over two years and a half, and I steadily get worse instead of better."

Benson smoked thoughtfully for a little time. Then: "Do you really want to know what's the matter?"

"I certainly do." McFall was definite.

"Selfishness."

McFall stared. "I don't get you."

"Selfishness," Benson repeated. "That's what ails you. That's what ails all of us who are so dissatisfied. You recall the war and your experiences on the other side with a great thrill. Why? Was it a pleasant experience? Not by a damn sight! It was a dirty, dangerous, monotonous business. Do you want to live in the mud of the trenches again? You do not. Would you enjoy shell fire, gas, air raids, discipline, going over, with good pals being popped off all around you? Certainly not. And yet you recall the time when all those experiences were commonplace with a great yearning. Do you know why?"

McFall shook his head. "It's by me," he admitted.

"There's a scriptural passage that sums up the whole business," Benson declared. "'It's more blessed to give than to receive.' There's been a lot of sickening bunk spread on the strength of that statement, but the bunk can't change the goods. During the war you were giving. You were giving everything you had all the time. You were continually giving of your time and strength, and offering your life as well. You were giving everything you had. For what? For a cause you believed in.

"Since it's over you miss something. Do you know what? You miss the exaltation of supreme sacrifice for an idea, old kid. In those days you were giving everything you had for an idea; doing rotten, dirty, dangerous work for the benefit of others. Nowadays you are spending all your time trying to get; trying to amuse yourself; hunting for adventures and the thrills that go with them. In those days you were busy giving; now you are doing nothing but receive. Get me?"

McFall laughed. There was a touch of embarrassment in his tone. "I didn't know you were a preacher, Andy."

"I'm not," Benson insisted. "I'm a reporter. My business is to watch what goes on, and tell what I see. I'm telling you. Maybe I don't see straight. Most people never do. Nobody always does. Eyes are darned inaccurate witnesses. What I've told you is what my eyes have told me. In this instance I believe them implicitly."

"I get your drift," McFall said. "But what's the answer in my case? Hook on somewhere and do settlement work? Try to reform birds that are lapping up bootleg booze and home-brew? Want me to start in as a reformer of some sort?"

"Nothing like it," Benson said. "You're a natural-born soldier—fighting man. You've got a flair for adventure. Indulge it. Follow your natural bent. But if you want to get any real fun out of it, do it for some purpose; do it to help some one, and if you don't have a good time, I'll buy a full case of prewar hooch and make you a present of it."

McFall shrugged. "That's all very well, but how? I can't step out on the street and start a war of my own for a good cause. What'll I fight for? Who'll I help?"

"Anybody who needs and deserves it," Benson said.

"That's helpful," McFall said dryly. "I suppose I just walk out on the street and ask the first person I meet if he—or she—needs help! Tell 'em I'm in the fighting business and ask if they need any eyes blacked. Go down the street like an old-clothes man shouting: 'Any fighting to-day? Anybody need any wrongs righted? Broken hearts made whole, injustices revenged while you wait!' Bright idea! Get your lazy hulk up out of that chair and let's go down the street and get a bite of something. Listening to you rave has given me an appetite."

"Just the same I've been giving you true talk," Benson insisted, as he followed McFall into the hall. "Plenty of chances for service and adventure, too, if a guy just had the nerve to follow them up. You can't walk ten blocks anywhere in the city, any time of the day or night, without seeing a good lead. If you'd follow those leads up as conscientiously as you'd investigate anything that aroused your suspicion while you were in the line with your company, or back in reserve or in a rest area, you'd get somewhere."

"Do you see such leads often?" McFall inquired.

"Every day," Benson boasted.

"Why don't you follow them up and have a good time on your own hook?"

Benson shrugged. "Why doesn't a doctor take care of his own health?" he countered. "I'm not telling you to follow my example. No; follow my advice."

"I'll get into enough trouble following my own inclinations," McFall said.

"What I've been telling you is good dope," Benson insisted. "It's straight stuff."

The two walked to an all-night restaurant on Sixth Avenue near Eighth Street, discussing Benson's theory. Over coffee and cigarettes they argued the matter until after one o'clock in the morning. Benson grew impassioned in defense of his philosophy. Adventure, he insisted, could always be encountered right around the corner. It demanded only recognition and development, with the idea of service as the chief motivating impulse. McFall continued to ridicule his contention, but there was a wistful quality in the tone of his banter. His doubt was that of the skeptic who devoutly hopes that the thing in which he does not believe is true.

The illuminated clock in the tall brick tower of the old Jefferson Market building marked the hour of one-thirty when they left the restaurant. There were few people on the quiet streets. A group of taxi drivers standing near their machines parked along the curb were gossiping about fares and trips. A bent old man with a bundle of morning newspapers under his arm limped along the street searching for customers. A noisy drunken man on the corner was swearing belligerently at his more sober companion, insisting loudly that he would not go home.

McFall looked about him and laughed. "As for instance?" he said questioningly. "See any leads in these people?"

"Um! Perhaps not," Benson admitted grudgingly. "But just for luck, walk ten blocks with me and see if we don't turn up something that offers a chance, if it were followed up."

"You're a stubborn theorist," McFall exclaimed. "I'm on. Show me."

They crossed under the elevated structure on Sixth Avenue and started west on Greenwich Avenue.

A block and a half up Greenwich Avenue they passed a girl. She was a slender girl in a tailored suit of some dark stuff. She was proceeding at a walk so rapid as to approximate a run. As she passed, a ray from the night light in the window of a drug store brushed her face. Her features were strained; there were tears in her eyes; her effort to choke back a stubborn sob was audible. Benson stopped and looked after her.

"There you are," he said. "Very decent looking, fairly well-dressed girl. Nice features. Has none of the marks of a woman of the streets. Out alone at this time of the night—crying. Why?"

McFall made an exclamation of derision. "Logical guess would be that she's just come from St. Vincent's Hospital up on Seventh Avenue where some friend or relative has just died," he said.

Benson shook his head and spread his arms in a gesture of disgust.

"You make a logical guess and pass up a perfectly good lead," he insisted. "That's the trouble. You haven't got the nerve to butt in and see the thing through. You're afraid of being made ridiculous, so you lose out. Now I'd make a little bet that that girl's in serious trouble of some sort and that if you'd find out what ails her, you'd have a chance to——"

McFall interrupted him with an irritable oath.

"You're a stubborn fool, Andy," he said. "You're a fool and I'll prove it to you, if I have to make a fool of myself to do it. Good night."

He nodded to Benson and started down the street in the direction in which the girl was walking.

"Hey, Mac," Benson called after him, apprehensively. "Are you really going to——"

"Good night," McFall called back. "Good night and shut up. See you later."

Benson stood looking after him, astonished.

"Well I'll be damned!" he exclaimed softly, as McFall disappeared around the corner, following the girl. "I wonder if he's really going to go through with it?"

After a moment's thought he walked on alone, heading for the subway and his home uptown, chuckling to himself. "I'd laugh if he got pinched," he thought. "If he speaks to her she's liable to yell for a cop. I should have followed and seen what happened. I bet it'll be good."

At the top of the subway stairs at Twelfth Street and Seventh Avenue, he stopped and stared thoughtfully down the deserted street. "I wonder if there's anything in that nutty idea I suggested to Mac?" he questioned himself wistfully. "I wonder!"

He heard the rumble of an approaching train, sighed and hurried down the stairs.

The girl McFall was following went north on the east side of Sixth Avenue. McFall, a half block behind, was already berating himself for having trailed her. He heartily wished himself out of the situation and at the same time, having declared his intention to Benson, at least by inference, he felt impelled to go through with it. Between Ninth and Tenth Streets, he quickened his pace and gained on the girl, steeling himself to speak to her. As he came near to her, a flood of embarrassment drowned out his courage; he slowed his step and fell back. He was glad that he had not accosted her, and angry with himself for not having had sufficient nerve to speak.

On Twelfth Street, the girl turned east, walking on the north side of the street. She was a third of the way along the block toward Fifth Avenue when McFall reached the corner. He kept to the south side of the street and walking faster gained a position directly opposite her before the middle of the block was reached.

Near to the middle of the block the girl stopped before a three-story brick house with a miniature front yard separated from the street by a slender iron fence. The front door was four steps up from the street level. It was a large, white door upon which was affixed a massive, brass knocker. To gain the basement entrance it was necessary to descend three steps and pass an iron grille to the areaway under the stoop. The girl fumbled for a moment in her hand bag, passed into the yard, down the basement steps and entered the house.

McFall, hidden in the shadow of a high stoop across the street, laughed softly to himself. Here was coincidence, if not adventure. He had several times been a guest there. It was the home of James Francis Cranford, the sculptor. He lived there with his wife, a wealthy young society girl, who played seriously at painting. McFall knew them quite well. They did not rank as his intimate friends, but they were more than mere acquaintances.

The girl, McFall decided, was undoubtedly Mrs. Cranford's maid. The adventure was at an end. Even Benson, he thought, would not call a man a quitter for refusing to ring the Cranfords' doorbell at near two o'clock in the morning, try to explain the situation to his friends, just roused from sleep, and induce them to aid him in discovering why Mrs. Cranford's maid had been crying.

"She probably has the toothache," McFall thought, "or a spat with her sweetheart."

He was disgusted and beginning to be

chilled by the early-morning air. He yawned and decided to go home.

The man across the street was at the gate of the Cranford yard before McFall was aware of him. Certainly the newcomer had made but little noise in approaching. In that quiet hour a normal footfall would be plainly audible in the deserted street. He had come from the east, from the direction of Fifth Avenue. And so silently! Rubber heels would not account for his absolute silence of movement. Only a man with rubber or felt soles on his shoes could walk that quietly.

The man halted for just a moment before the gate of the Cranford house and looked quickly about him. Then he entered the yard, stepped down into the areaway and entered the house.

For all the sound he made opening the iron gate, the door into the areaway, the door into the house itself, the man might have been a ghost. McFall felt a thrill of interest. He told himself that the man was undoubtedly a servant, a butler, or chauffeur, who slept in the place. He recalled his visits with the Cranfords and was unable to remember that they kept a butler. He called upon his common sense for assurance that the man was the chauffeur. His common sense told him that this was so, but he did not believe it. Tingling with anticipation, he crossed the street on tiptoe, entered the little yard, stepped down into the dark areaway and listened. He was not sure, but he thought he heard a faint whispering in the lower hall inside. Neither the girl nor the man who had entered after her had turned on any light that was visible from the street.

McFall curiously tried the iron door that led into the little areaway under the stoop. It gave to his touch and he stepped in. He felt then, in the dark, for the knob of the door leading into the lower hallway. He found it and felt that the door was slightly ajar.

All his doubts were burned away in a hot flame of excitement. He pushed the door open a few inches farther and felt a thrill as from a dash of ice water on his bare flesh as he distinctly heard a warning, "S-s-sh!" in the darkness of the hall ahead of him. He waited a moment longer, pushed open the door another few inches and cautiously thrust in his head.

Ahead of him and a little higher than his head, he saw a round patch of light from a flash lamp on a step of the stairway leading to the first floor. The telltale bit of light moved slowly to the step above and to the step above that. Other than that bit of light, McFall was unable to see anything. He listened intently and was made aware that two people were slowly, cautiously mounting the stairs. The girl and the man!

He watched the progress of the slowly moving spot of light until it disappeared in the darkness above. Whoever the people ahead of him were, they had either entered one of the rooms on the first floor or were ascending the stairway to the second floor.

McFall called upon his memory for a picture of the Cranford house. As he remembered it there were, on the first floor, the hallway, two large rooms of about equal size connected by a big open arch in which there had at one time been double sliding doors, removed when the place was remodeled; and at the rear of the back room, a small alcove used as a sort of office. There was a desk in that little alcove, McFall recalled, a few books, and—yes! A safe! He remembered that safe distinctly. A small safe about two feet square.

With the second floor, he was not familiar. He supposed that there were sleeping rooms there. He had never been on the second floor, except to pass through the hall on his way to Mrs. Cranford's studio on the top floor to examine some of her work. Cranford himself did not work in the place; he had his studio, a huge, barnlike place, in a building on Eighth Street.

McFall thrust open the door sufficiently to admit his body, stepped into the dense blackness of the hallway and made his way slowly forward, feeling carefully along the wall with his left hand. He located the bottom step of the stairway with a gently exploring toe and mounted slowly. Gaining the hallway on the first floor he felt his way back until he reached the door giving into the rear room. The door was partially open and through the crack he saw again the spot of light. This time it rested on the dial of the safe in that little back alcove and as McFall looked, a man's fingers appeared from the darkness and laid hold on the mechanism.

McFall crept into the room and tiptoed slowly forward, gathering himself for a spring. In the dark his outstretched hand touched flesh. A wild scream of fear was the answer to the contact.

McFall sprang for the light like a football player making a flying tackle, and crashed to the floor with a precarious hold on a man's coat. Before he could shift his grip, a blow fell on his head and stunned him. Mechanically he retained his grip on the coat and summoned his will to dispel the numbing effect of the blow he had received. As mental clarity returned in answer to his demand, he found himself yet holding tightly to the coat, but the late occupant was gone from the garment. A woman was moaning in the dark near him. He heard the sound of swift feet in the hall below and a clang of iron as the areaway door was swung sharply open by the fugitive.

Then quick steps on the stairs. The lights were switched on. A man's voice called sharply: "Hands up, there! One move and I'll shoot."

Jimmy Cranford was standing in the doorway in his pajamas covering McFall with an automatic. The girl McFall had followed was crouched against the wall white and shaking with terror.

Recognition showed in Cranford's eyes. He lowered the revolver. An expression of utter bewilderment appeared on his face. He looked at the cowering girl and then at McFall, lying on the floor by the safe with a man's coat clutched in his hands and a thin trickle of bood working down over one ear from a swelling cut in his scalp.

"Mary!" Cranford exclaimed, his eyes on the girl. Then: "McFall! What in the name of——"

McFall came alive. He had heard Mrs. Cranford on the floor above frantically calling central on the telephone.

"Jimmy. Your wife's phoning the police. Stop her before she gets them. Quick, Jimmy! I'll talk later, but no police in this now!"

Cranford called out to his wife. "It's just Mr. McFall, Emma," he said, dazedly. "Mr. McFall and—and Mary."

There was a pause. Then from the upper floor: "Mr. McFall and—and Mary! Well!"

McFall heard Mrs. Cranford's step on the stairs. Then she appeared in the door beside her husband, wrapped in a dressing gown. She looked at McFall, bewildered; then at the girl crouching by the wall and indignation showed in her face.

"Mary!" she said sharply. "What's the matter here?"

The tone told McFall what he wanted to know. The girl was undoubtedly Mrs. Cranford's maid. His brain was driving at full speed under the forced draft of necessity. He got slowly to his feet, assuming a pose of extreme embarrassment and held out the coat.

"There was a burglar working at your safe here, when we came in," he said haltingly. "We sneaked up on him and I jumped him. He hit me a crack on the head with something, slipped out of his coat and got away."

Cranford, manlike, thought of the valuables. "Good for you, Mac," he crowed. "That's fine! Too bad the beggar got away."

Mrs. Cranford, womanlike, thought of the proprieties, of romance and scandal.

"'When we came in,' she repeated with emphasis. "I'm not sure that I understand you, Mr. McFall."

McFall hung his head and did his best at acting the part he had determined to play. "I'm afraid you understand only too well, Mrs. Cranford," he said guiltily. "Mary and I were out rather late. We went to a dancing place uptown. It—it wasn't altogether her fault. I insisted rather stubbornly on coming in for just a few minutes. She tried to make me leave her outside, but I—well, I'd had a few drinks. Not an excuse I know, but perhaps a cause. We came in very quietly—naturally enough. We saw the play of the flash light in the hall on this floor. We sneaked up on the chap and—and that's about all there is to it. You can understand why I do not want the police investigating. It's embarrassing enough explaining to you. But the police! Reporters! Phew!"

Indignation and gratitude struggled for the mastery of Mrs. Cranford's tongue. Indignation won.

"Well! Really, Mr. McFall!" she said coldly. "My maid! It's—you must have known!"

McFall nodded miserably. "Of course," he admitted. "It was a despicable thing to do. There's no excuse for me. I'm glad, however, that I was able to be of some service."

Cranford was trying desperately to control the grin that threatened to chase the expression of righteous disapproval from his features. He winked furtively at McFall and frowned for his wife's benefit.

"I—I don't know what to say," Mrs. Cranford admitted. Then to the girl direct: "Mary! I'm surprised! Of course, after this——"

"I'm sure she understands," McFall interrupted. "We'll be trotting along. It's near to daylight. She—ah—Mary will send for her things to-morrow."

"Oh, I didn't mean that she must leave now, in the middle of the night," Mrs. Cranford protested.

"I think it's better," McFall insisted. "Save embarrassment all around." He spoke directly to the girl for the first time. "Come, Mary! I'm sorry I got you into this mess, but it can't be helped now. We'll be going."

The girl nodded like one hypnotized. She seemed unaware of the presence in the room of any one save McFall. At him she stared as at an apparition, a man who had appeared as a ghost, and who had taken on flesh before her eyes. Shame, fear, all emotions were temporarily suppressed in her by the dominace of sheer astonishment. She was a girl evidently in her early twenties. McFall found time for swift approval of her features as they were revealed to him in the light. He moved toward the door and she followed him.

"Truly sorry, Mrs. Cranford," McFall said, contritely, as he stepped into the hall. "Inasmuch as I did, after all, save your place from being robbed, I'll trust that knowledge of this affair will remain the sole property of those of us who are directly involved in it."

"Of course!" Mrs. Cranford answered quickly. She permitted herself the hint of a generous smile. Then: "It really was too bad of you, Mr. McFall; but—I'm not too angry. Oh! Your head! It's bleeding."

"Nothing," McFall assured her. "Just a wee cut in the scalp. Good night, Mrs. Cranford, and many thanks for not being 'too angry.'"

Cranford preceded him down the hall and opened the front door. McFall stood aside and bowed Mary out. Cranford chuckled.

"You dog!" he whispered jovially. "What a thing to happen—my wife's maid! I say, that's good, Mac. Emma's not really sore; just trying to be. We'll have a get-together soon, you and I, and have a real laugh out of this. 'Good night, Mac; good luck!"

The girl was waiting for McFall on the sidewalk. He offered his arm and they walked toward Sixth Avenue. She began to cry softly.

"I don't understand," she said. "What—what happened? Who are you?"

"There's an all-night taxi stand a couple of blocks down Sixth Avenue," McFall replied. "We're going to get a taxi there and run a big bill while you find out who I am and I find out who you are, and we both find what and why."

At nine o'clock that morning McFall entered the main office of the Alamac Trucking Company on Canal Street and sent in his card to Arthur J. Chambers, the general manager. He eyed Chambers sharply when he entered his private office and found him to his liking; middle-aged, solid, matter of fact, human; a man giving every casual evidence of deserving the title: "A Regular Fellow." McFall decided to go straight to the point. He drew a wallet from the breast pocket of his coat, counted out eight hundred dollars in bills and laid them on the desk.

"That amount was stolen by one of the employees in your concern, Mr. Chambers," he said. "I'm returning it to you."

Chambers looked at the money; then at McFall; then he waited.

"You have a bookkeeper by the name of Hagen?" McFall asked. "E. J. Hagen?"

Chambers nodded assent.

"You had a girl working here as cashier until just recently; a girl by the name of Mary Townsend?"

Again an affirmative nod.

"She took the money," McFall said. "She was married in 1917 to a young fellow from Iowa, a chap who had just enlisted. He went across with the Rainbow, the old Forty-second, the same division with which I served. He was hit during the last week of the war, in our last big drive up near Sedan. He got high explosive in his right leg. He spent a little more than two years in military hospitals abroad and at home. He underwent eight operations and still he did not have the use of his leg. Last winter he got wind of a surgeon, not an army surgeon, who, he was sure, would cure him. He couldn't get the job done in the army; he didn't have the money to get the job done outside the army. Just at that time a distant cousin of his wife died and left her eight hundred dollars. Just the amount necessary, added to what little she had been able to save, to pay for the operation.

Providential, wasn't it? Do you get me?" He pointed to the money on the table. "There's the inheritance, Chambers. Your firm was the distant cousin."

Chambers picked up the bills and fingered them.

"Well, I'll be damned!" he exclaimed. "That's the way of it, hey? Nice girl. Always liked her. Shouldn't have done it, of course; all wrong. But—poor kid! Tough!"

"Then you'll accept the money and not make trouble for her?" McFall asked.

"Sure!" Chambers agreed. "Poor kid! Too bad! She should have come to me. She should have——"

He stopped short and a hard expression crossed his face.

"You asked if we had a bookkeeper by the name of E. J. Hagen," he reminded McFall. "Why? Where does he come in on this thing?"

"He found out that she had taken the money," McFall explained. "He covered up the theft for her—for a price."

"Yeh?"

"Your man Hagen trains with a fine bunch of crooks. He turned Mary Townsend over to one of his friends, Sid Whipple by name, who specializes in burglary. They finally made her promise to help them with one job as the price of silence about what she had done here. Oh, she shouldn't have done it, of course. But her husband was convalescent after the operation, lying alone in their little one-room home in an old house up on Perry Street, on the way to getting well and absolutely dependent on her. She was in a tight fix, Chambers, and she's not a sophisticated old hand at the game of life; just a new player and not a particularly expert one. Your bookkeeper's friend Whipple forced her to quit here and take a position as maid to a Mrs. Cranford. Last night she paid for Hagen's silence by letting Whipple into the Cranford home."

McFall related the night's adventure and the discussion that led up to it. Chambers laughed.

"You stepped right into it, didn't you?" he chuckled. "About this fellow Hagen; we can't do anything to him without involving the young lady, eh? No. Well, nothing to do but fire him."

"I weigh one hundred and ninety-eight stripped," McFall said casually. "I have a bad habit of leaving myself wide open when I swing my left, but I'm fairly fast for an amateur and I've got a stiff, straight right. Would you enjoy watching me work?"

A pleased grin of anticipation appeared on Chambers' face. "In here?" he asked.

"It's a little crowded," McFall said with a glance around. "Probably do some damage. I'd be glad to pay for anything I break."

"Breakage is on me," Chambers declared. "No. Better yet. I'll figure up the damage and take it out of Hagen's salary."

He pushed a button, and when the office boy appeared in answer to the ring, sent him for Hagen.

Hagen was a stocky young fellow of twenty-seven or eight.

"You sent for me, Mr. Chambers?" he asked as he entered the office.

Chambers nodded. He was fingering the money McFall had laid on the desk.

"This gentleman," he said, nodding at McFall, "has just returned the eight hundred dollars that Mary Townsend borrowed just before she left us."

Hagen said nothing. A pallor overspread his heavy face and he began to tremble. McFall got up, crossed the room and sprung the catch on the door.

"Mr. McFall here is going to thank you personally for your generosity for making that loan to Mrs. Townsend possible," Chambers continued smoothly. "Grateful chap, this fellow McFall. He means to express his gratitude in deeds rather than words."

McFall slipped off his coat and laid it on the desk.

"Mr. Chambers and I have decided that the fairest thing we can do under the circumstances is to make you a present of a boxing lesson, Hagen," he said. "You begin like this."

He lashed out with his left and landed on Hagen's nose.

Five minutes later Chambers was sitting tilted back in his swivel chair watching McFall rearrange his collar and tie.

"Good job," he said judiciously. "Very well done. Hagen'll be able to be out in a couple of weeks, but he'll never look quite the same. He can get false teeth that'll look as good as new, but no one will ever be able to mold that nose back into its original shape. You certainly did full justice to that nose."

"I bruised one of my knuckles on his

head," McFall said, examining the back of his right hand. "He ducked and I caught him high."

"Very good job," Chambers repeated thoughtfully. "I think if you'd use your left straight from the shoulder, instead of swinging with it——"

"Oh, sure," McFall agreed, "I'm just an amateur."

"I'll pay professional rates to watch you work, if you'll let me know the next time you're going to do a job of this sort," Chambers declared. "Glad you came in, Mr. McFall. I've had a pleasant time and I'm sure you've enjoyed yourself. Give my regards to that little Townsend girl. Good morning."

At eleven o'clock that morning McFall rang the doorbell of an old brick house on Perry Street and inquired for Mr. and Mrs. Townsend.

"Three flights up in the rear," the landlady directed him. He mounted the dark, narrow stairs and knocked. Mary Townsend opened the door. Her husband was seated in a rocking-chair with his crutches across his knees. He was a stocky, boyish-looking fellow with a homely, frank face. McFall felt a constriction of sympathy about his heart as he marked the lines of agony that pain and waiting had carved.

"Your wife has spoken to you of me, I suppose?" he asked.

"Yes sir," the boy replied. "She told me you were coming to see us."

"The people she has been working for are old friends of mine," McFall said, speaking according to the half fiction that he had arranged with Mrs. Townsend in the early hours of the morning. "She happened to hear me mention that I had been with the Rainbow, and told me something of you. It struck me that you might be interested in a proposition I had in mind."

The boy swallowed hard. His eyes shone with a pitiful eagerness. "Yes sir," he said. "I'd like to hear it."

"I've got a farm up State, a piece," McFall explained. "About fifty miles out. Up near Yorktown. I bought it with the idea of making a summer place of it some time. Haven't done anything with it so far. Pretty good place. About a hundred acres. Know anything about farming?"

"Yes, sir," the boy said eagerly. "I was raised on a farm out in Iowa. I was working as an automobile mechanic for a couple of years before the war, but I know more about farming than anything else. I——"

The eagerness went out of his face suddenly and he looked down at his bandaged leg.

"I guess I couldn't do much for a while," he said wearily. "This leg of mine. They say it's going to be all right, after a while; but—I don't know. It may be several months before——"

"Oh, that wouldn't make any difference," McFall broke in. "My idea was this: I'm not making any use of the place. Don't know when I will. Not soon, anyway. Seems a shame to let it just lie idle, so my suggestion is that you and your wife go out and live on it. I'll pay you say, fifty dollars a month in salary. Then I'll give you a drawing account of, oh,—perhaps two thousand five hundred dollars a year, maybe three thousand dollars. You will run the place in your own way, hire what help you need. You'll have everything you need for yourselves free, of course; fuel, milk, eggs, vegetables, all that sort of thing. If you can make a profit, I take half and you take half. If there's a loss I stand that and you have your fifty dollars a month and all your living expenses. Sound fair?"

The boy's lips moved in an effort at speech, but no words came. He nodded affirmation and two big tears welled from his eyes and slipped down his cheeks.

"I'm s-sorry to b-be such a b-baby," he blubbered. "B-but damn it! It's been so long. J-just waiting. My wife having to w-work to t-take care of me and all. G-god! It'll be g-good to have a chance t-to do something again. I'm——"

"Forget it," McFall said heartily. "Why man, it's like a bargain for me. Mighty difficult to get dependable people for a proposition like that. Takes a load off my mind. By the way, you were with the One Hundred and Sixty-sixth Regiment, weren't you?"

The boy nodded.

"Were you in that scrap in late July at that little town of Sergy just beyond the Ourcq when——"

"Was I?" the boy echoed eagerly, leaning forward in his chair. "Why, say——"

Andy Benson called at McFall's house in Waverley Place at four o'clock that afternoon and found his friend asleep in bed. He roused him and demanded particulars.

"What happened, Mac?" he asked. "Did you find out what the girl was bawling about?"

"Did I!" McFall exclaimed drowsily. "Boy! The first real, fast fun I've had since Hec was a pup! Lord, I'm tired. I've got something to tell you as soon as I get my eyes pried open. What time is it?"

"A little after four."

"Great Scott!" McFall sat up in bed with a jerk and grabbed the telephone.

"Hello, central! Give me Beekman 8620. Yes."

He held the receiver at his chest while he waited and blinked at Benson.

"I didn't expect to sleep this late," he said.

Then into the telephone: "Hello! Seldes Real Estate Company? Is Mr. William Seldes there? Please! Hello! Hello, Billy? This is Mac—Bob McFall. Fine! How are you? Listen Billy! I want you to do a quick job for me. Special. Buy me a farm. About one hundred acres. Good house and barn. Something in pretty fair shape. What? Oh, yes. Somewhere near Yorktown. Yes, it's got to be there. Near Yorktown. There's a lot of them for sale up there. I drove around out there a good bit last fall, and there were a lot of them for—— You have? One hundred and ten acres? That's all right? Twelve thousand dollars? Yes. I can stand that. It's a fair-enough buy just as an investment, isn't it? Good! Right away. I'll give you the dope when I see you. All right, Billy."

McFall hung up the receiver and propped himself on his pillow.

"Give me a cigarette and open your ears," he said, yawning and ruffling his hair. "It was like this, Andy: I followed her up Sixth Avenue to Twelfth Street and——"

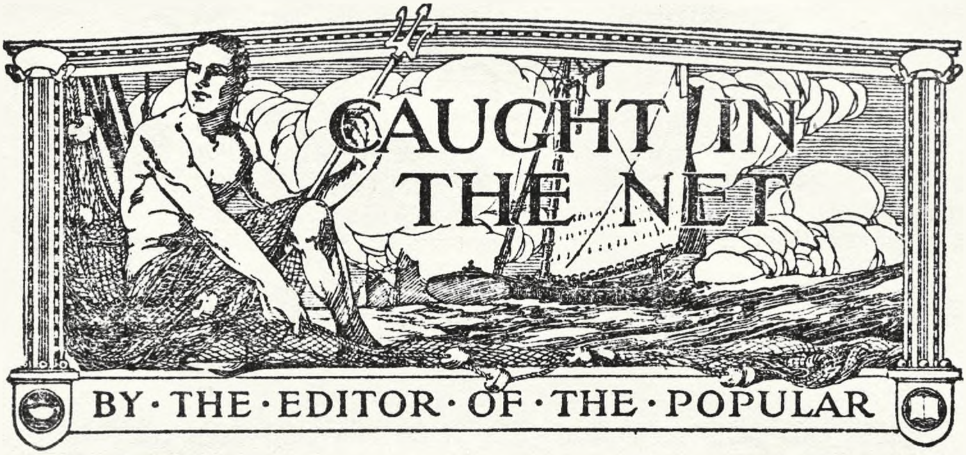
*Look for other stories by Mr. McNutt.*

## THE HOUSE FAMINE

PRESIDENT HARDING and his cabinet make no secret of their alarm at the housing situation throughout the country. It worries them because, they say, business men everywhere, being carried away with the idea that the much-desired return to normalcy can be accomplished by means of legislation, expect the administration to bring prosperity to business. So insistent did the pressure become during the first months of his occupancy of the White House that Mr. Harding put the cabinet to work hunting for means to remedy the situation. Every investigator came back to him with the statement that high rents were slowing up business and holding up the cost of living.

It was found that the country was in need of over a million new dwelling houses, and that it would cost five billion dollars to build them. Furthermore, the rents were going higher instead of lower. Some of the States had already taken action to relieve conditions. Rents are now fixed or regulated by special laws in the District of Columbia and the States of Maine, Washington, and New York. In New York and the national capital tenants can be evicted only under certain conditions. North Dakota and South Dakota lend money for building purposes, and California and New York are contemplating similar action, while already New York and New Jersey encourage building by remitting taxation on it.

But all that is not enough. The president at this writing is still afraid that the national government may have to step in and, by extensive and elaborate legislation, encourage building, if not go so far as to attempt the regulation by law of the prices of building materials.




## GOLD!

AGAIN there comes thrilling news from the outlands. Gold has been discovered! This time the strike is in the Province of Manitoba, at Elbow Lake, six hundred and fifty miles north of Winnipeg. Last winter two young Irishmen, brothers, Gordon and Kenneth Murray, left The Pas, a little town on the Canadian National Railway that is the gateway to this almost unknown district, traversed the two hundred miles of wilderness trail to the lake, and as soon as the muskeg was free of snow set to work. Early in the spring they found the gold-bearing quartz that they hope will make them millionaires, staked out claims, traveled back to The Pas by canoe, and by the middle of June astonished the assayer there by presenting ore-quartz samples that he declared indicated a gold content of from $25.000 to $100.000 a ton.

Thus far the Murrays had been close-mouthed, but now they told a few friends of their luck, and before the sun had set other prospectors were traveling trail and river toward the new El Dorado. News of the strike was wired to "the outside," and within a few days gold seekers began to pour into the little town. And, at the rate of two hundred or so a week, they have been pouring in ever since. Meanwhile the Murrays have returned to their claims and are busy trying to find out just what sort of prize package Fortune has handed them. According to latest reports they haven't made any complaints against that notoriously fickle lady.

So to-day, "north of fifty-three," there are being enacted scenes such as stirred the pulses of the adventurous during the days of the Klondike gold rush twenty-five years ago. Elbow Lake is not easy to reach. It lies a hundred miles beyond the nearest railroad line, and the same distance beyond the nearest steamboat stop, Sturgeon Landing, on the Saskatchewan River. There are no roads for vehicles—supplies must be taken in by dog sled in winter and by canoe in summer. Yet sourdough and tenderfoot alike are daring the dangers and discomforts of the wilderness to follow the lure of the yellow metal.

Just what lies at the foot of the rainbow that these gold seekers are chasing? That still is a matter for speculation. In the five years following 1849 the California gold fields yielded $258,000,000. Five million dollars' worth of dust and nuggets was taken out of the Klondike in the five months following McCormick's strike on Bonanza Creek in 1897, and by 1902 the district had yielded $30,000,000. In 1904 the Goldfield, Nevada, fields netted the treasure hunters over two million dollars, and by 1907 the fields had produced eight and a half million dollars' worth of gold. In each of these gold rushes a few fortunate ones won great wealth—the unfortunates often found disappointment at the cost of health or life. We don't believe that the odds will be any less against the average man in the present race for wealth, but—well, we must confess to a sneaking wish that we, too, were "headin' north."

## DYES AND NATIONAL SAFETY

UNTIL disarmament is an accomplished fact all around, it is only common sense to continue to look to our defenses. The importance in this respect of one of our industries in particular, our newly developed dye industry, can scarcely be too often or too strongly emphasized. Perhaps its importance cannot be more concisely suggested than by noting that one of our largest dye products, sulphur black—with which most of our stockings are colored—is, in its process of manufacture, the same, up to the last point, as picric acid—one of the two greatest shell fillers used in the war. It is to be remembered that the late war started as 100 per cent an explosive war, and ended as a 55 per cent chemical one. If Germany had fully realized the value of her first gas attacks, in 1915, and relentlessly pressed them home, it is thought probable that the defeat of the Allies might have occurred then and there. The Germans made all of their poison gases in their dye works without changing them in the least. When you consider that a dye works can be turned into an explosive and poison-gas factory overnight, the vital importance, in the event of another great war, of having maintained in peace times a full-grown dye industry becomes completely obvious. The mere existence of such an industry obviates the necessity of keeping on hand in normal times any very large supply of explosives or of keeping recruited any trained force of explosive experts or employees.

It is in regard to the maintenance of our new national dye industry, however, in spite of such steps as already have been taken to protect it that a serious menace threatens. It is true that our output of dyes in 1920 reached the impressive total of 88,000,000 pounds, which represented a 40 per cent increase over the previous year, and was 90 per cent in excess of prewar imports. Also, our manufacturers are at present able to supply from 90 to 95 per cent of the colors ordinarily used here in commercial work. Nevertheless, the significant fact obtrudes that our exports of dyes fell off 90 per cent during the first quarter of this year. This means nothing more nor less than that Germany has again struck her stride and is underselling us, as well as other countries in the foreign markets. And it is from Germany that the danger to the very existence of our dye industry threatens.

Of the many colors which a dye company makes, it is, generally speaking, from comparatively few of the colors that the profits are made. All that the Germans have to do, to undermine a dye company here, is to take some of their surplus of the particular colors which they know to be the basis of any given dye company's profit and sell 10,000 or 15,000 pounds of each of them here for less than our cost. There is no doubt that they could sell here profitably very cheaply, and could, by such a selective attack insistently kept up, put out even the greatest of our companies. With peace declared and no provision made to safeguard us during the probably protracted period of months that will elapse before a permanent tariff can be perfected, the destruction of our dye industry would begin. It is figured, indeed, that even with a 1,000 per cent duty, it would be for Germany a matter of only hundreds of thousands of dollars, not millions, to destroy any one of our largest concerns.

Our salvation, in the opinion of both dye manufacturers and consumers, lies in the institution of some importation-licensing bill similar to that with which the British government recently came to the aid of its own hard-pressed dye industry. Whatever is done, it seems clear that it should be done promptly, if our new national industry is to survive. To say nothing of the widespread industries here dependent upon dyes—industries involving an output of over $5,000,000,000 a year and the employment of over 2,000,000 workmen —we must realize that our very life as a nation may some day depend upon our having insured the existence of a great perfected American dye industry.

## UPROARIOUS ROADS

IN road building now, it is said, a new contingency may have to be taken into consideration. This contingency is the possible explosions of sections of the roads during a prolonged hot-weather spell. There is nothing new in the explosion of gas mains, but during the hot wave of June and July, 1921, which extended through a larger area and lasted longer without a decisive break in temperature than most heat waves, the explosion of road pavements from heat first attracted general attention. If there have been similar explosions in the past they have been so infrequent that they did not attract attention as those during this hot spell did.

On the Roosevelt Road, during the heat wave referred to, near Maywood, Illinois, a concrete section of the thoroughfare blew up in front of a road house, throwing a mass of fragments into the air and shaking the walls of the road house so badly that a number of patrons of the latter fled from it in a panic. About the same time there was an explosion of a road pavement between Seattle, Washington, and Tacoma, on the Des Moines road, a part of the "high line" route between the two places, which led to litigation for damages against the county. It is said by highway engineers that the long-continued heat and a lack of sufficient space between the joints of the pavement to provide for the expansion were one cause of the explosion near Maywood and probably other explosions of the kind. Besides, they said, the "creeping" of the heavy roadway caused the joints to fill. The result was that the roadway which was ten inches thick and very solid in its construction throughout, buckled at its lowest point and burst, tearing a hole nearly fifty feet square.

The part of the "high line" road near Seattle, where the explosion occurred, was built with a concrete base and a monolithic brick surface. It is reported that nearly thirty explosions took place in different parts of the entire highway during a period of unusually hot weather. In one road explosion a truck was thrown from the road into a ditch and the occupants of the truck more or less injured.

An explosion of the pavement of part of a street in Brooklyn, New York City, also took place. This explosion, it was reported, was not so severe as those near Maywood and Seattle.

It is now reported that highway engineers will probably take up the newly discovered peril for consideration. Such explosions have been of extremely rare occurrence, but experts say that as what has happened once may, under similar conditions, happen again there is a lesson in the road pavement explosions of 1921, which will have to be heeded. The matter is agitated by a number of road experts now.

## THE HIGH COST OF BEING A CROOK

THE announcement was made very recently at Washington on behalf of the internal revenue department that a large proportion of tax dodgers have lately paid very dearly for their illegal acts. Fraudulent returns of incomes which proved in the end costly to those making them, were found in different cities in every part of the United States.

It was stated by Commissioner of Internal Revenue Blair that approximately $20,000,000 was added to the government revenues during the fiscal year ending June 30, 1921, in additional taxes, penalties, and fines, the result of the discovery of fraudulent and false income-tax returns. This sum was collected, it was stated, by special agents of the internal revenue bureau from dishonest and unscrupulous people who were trying to defraud Uncle Sam.

A special force of attorneys and investigators, acting under the immediate supervision of the internal revenue department, discovered the plans of the evaders of income tax who were found out. Their investigations extended into all the sections of the United States. Heavy fines and jail sentences resulted in many cases and the government agents are still gathering evidence to be followed by more court trials.

Commissioner Blair said later that some of the culprits with a business training and experience have been very crude in their methods. The examiners found that in many cases taxpayers in business kept two sets of books, one accurately setting forth the status of the business and the other, kept for the purpose of defrauding the government, fraudulently setting forth an alleged income.

"It is safe to say," he continued, "that nine times out of ten the fraud is discovered within a short time after it is perpetrated. Since the last fiscal year many jail sentences ranging from sixty days to a year have been imposed in addition to fines and penalties." In one instance, he said, a prominent merchant in one of our larger cities owned and operated two stores. For three years he omitted entirely from his returns the income of one of the two stores. In another instance, he said, a prominent man received as salary one half of his income from a corporation of which he was president and of which he owned virtually all the stock. The corporation took the salary as a deduction and a necessary expense. The man himself, never thinking the corporation's returns would be checked up against his individual returns, omitted to report his salary.

One form of punishment for income-tax offenders provides for an assessment of fifty per cent of the additional tax discovered and another form is prosecution in the Federal courts, often resulting in fines up to $10,000 or one year's imprisonment or both.

## POPULAR TOPICS

THE world's cotton crop for the year 1920-21 is estimated at 19,595,000 five-hundred-pound bales, by the department of agriculture. The crop of the United States is placed at 13,366,000 bales; India, 2,976,000 bales; Egypt, 1,251,000 bales; China, 1,000,-000 bales; Russia, 180,000 bales; Brazil, 100.000 bales; Mexico, 165,000 bales; Peru, 157,-000 bales; all other countries, 400,000 bales.

FOR the first time in seven years the national mint in Washington is coining silver dollars. During the war 279,000,000 "cart wheels" were loaned to Great Britain, most of them being melted, cast into silver bars, and rushed to India to relieve Indian apprehension—fostered by German propaganda—as to the value of British-Indian currency. At present silver dollars are being coined at the rate of eight or ten million a month.

REPORTS from seventeen wheat-producing countries, including the United States, Canada, and India, place this year's acreage planted in wheat at 151,000,000 acres, as compared with 155,000,000 acres last year. It is expected that the United States will have 225,000,000 bushels of wheat available for export, a decrease of 13,000,000 bushels from last year.

STATISTICIANS of the Metropolitan Life Insurance Company figure that for the first half of 1921 the death rate among their more than thirteen million policyholders is 23 per cent less than for the corresponding period in 1920. The death rate for influenza was about one ninth of the 1920 period, and the pneumonia rate about one half. Deaths from tuberculosis decreased 19 per cent, and from heart disease, 9 per cent. There also were marked decreases in mortality from cerebral hemorrhage, Bright's disease, measles, and whooping cough. There was a decline of 21.2 per cent in mortality incident to childbirth, and a slight decrease in the accident rate.

APPLICATIONS for 222 water-power grants, which—if all are granted and the projects completed—will provide 15.000,000 horse power, are being investigated by the Federal power commission. The greatest of these projects is the proposed Green River development in Wyoming and Utah, which would provide 912.600 horse power. Other important proposed developments are in California, New York, Washington, and Alaska.

THE job of scrapping Germany's war machine is almost completed. So far there have been destroyed 4,770,000 rifles, 90,000 machine guns, 50.000 larger guns, 13,000 aeroplanes, and 23,000 aeroplane motors.

CANADA'S total trade with the United States for the fiscal year ended with May amounted to $1,337,696,226, an increase of $31,807,349 over the previous fiscal year. This is more than one half of Canada's total foreign trade, according to Canadian government statistics. Imports from the United States were $812,531,821, a decrease of

$21,000,000 from the previous year. Total imports were $1,162,160,362. Canada bought more from us than from any other country, and four times as much from us as from Great Britain. Canadian exports to the United States amounted to $525,164,405, an increase of $53,000,000 over the previous year. Total exports were $1,161,313,464. Uncle Sam was Canada's best customer.

MR. HUDSON MAXIM, the inventor of many of the materials and weapons of modern warfare, predicts that in the "next war" the aëroplane will be the most deadly weapon, and that its attacks will be aimed as much at civilians as at military forces. Among the cheering developments that Mr. Maxim predicts are the smothering of unfortified cities with poison gas, and the sowing by aëroplanes in enemy territory of rats, mice, fleas, and "cooties" infected with bubonic plague, typhus, and other deadly diseases. Seems to us that the best time to stop the "next war" is before it starts.

## PRECIOUS POTASH

THE story of potash is the story of monopoly and necessity, war and intrigue, hate and romance. A product of desolution, it is inevitably linked with the success and downfall of nations. And the end is not yet.

The family name is potassium, which is chemically called "K." In its most familiar form it is known as potash—literally ashes from under the pot—or more formally K20. Even the modern farmer often burns otherwise valueless vegetation so that the potash can be returned to the land lest starvation threaten the ground, and through the ground the products which it bears, and through these products the nation.

Other uses for potash, besides fertilizer, consume only about 10 per cent of the total. It is the cotton field, the acres of grain, the potato patch, the fruit grove, and the truck garden that must have 90 per cent of it. There are three elements that are necessary to grow the food of the world, and a goodly portion of the world's clothing as well; namely, nitrogen, potassium and phosphorus, better known as ammonia, potash, and phosphoric acid. Land that has lain fallow for a long period contains these elements in considerable quantity, but every crop that is raised on it and taken away takes some of these elements with it, until there are not enough left to raise healthy, vigorous plants.

The total cultivated area of Austria, Hungary, Belgium, France, Italy, and Germany is only about two thirds that of the United States, yet the production of wheat alone in these countries has been averaging one and one half times that of this country. Yet European land was being tilled when this country was unknown; its vital contents have been used up times without number. The difference is begotten of necessity. Europe has 120 persons to every square mile; the United States has 16. Every acre must work where nations are crowded into small spaces, and the land must be and is fed what it needs to make it work, just as we feed our horses, or fill our trucks with gas and oil.

Many years ago there was discovered in Germany—by accident—a supply of potash in commercially workable form which is estimated to be sufficient to last the entire world for centuries. This constituted a Heaven-sent monopoly which the German nation was not hesitant in exploiting. A German, Doctor Frank, it was who first discovered the action of potash on the soil. The organization of the potash *kartel,* or selling syndicate, is a marvel of compactness and completeness. Up to the time that the supply was cut off, ninety-nine per cent of the potash used in this country came from Germany.

Could the monopoly be broken? Potash is found in all briny water, as potash and salt are close associates, but the cost of extraction has made this method impractical. The increased demand on American soil, however, which had to feed not only its own people, but a large part of the rest of the world, necessitated the use of potash even at an increased price.

The ordinary consumption of potash in this country is around 250,000 tons annually. Up to 1915, all except a negligible amount was purchased through the German Kali Syndikat. On January 30, 1915, an embargo was placed on the importation of these salts from Germany. This left the United States with access to approximately 1 per cent of the potash requirements. In 1918, 54,803 tons of potash were produced in this country. While only about 20 per cent of previous requirements, the total is amazing when the difficulties are considered.

This potash came from many sources, of which natural brine was the largest. In the "great basin" of the United States, which comprises Nevada, and parts of Oregon, Utah, and California, there are found a number of inland lakes of salt water. In Nebraska there is a chain of similar lakes. One of the California lakes—Searles—and the chain of Nebraska swamps have yielded the great portion of the American production. Potash from this source constituted 73 per cent of the production in 1919, and 69 per cent in 1920. At Marysville, Utah, there is a deposit of alunite which contains potash. This was utilized, although it has not proved to be a very economical source. Other sources are kelp—or seaweed, waste molasses from the distilleries, cement dust, wool washings, wood ashes, and a few others. In 1918, kelp furnished 9 per cent of all the potash, but there was practically no work done in the kelp plants in 1919, or in 1920. This method of extraction was too expensive to meet competition which developed during those years and was abandoned. The peak of business was reached in 1918, and it is estimated that the capacity of the plants then established is at least 100,000 tons a year. About $40,000,000 was invested in creating this new American industry.

Meanwhile, the German government, operating through the *kartel,* or syndicate, was confident that the potash control was quite as effective a weapon as "Big Bertha." But the mines of Alsace, taken back by France, had available potash estimated at 300,000,000 tons pure K20, which could be taken out in the form of from 14 per cent to 15 per cent potash content. With a full working capacity of about 15,000 tons of crude salt per day, or over three quarters of a million tons of pure potash annually, it means that German control is broken.

When war came, the price sky-rocketed from around $40 up to $500 a ton. This was a bit too much for the farmer. We did without potash.

As most of the large fertilizer companies in the United States are owners—or part owners—of German potash mines, as soon as the armistice was signed Germany went after American business. The matter of securing such business from the syndicate members was not so difficult as lining up the independent importers. One proposition was to rebate 45 per cent on last season's purchases, which were at a high price—provided 80 per cent of the next five years' requirements be contracted for from the German Kali Syndikat, storage charges, freight, and insurance to be borne by the Syndikat. It is further provided that the price agreement ceases to be binding if a competitor offers potash at a lower price!

This plan leaves 20 per cent to be competed for, with 80 per cent to be sold by the German interests. Because of the slight interest shown in German potash by American buyers, the syndicate was greatly alarmed. The potash trade had been the bright particular star in the prewar exports and the Syndikat rushed a representative over here to find out why there was no clamoring for these salts.

The French mine management decided to go after business also, and opened offices in this country. In the meantime, with no protective tariff on potash, the American industry literally threw up its hands and said "it is no use," and, in most instances, closed up shop. When foreign prices stayed up, some of the plants—notably in the Nebraska fields—opened up again, but the total production dropped materially. The cost of production in the United States at best is around $2.00 a unit—twenty pounds. At $4 to $5 per unit, it was possible to make some profit, but when the price dropped to less than $2.50, most of the producing companies retired from the field, and production dropped 40 per cent within a year.

The question as to what is best to be done with the potash industry is still unanswered. It has been proved that the German supply is not absolutely essential so far as getting potash is concerned. As to getting it at a price that will recommend its use, that is a cat of another color. Whether it will be ultimately more beneficial to sacrifice the infant American industry on the pyre of price, or to tack a tariff on to the imported product that will put domestic and imported on the same basis is still a question. It looks as if some one will have to be "the goat" and the question is "who?"

# "First Down, Kentucky!"

## By Ralph D. Paine

*Author of "Eyes in the Boat, Number Six," "The Orphan and the Battle Wagon,' Etc.*

---

WHAT HAPPENED IN PREVIOUS CHAPTERS.

"Bo" McMurray had to fight three Texas policemen to do it, but he saw the football game between Fort Hawley and Waco high schools. His masterly exhibition of rough-and-tumble scrapping so strongly interested Fayette Caldwell, who had been a football star at little Centre College, back in Kentucky, that he took the pugnacious youth in hand. A great improvement in deportment resulted in Bo being invited to Nancy Overton's birthday party where, in Len Garretson, he met a worthy rival who unpacked a wicked punch on his jaw. The next summer, while Bo was working on a ranch near the Rio Grande, an adventure with Mexicans resulted in a firm friendship between the two boys. Len entered Fort Hawley high school that fall, and under the coaching of Caldwell, he and Bo battled through a successful football season together. "Red" Mercer, a local minister's son, was admitted to their partnership. Bo and Len went to Somersworth, Kentucky, for their last year of preparation for Centre College. They converted the town to the gospel of "Don't Be Mussed Up!" by establishing a clothes-pressing business to earn their way. Red Mercer joined them in time to offer words of wisdom that helped win Somersworth's big football game against unscrupulous Coach Dick Stenton's Buford team. Two new members, Duncan Fordney and "Al" Cottrell were admitted into their "just like that!" brotherhood. When the boys returned to Texas for the summer, Nancy took Bo down a peg for thinking too much about Bo McMurray—and he felt that he was a misunderstood man. Next fall he was the bright star of the Centre eleven, although there was friction between him and Coach Andy Swope. Just before the game against Kentucky State University, Dick Stenton, involved in a gambling plot to keep Bo away from his team, faked a telegram to him from Nancy, asking him to meet her in Cincinnati. Bo went, but the Garretson kid smelled a rat, found Stenton in Lexington, and forced the gamblers to give up their plan to keep Bo out of the big game.

---

*(A Five-Part Story—Part IV.)*

## CHAPTER XIV.

### FAITH AND WORKS PUT THE COLLEGE ON THE MAP.

WITH heart beating high, Bowman McMurray had hastened to keep the tryst in Meridian Street. The taxi whirled him into a residence quarter of Cincinnati, nothing pretentious, but quietly respectable. Old brick dwellings snuggled between more modern houses of stone with iron grille work and plate-glass windows. The street was clean and wide, with no great amount of traffic. It was a perfectly proper environment in which to find "an aunt or something" of Nancy Overton. The taxi discharged its ardent passenger in front of 1716, and Bowman ran up the stone steps. Adjusting his tie and giving his coat collar a jerk, he pressed the electric button.

After waiting several minutes, he rang again. The door swung open and an elderly colored man bowed respectfully.



"Mr. McMurray, please, to see Miss Overton," exclaimed the caller, presenting his card. The servitor bowed again and squinted at the card as he replied:

"Miss Overton wuz 'bliged to change her plans, suh. She lef' her regrets an' I'll say she wuz suttinly distu'bed at missin' you."

"W-what! She isn't here?" gasped Bowman. "But she wired me to come this afternoon."

"Yes, suh. I carried th' message to th' telegraph office mahself. She didn't have no time to head yo' off. 'Twa'n't more'n fifteen minutes since she flew f'um this yere house to ketch a train."

"Is her aunt at home, or whoever she is visiting?" asked Bowman.

"No, suh. Her a'nt, Miss—Miss Ellen Hotchkiss, done went to esco't th' young lady in a cab an' she lef' word she wouldn't be back till late."

"And Miss Overton left no explanation for me?"

"It wuz terrible sudden, Mistah McMurray. 'Pears like she had news f'um home. I never did see a beautiful young lady mo' distressed, suh, than she wuz at bustin' her date with you."

"Thank you," dolefully murmured the stricken suitor. "I reckon I'll get a letter from her."

"Of cou'se. Come to recollect, suh, them wuz her las' words. Good evenin'. Mebbe you kin find her at th' depot, if yo' hustle."

Bowman raced down the steps and vainly sought a taxi. The street cars were convenient, however, and he made a rapid journey to the Union Station. But there was no glimpse of fair-haired, gracious Nancy Overton. At the lunch counter Bowman revived himself with a substantial snack and sat himself down to await the departure of the Blue Grass Special at four o'clock for Danville. It had been a bewildering experience, enough to take ten years off a man's life, he said to himself. You simply could not tell what a woman was liable to do.

Anyhow, Nancy had been anxious to see him or she wouldn't have sent that telegram. It was a frightful disappointment, but he would take it smiling and show his sand. If Red Mercer dared to guy him about it there would be rough work in their old Kentucky home.

As soon as he was southward bound in the Blue Grass Special, the resiliant emotions of the McMurray began to recover from the shock. Although a pure woman's influence was a pearl of greatest price, perhaps it was just as well not to mix it with a football game. As things had turned out, this brief absence would cause no serious trouble with Andy Swope and they could manage to keep the peace through the Kentucky game of the morrow. As for their future relations, Bowman saw through a glass darkly. His proud spirit could not submit to the coach's dictum, "on probation."

It was only eight-thirty o'clock in the evening when he climbed the stairs to the rooms of The Lone Star Corporation. With his heels on the table and his shirt sleeves rolled up, Len Garretson was peacefully reading a French lesson. He laid the book down, waved a hand at the truant, and drawled:

"Fast work, boy. Looks like you proposed to her in a hurry and got thrown."

"I didn't see her," sheepishly confessed Bowman. "The trip was a false alarm. She had to cut her visit short. Something very urgent must have happened."

"Hard luck! Well, you have her on record. Here's your telegram to wear next your heart. She never was as anxious for me or Red."

"Where is foolish old Red?" was Bowman's anxious query. "I s'pose you showed him that telegram."

"Not me, Bo. And have you two fightin' duels all over the place? Anyway, a man's love affairs are private—'specially when they stack up as serious as this."

"Thank the Lord! He'd make a red-headed nuisance of himself, with his silly 'haw, haw.' Did you happen to discuss me at all?"

"Oh, I told him you had just wandered off for the day to forget Andy Swope."

"What did the team do this afternoon, Len? Light work, I s'pose."

"I wasn't there, Bo. Andy Swope said I could run over to Lexington for the afternoon. I just played around."

"In the train coming back I heard there was a good deal of betting on the game," said Bowman.

"There was some talk of offering two to one, or better, on Kentucky University in Lexington, but it took a sudden slump. Even money is the best they will do. Can we lick 'em, Bo?"

"I don't know whether we *can* or not, but I know we're going to," fairly shouted the McMurray.

"Gosh! I wish I could get more of that fighting spirit of yours," wistfully exclaimed the Garretson kid. "I reckon I am too mild and easy goin'."

Unaccustomed to large football crowds, Danville rubbed its eyes the next day when the automobiles came streaming in over every turnpike and one special train after another pulled into the station. It was an army with banners which swept the restaurants as bare as the cupboard of Old Mother Hubbard and bivouacked in picnic parties all over the campus. Little Centre College had suddenly become famous for something else than the "Ten governors, eight senators, fifty-two judges, an' so forth."

After dinner at noon, the three partners of The Lone Star Corporation sauntered from the eating club to their rooms for a quiet hour before reporting to Andy Swope at the gymnasium. They were not nervous, but rather subdued. They had not expected that thousands of people would come to see them play. It increased the sense of responsibility, of duty to the cause.

Young Garretson considered this an excellent time to darn a pair of socks. Fired by this example, McMurray decided to sew on a button or two. John Calvin Mercer, Jr., was the shameless idler who talked words to which nobody paid much attention. It was he who opened the door to a summons and gazed down at a dirty-faced urchin who wore a blue cap and shoved a yellow envelope at him.

"Telegram for you, Red. Sign the book. Say, will we trim 'em?"

"Certainly, Bud, if we can score often enough," replied John Calvin. He closed the door and stood reading the telegram which caused an expression of rapt self-satisfaction to appear on his freckled countenance. It was positively smug. After a leisurely pause, he condescended to read it aloud:

"St. Louis, November 12.
"Good luck and best wishes for victory to the three heroes from Texas. Nancy Overton."

"Haw, haw! Listen to that!" shouted the idiotic Mercer. "She mentioned you fellows so as not to hurt your feelings, but she sent it to *me*. Isn't that highly significant?"

"It signifies that for a man of intellect you have a soft spot in the top of your head," pleasantly suggested Garretson. "You have been pesterin' the poor girl with letters and she happened to know the address where we all lived. That's why."

Poor Bowman McMurray was staring at the obnoxious Mercer with a puzzled and hostile scrutiny.

"From St. Louis, did you say, Red?" he inquired. "When was it sent?"

"At nine-ten this morning," answered Mercer, "and addressed to *me*."

"We heard that. What kind of a football game can we play with a center rush that has gone feeble-minded? From St. Louis, this morning! Oh, yes—Nan Overton is in her last year at school there."

Garretson laid aside the sock and the darning cotton and grasped Red Mercer by the shoulders. Marching him to the door, he sternly exclaimed:

"The fresh air for yours. Go get those football shoes you left at the repair shop to have new cleats put on. Forgot all about it, didn't you?"

Still waving the telegram in the air and full of vain boastings, the minister's son galloped down the stairs. McMurray sighed forlornly and observed:

"She went right back to school from Cincinnati yesterday, Len. That explains part of it. Maybe she played hooky to visit her aunt, Miss Ellen Hotchkiss, at 1716 Meridian Street."

"Something like that, Bo, though Miss Overton isn't the kind to break out of the corral that way. However, back to school she trailed. But what's the matter with you? Aren't you glad she made the trip all safe and sound?"

"Positively yes. But here she goes and wires Red Mercer, and not a word of pity and regret, an' ever'thing, for me that was left flat on my back yesterday."

"She calls you a Texas hero, don't she? That's enough to make me fight a wolf barehanded and give him the first bite. Why, boy, if I don't hold myself back this afternoon, what this game'll need won't be a referee, but a grand jury."

"I was entitled to a personal message of sympathy," persisted the McMurray.

"It may come in a letter, special delivery, Bo," said Garretson, a little worried by his comrade's doleful frame of mind. "Girls like Nancy Overton are too refined and sensitive to tell their feelings to the Western Union. You mustn't be jealous of Red, the poor old jack rabbit."

"Jealous? May the best man win, God bless him!" declaimed Bowman with a gesture. He was returning to form. Presently they drifted into the street and waited for Mercer to join them. They were becoming restless, and it was time to walk across the campus to the gymnasium and the locker room in the basement. There they found the rest of the team and the substitutes. It was a very small force, perhaps sixteen men in all, not like the battalion which one of the great universities is able to hold in reserve for emergencies.

By a sort of unspoken impulse, the five freshmen of the team sat on a bench in a row after they had put on their football gear. They were brothers in the bonds, who held up their fingers, close together, and said, *"Just like this"*—McMurray and Garretson and Mercer from Texas, and Duncan Fordney and Alfred Cottrell, gentle, courageous sons of old Kentucky. The others were older in years, but not so wise in football.

In came the coach, Andy Swope, and some of them expected to hear him break out in rough and stinging exhortation. This was not at all his mood. Perceiving that two or three of the players appeared to be a bit frightened by his entrance, he stood silent for a moment in the crowded locker room. He had learned something from these boys of his, even while he taught them football. He was wondering just what to call this spirit which seemed different from anything he had found in other college elevens. Ah, he had it! Consecration was the word!

The discovery impelled him to reveal to them the ideals which had been kept untarnished through his battering career among men of all sorts and conditions. It was an unusual speech for a football coach, on the eve of an important contest, but Andy Swope doffed his cap and said:

"I say my prayers every night, boys, and I hope you haven't grown out of the habit. All decent men pray to God in one way or another, even if they don't put it in words. You know what it means when they call old Centre a Christian college. Nothing to be ashamed of in that, is there? Well, this is going to be the same kind of a football team. Not that we're going to pray God to help us win all the time, but we can pray to be kept from injury and bad temper and playing dirty ball. And such prayers will be answered."

"A few of us said a prayer before a high-school game in Somersworth," spoke up Bowman McMurray. "And we felt better for it. Faith and works, and God helps them that help themselves is good doctrine, Mr. Swope."

Red Mercer had beheld an unquenchable faith in God lived day after day by a mother and father who were steadfast amid many discouragements. Now that he was ready and waiting for the ordeal of battle, his nerves were tense with excitement and he cried:

"Darn it all, I'll pray if you will, Andy Swope."

Simple, sincere, and moving were the petitions uttered by the player and the coach as they knelt beside a bench in the locker room while the others bowed their heads. In later contests, on fields far from home, they were to be called, and sometimes jeeringly, "the praying Kentucky colonels," but it is not in the record that they were any the worse for it, nor were the foemen heard to refer to them as mollycoddles. It became a custom, a ritual, to pray for strength and patience and forbearance that, win or lose, the shield should not be tarnished.

The coaches at Kentucky University had made themselves familiar with the style of football taught by Fayette Caldwell and Andy Swope. They came to Danville with a heavy team which was also fast, intelligent, and aggressive. And a moral factor in their favor was the string of six annual victories in succession. A thousand undergraduates had come from Lexington to display their allegiance by means of those strange and frenzied war cries which are known as college cheers. In their vocabulary there was no such word as defeat.

Andy Swope followed his team out of the gymnasium and joined the group of substitutes at the edge of the field. The president of the college passed along and stopped to shake hands.

"What is your honest opinion, Andy?" said he. "Is it more than a fighting chance?"

"Better than that, sir, barring accidents. We can't afford to have anybody crippled. If you will be kind enough to round up two or three hundred more students next year, my hair won't turn gray nearly so fast."

"I stand rebuked. Half my time is spent in making speeches all over Kentucky to boost Centre College, but I hereby resign that task to you."

"Don't josh me, sir," replied the coach. "Just before a game kicks off, I'm the man that invented melancholia."

"What about McMurray? I hear you have found him a bit difficult. Is it temperament or too much notoriety?"

"Watch him to-day and you'll understand. And can you blame him? Just listen to that!"

A large part of the crowd was massed on the long slope which overlooked the field. Presumably the partisans of little Centre College would be a minority, but the fact that this was a struggle against odds won the favor of the populace. Amid the noisy applause could be heard shouts of:

"Oh, you Bo McMurray! How many touchdowns?"

"Crack 'em wide open, you Texas mustang!"

"Bo is the boy! They can't stop him!"

"A long yell for McMurray! Wow! Wow! Wow!"

Now even his best friends were not always able to p ognosticate the peerless McMurray. As for Andy Swope, he had not yet plumbed the depths at all. While the rival elevens tossed the ball about and waited in leash for the officials to finish the last-minute conference, Bowman squatted on his heels and plucked tufts of grass. He had thought of something and desired to be undisturbed. His gaze followed the sturdy figure of the captain of the team, Perley Kemp. Here was a splendid man who had played four years for Centre College, and this was the last big game of his career. There had been precious little reward or recognition for all his unselfish, devoted labor.

During this sensational season he had been eclipsed by the freshmen on his team. People didn't really appreciate how good he was, reflected Bowman, as a sandy, reliable old half back. Now if he could make the winning touchdown in this Kentucky game, it would be poetic justice and so on, and think what it would mean to his wife and children as soon as he had any! It made the McMurray feel so noble and happy that he forgot to be nervous.

It was Perley Kemp himself who yelled to Bowman to come out of his trance and line up for the kick-off. Instantly the idealist from Texas was the indomitable, quick-witted quarter back, keyed to play football with heart and soul and body. Red Mercer lifted the ball high and far with that ponderous but accurate foot of his, and the game was on. Kentucky promptly moved against the enemy with an efficiency which was disconcerting. Forward passes, deceptive shifts, plunges straight ahead, were executed with dazzling precision. But as soon as the Centre College players perceived that the attack was fashioned very much like their own offensive, they began to hamper and check it.

In first-class football there is a sense of divination, almost uncanny, which anticipates and frustrates the opponents' intentions. This was Bowman McMurray's peculiar gift, and time and again his warning shout told his comrades where to be on guard. They halted the high-geared Kentucky machine and, in turn, endeavored to set in motion their own perfected advance. It gained ground, but not steadily. Forward passes were hurled with the accuracy of a baseball, but the fleet-footed men from Lexington were not often tricked. They swooped at the runner before he could get into his stride and spilled him violently. McMurray was thwarted whenever he attempted to dodge and double clear of the last line of defense.

In this deadlock there recurred to him his noble inspiration concerning Captain Perley Kemp. It seemed rather ridiculous now. Conferring winning touchdowns as a reward of merit promised to be difficult if not impossible. However, sentimental obligations were always binding in the sight of Bowman McMurray, and he said to Red Mercer during a breathless interval:

"Pass it around that good old Perley is the boy to score. He deserves it, and the Lord knows we need it. Whirl in and jam him through somehow. This idea will give 'em all an extra punch."

"Yes, but the best he can do is buck the line for short gains, Bo, and that'll never save this football game. We're sure to lose the ball on downs."

"You mind me, Red, and do unto others. What do you think you said your prayers for, anyhow?"

In this worthy impulse there was concealed a certain strategy of which not even Bowman himself was aware. Physically, Perley Kemp was as hard as a rock and could stand a vast amount of punishment. In the open, varied style of play, however, he had been used much less than McMurray or Garretson or Gentry, the other half back. Human pile drivers were no longer in vogue. In this instance, as soon as the word went round that Perley was to bear the brunt of the attack, the team closed in for formation of a more old-fashioned kind.

Perhaps Perley grasped the fact that this was his great and farewell appearance, and there was a terrific stimulus in the realization that his comrades were relying on him when all else had failed. At any rate, he smote the line again and again, and when the scrimmage pulled itself apart he had plunged forward three and four and five yards. At the verdict of "first down," McMurray decided to try the slow but resistless Perley Kemp again.

The team from Lexington was of a perplexed, uncertain mind. They had not been drilled to expect just this kind of an onslaught from the nimble and shifty Centre

College eleven. Possibly it masked some new, unforeseen manifestation of Andy Swope's genius that was designed to catch them napping. And it was odd to hear the fierce yelps of approval which greeted McMurray's cries of "Once more for Perley's party, boys! Go get him a present. He wants that touchdown!"

Perley's grateful smile was spoiled by a swollen lip, but he expressed his feelings by hurling himself between guard and tackle for five yards more. As he fell, with two or three men on his back, the ball flew out of his arms. It bounded crazily as Bowman McMurray shot past the prostrate Perley Kemp. Not for him the safe and stupid axiom of falling on the ball in such a moment as this. Andy Swope had discarded it as obsolete. His black hair flying, Bowman scooped up the ball on the wing and scudded straight toward the goal posts, forty-odd yards distant. It was almost a clear field, for the Kentucky team had been playing well in to hold the dangerous onsets of Perley Kemp.

The throng of spectators roared delirious delight. This was what they had come to see. This was the McMurray whose fame had spread beyond the Blue Grass. Nothing could prevent those stout legs of his from carrying him to a sensational touchdown. He was only a few yards from his destination when the uproar was suddenly hushed. The multitude was affected with horror. McMurray, the sure-footed and swift, had stumbled. He failed to recover himself, tripped again, and fell headlong. Before he could scramble to his knees, a brawny Kentucky man was upon his back and he was pinned to the turf, still clutching the ball.

No more than four yards from the goal line! It was heartbreaking, but his courage was unshaken, and when his companions came pounding along to line up for the scrimmage, he slapped Perley Kemp on the back and confided in his ear:

"Never ask me what I stumbled over. You just take that ball and go to it."

It was to be expected that in such a crisis as this McMurray would endeavor to put the ball across himself. Kentucky was wary of one of those daring end runs of his. The Centre team feinted as though to protect such a maneuver, but Captain Perley Kemp snatched the ball from the quarter back's deft hands and was fairly lifted and thrown bodily into the hole that Red Mercer opened for him. Then it looked as though both teams were heaped on top of him. McMurray wriggled out from under and behaved like a howling dervish. The crowd accepted the pantomime as conveying glad tidings. Captain Perley Kemp had scored a touchdown for Centre College.

For once Len Garretson failed to kick the goal and a tally of 6—0 was the narrowest kind of a margin by which to win a victory. This, however, was how it stood when the game was ended. Kentucky University was skilled and valiant, but there was lacking that slight element of superiority which might have changed the verdict. If McMurray had not snatched the ball on a fumble, if Kentucky had not been penalized, if other things had been just a little bit different——

But such is the fortune of war, and these were splendid young sportsmen from Lexington, who offered no excuses and stood with their heads together and lustily cheered Centre College and Bo McMurray and Captain Perley Kemp.

The victors fought their way to the gymnasium, after being turned upside down upon the shoulders of their vociferous friends, and before Andy Swope could join them, Bowman hastily dragged Perley Kemp into a corner and solemnly exclaimed:

"Give me your sacred word of honor, old man, that you will never breathe what I said about stumbling. I mentioned it so as to put the pep into you for that last play."

"You did actually trip yourself on purpose, Bo? To give me the chance to make the touchdown? It was mighty fine of you, but what a risk you took!"

"First down, and only four yards to make? I knew you could do it, Perley. But listen, if Andy Swope suspected it, he would——"

Bowman moved away with an air of conscious innocence. The coach was hurrying in to congratulate his boys. He halted and glanced very keenly, first at Perley Kemp and then at Bowman, whom he detained by holding his arm.

"Great work, McMurray! We had the edge on them by just about one touchdown, and the boys delivered it. You showed good judgment in using Perley Kemp so hard, although it did look foolish to me. The change of pace had Kentucky guessing."

"I figured it was worth trying," replied

Bowman, with a certain caution. Words of praise were pleasant, but the eye of the coach bored like a gimlet.

"Funny how you happened to fall down with nothing to trip over," said Andy Swope. "I never saw you do that before. A dry field and smooth turf in front of the goal posts. I walked over to look at it just now."

"I was going so fast that I ran myself off my feet," ingenuously explained Bowman. "Lucky it didn't happen any sooner. With only four yards to go, I didn't spill the beans. Fine, wasn't it, that old Perley was the lad to put it across?"

"Giving the ball to Perley to score was a foxy play, and it worked," admitted Andy Swope. "They were afraid of *you,* McMurray. But let me tell you one thing. If I felt sure of my suspicion I would——"

"What suspicion, Mr. Swope? Great Scott, are you and I always going to misunderstand each other?"

"Not if I once get your curves plotted," grimly exclaimed the coach.

"It's inconsid'rate to spoil a victory like that," protested the aggrieved McMurray.

"Did you intend to let Perley Kemp make that touchdown?" demanded the inquisitor. "You know exactly what I mean—when you tripped over yourself and did a fake tumble."

"Well, Mr. Swope, if you are always going to be accusin' me of something or other, I might as well resign from the team and get my education at some college that has a fair-minded coach."

"Don't talk bunk. You couldn't be driven away from Centre. But remember what I said. On probation, my boy! What would I do if I could cinch this little suspicion? I'd hang your hide on a fence."

"Honestly? Oh, I forgot to offer you my hearty congratulations on the game, Mr. Swope. The college is mighty fortunate in getting a coach like you. This is a great day for old Centre, and most of the credit belongs to you."

Bowman offered his hand, and Mr. Swope shook it in an absent manner. For a league umpire he appeared to lack decision. While he wondered what to say next, the beaming McMurray hastened to a locker room to rejoice with his weary comrades. Virtue was its own reward, and in sacrificing the chance to make the winning touchdown he had overcome his besetting sin.

A week later, the town and the college combined to honor the team with a banquet at the hotel. At the long table sat prominent citizens, members of the faculty, and representative undergraduates. The glee club sang between the speeches which began with the president of the college and finished with Bowman McMurray, who responded to the toast, "Why Is a Freshman?"

Listening to so much eloquence had exhilarated the young man. He was lifted above himself, and in a mood akin to tears. His eulogies embraced Centre College, the grand old State of Texas, and most fervidly of all, his companions of the football eleven. He seemed particularly anxious that the company should realize the sterling worth of Captain Perley Kemp.

"The man of the hour, that's what I should call this unfalterin' leader. Through clouds of discouragement he pursued the even tenor of his way year after year, when football at Centre was small potatoes an' few in a hill. Nothing showy about him, but built like a brick house to stand when the rains descend and the flood comes and the wicked flee to the tall timber. These are the men to tie up to and they have made Kentucky famous. On many a dark an' bloody ground you have seen Captain Perley Kemp plug ahead with the ball, and even if he was slow in starting and didn't gain much distance, a stout heart beat beneath that ragged jersey.

"Can you stop thrilling whenever you think of that last game, the climax of this hero's long career? When a bunglesome, left-footed quarter back named McMurray practically threw it away by falling on his face, an' Perley Kemp snatched an immortal touchdown from the very jaws of disaster? There is the test, gentlemen, when a man whirls his rope at opportunity, as my cow-punchin' friend Garretson would say, and throws and ties her as she streaks past him. Watch Perley Kemp in after life! Along with the senators, judges, vice presidents, and so on, it's the one best bet that you'll find the man who led Centre College to victory against the dangerous minions of Kentucky University."

As soon as the applause subsided, Andy Swope whispered to the Garretson kid, who sat beside him:

"On the level, does he believe himself when he talks that way?"

"Plain, sensible men like you and me, Andy, can't keep up with him. Sometimes

I wonder if he isn't afflicted with genius. You can't tell if a genius is coming or going."

## CHAPTER XV.

### A GREATER GAME THAN FOOTBALL.

Having done their duty by the football season, the freshmen from Texas proceeded to organize themselves for the rest of the college year. McMurray's informal eating club had become so popular that he moved it off the campus into larger and more convenient quarters and advertised for patronage. The response was prompt and enthusiastic. Quite unexpectedly the problem of self-support was solving itself. Red Mercer made himself so useful as cashier and expert accountant that he was made a partner, and so The Lone Star Corporation resumed business activity. Garretson helped during the rush hours, but refused any share in the profits. It was a social diversion, said he, and he liked to listen to so many kinds of foolish conversation.

In his relations with Bowman McMurray, one thing worried him a little. Of course, no letter had come from Nancy Overton to explain the broken engagement and sudden departure from Cincinnati. Bowman could endure no more bantering from John Calvin Mercer without losing his temper, and he felt too deeply hurt to parade the grievance to Len Garretson. Life was full of mysteries. He dismissed as impossible the idea of writing to ask Nancy to explain.

Garretson debated it with himself in his clear-headed fashion and remained convinced that his conduct had been correct. If these two young people should ever have any serious intentions, a misunderstanding like this could not block the course of true love. It would give them something interesting to wrangle about the next time they met. To reveal the whole story to Bowman might have consequences much more serious. He was a tempestuous and impulsive young man when provoked too far, and he had detested Mr. Richard Stenton of Buford ever since that high-school game in Somersworth. It was easy to imagine that heaping this fresh fuel on the flame might cause the McMurray to seek Mr. Stenton and inflict violent punishment.

Bowman and John Calvin Mercer tarried in Danville during the Christmas vacation. It was a costly journey to Fort Hawley, and they had ambitious plans of increasing the equipment of The Lone Star Restaurant. They were therefore denied the precious privilege of beholding Miss Nancy Overton. Red fumed and sighed and talked about it, but Bowman kept his own thoughts locked within his manly breast.

When the springtime came to the campus—this was in the fateful year of 1917—all the vital and absorbing interests, athletics, fraternities, girls, scholarship marks, were swept aside like leaves in a gale of wind. War was a game ever so much greater than them all. Those older buildings of Centre College had known it once before, and intimately, when classrooms and halls had been filled with sick and wounded Confederate soldiers. But even then the college had not closed its doors to students, and so now the president told the boys in chapel that it was their duty to continue their education until the country summoned them. He wisely persuaded most of the younger lads to finish the college year in June and then to undertake such training as should make them useful to the armed forces of the United States in the war against Germany.

The advice of the patriotic president failed to appeal to three freshmen who hailed from Texas. They held a council of war in their rooms, not long after the momentous tidings had aroused the campus. Bowman McMurray strode the floor and proclaimed what his own intentions were.

"I don't b'lieve in waiting to be educated some more. How about you, Len, old man? We learned a whole lot of things before we came to college, and here's a chance to use 'em. And maybe this war won't sit around and wait for us. Then wouldn't you be sorry? Old Colonel Harris Shelby was chasin' Yankees with a cavalry saber when he was younger than we are."

"Who are you arguing with? Yourself?" inquired the Garretson kid who had stretched himself upon the sofa with his hands under his head. "How do you get to this war, Bo? And when do we start? Early to-morrow suits me. What about Red? Will we let him go?"

"I don't think so," answered McMurray, before John Calvin Mercer could voice his own heated opinion. "The men with brains ought not to be killed off early in a big war like this. Red would make a corking artillery officer, for instance. It takes all kinds of mathematics to aim at something that isn't there and hit it where you can't see it. And, besides, Red has led a sheltered life. He ought not to go surgin' out to kill Germans on the impulse of the moment like us hard cases."

"Hush your noise," advised John Calvin. "If you had any brains you would do the only sensible thing—keep your shirt on and try to get into some kind of an officers' training course. There may be something of the kind here at Centre College. If we are too young for that, we'll peg right along at our studies, as Prexy says. This is not a freshman's war, Bo."

"You are a brave, red-headed man with big feet," replied McMurray, "but I know two freshmen you can't lay down the law to. The Lone Star Restaurant is yours till I come back. Len will have 'em out of the trenches by Christmas. I'm going to join the navy."

"What for?" cried Garretson. "Just because you can swim like a fish? Here's where we part company. That time I was in the Texas navy on the Rio Grande was the last cruise for old man Garretson's youngest boy!"

"Len, this is awful! The navy is my natural choice. It always was. The Lone Star Corporation is shot all to pieces."

"We can breeze up to Cincinnati together, anyhow. War busts a lot of family relations. I'm all set to enlist in the regulars. Those birds will be shoved across to France pretty pronto."

John Calvin Mercer interposed to say:

"It's ridiculous for you two to separate. Why don't you toss up for it?"

"If Len wasn't so stubborn, he would come along with me."

"You can't reason with Bo. He's a mule."

As football had gripped them, so now it was war. The spirit was much the same—high purpose and devotion to a cause and the sense of a great adventure. The only regret was in parting with each other; but prolonged discussion found their paths still divergent. The call of the sea and the magic of ships lured the McMurray in whose soul was the true romance, while you would expect to find a Garretson nowhere else than in the ranks of the regular infantry with rifle and cartridge belt, and the long, long trail ahead. With the fighting line, with the men who did the dirty work, this was his instinctive choice.

They made no round of campus farewells but slipped away in the early morning and only Red Mercer was at the station to see them off. He was also certain that his decision was right, but this made it none the easier and a tear rolled down his freckled cheek as he clasped the hands of his comrades twain. Easily affected, Bowman winked rapidly and wiped his eyes. Breaking away from good old Red was sad business. It might be for a long time, and perhaps never again could they hold up three fingers, close together, and smile at each other and say, *"Just like this!"*

"Darn it all, I'll pray for you," exclaimed John Calvin.

"I b'lieve you will," replied Bowman. "And I reckon we may need it more than we did in football. Regards to Andy Swope. He is morbidly suspicious of me, but perhaps he will be sorry."

"No motion-picture stuff," severely put in the Garretson kid. "So long, Red Don't let 'em short-change you in the restaurant, and remember us to all the folks in Fort Hawley."

"And you are starting off for war without saying farewell to Miss Overton?"

"Ah, yes," sighed Bowman. "What a chance for the big scene!"

The train moved and the two volunteers jumped to swing aboard the steps of the last car. They looked back and had a final glimpse of John Calvin Mercer, Jr., who walked away with his chin down and his hands behind him as his reverend sire was wont to do when his mind was heavy laden. They had sent telegrams to their own parents, but it had not occurred to them to ask permission. The Lone Star Corporation was in the habit of acting independently. From the Garretson ranch the old Texas Ranger had wired back:

*"That's the boy. You beat your brothers to it."*

The service was ready with a warm welcome for two such recruits as these. The young lieutenant of the navy who promptly enrolled McMurray displayed a cordial interest in him.

"I saw you play last fall, Bo," said he. "I was raised in old Kentucky. If you can be sent East for training, you will stand a better chance of shoving off in a ship bound overseas. I will do what I can for you."

This was hopeful, and Garretson also had good tidings to report. He was to be sent to an infantry outfit of Pershing's old division which had guarded the Texas border, and the rumor was that these would be among the first troops sent to France. A day or two together in Cincinnati and the partners bade each other good-by. Bowman had one regret which he could not help mentioning.

"You saved my life one time, Len, and if we could serve together I might have a chance to save yours. Of course that would be a delightful coincidence. But it cannot be."

"Thank God for that. Take care of yourself, Bo. See you in Danville, as soon as we get done with this little old war."

## CHAPTER XVI.

### MIKE BRENNAN PASSES IT ALONG.

And now the navy undertook the education of Bowman McMurray. He was lucky enough to be sent across in a destroyer of the first division which based on Queenstown and cruised far offshore to meet the convoys and guard them in to France. Blow high, blow low, they played the game while the foaming seas swept their decks and the crews hung on by the eyelids.

Seaman McMurray made many friends, but the one he liked best of all was old enough to be his grandfather, Chief Quartermaster Michael Brennan. Gray as a badger he was, and the red hash bars or enlistment stripes ran clear to his elbow, but the bluejacket rash enough to call him a condemned old relic had to be quick with his hands.

For the task of whipping flighty young gobs into shape, of teaching them the honor of their calling, such a chief petty officer as Mike Brennan was worth his weight in gold. He had earned retirement, but there was no driving him out of the service. He was a destroyer man and naught else, said he, and where was there any one that had seen him crack?

A childless man without home ties was this barnacle of a chief quartermaster, and his allegiance was therefore undivided. Now and then there had come under his eye some lad with an uncommon aptitude for the service and a realization of its ideals. To such a bluejacket old Mike was a father as well as a taskmaster, and the word went round that he had adopted another one. It was deeper than personal fondness, a desire to transmit his own wisdom and devotion and keep the torch alight after he was gone.

Of all the youngsters who had won Mike Brennan's paternal solicitude, there had never been one so promising, in his opinion, as the eager, intrepid McMurray. Month after month they cruised together without mishap until the destroyer was hit by a hostile torpedo and sank in a vast bubble of steam and smoke. Adrift on a bit of wreckage, Bowman and the chief quartermaster were among the survivors picked up and carried into Queenstown.

A fortnight after the disaster, McMurray was navigating the corridor of the naval hospital and the deep gash in his foot was mending nicely. Mike Brennan's broken ribs were knitting and they were an unruly pair of patients who fretted to get to sea again. But the shock and exposure had sapped their vitality, and they learned what it was to have nerves.

Into Queenstown harbor came a naval-supply ship homeward bound from Brest. Tactfully a surgeon broke the news to Mike Brennan.

"You'll have to take easier duty, if you insist on active service. Why not go back in this supply ship and report to the home fleet? I'll send McMurray along with you."

"I'm not the man I was," sighed Mike. "'Tis a harrd service here with th' flotilla."

"You mean that I can join the home fleet, too?" asked Bowman.

"Certainly. That foot of yours is healing beautifully. Don't feel unhappy at leaving the flotilla. We are sending lads back all the time, after six months of it. And they haven't been blown up and wounded. A man can stand only so much of this game."

"Carry on, me boy," shouted brave old Mike Brennan. "They might have booted us out of th' service for disability."

The supply ship was as comfortable as a passenger steamer. There was soothing relaxation in the freedom from routine watches, in eating meals served without haste, in sleeping without being bucked out of a bunk.

A few days at sea and McMurray was very much like himself. His injured foot had ceased to pain him, and he walked the deck without discomfort. There was a slight imperfection in his gait; it could scarcely be called a limp, but he assumed that it would gradually disappear. When he stepped forward it seemed as though his foot let him down a trifle. He noticed it when he moved rapidly.

The ship was nearing the end of the voyage when he felt the first touch of anxiety concerning this curious little weakness, if it could be called such. He mentioned it to the ship's surgeon who made a careful examination.

"I noticed it several days ago," said the surgeon, "but I imagine it will cause you no serious trouble. Have you tried to run?"

"Yes, and I can't start and turn the way I used to. I'm a football player."

"Whew, that's unfortunate. It's your great toe—it should operate like a powerful spring every time you step. The tendon which controls it may have been cut or lacerated. As I say, it will never cripple you seriously, but——"

"But it will spoil me for fast work in football?" cried Bowman.

"Well, I am afraid you can't sprint and dodge very effectively. Where did you play?"

"Centre College, Kentucky," proudly answered McMurray.

"Never heard of it," said the surgeon, who was not at all athletic. For a dozen years he had led a drudging existence in the regular service, and all bluejackets looked alike to him. His interest in this one was more professional than personal.

"Never mind about Centre College, then," said Bowman who minded very much indeed. "Will this flat wheel of mine, the unlucky big toe, I mean, bar me from the service?"

"Oh, no. You are competent to perform duty, and there is a certain sympathy for a man wounded in action."

"Thank you, sir," steadily replied Quartermaster McMurray as he saluted and went on deck. He avoided Mike Brennan and wandered forward to fight it out with himself. The world had tumbled about his ears. He had expected to return to college some day and pick up his life where he had left it. Again and again, while aboard the destroyer, he had forgotten the hardships in bright pictures of that reunion on the campus, Len Garretson strolling in from France, Red Mercer probably a snappy artillery lieutenant or something, Duncan Fordney and Alfred Cottrell and Gentry and big Murdock all there together to build up the football team anew.

Bo McMurray could not imagine himself returning to college and unable to play football. He brooded alone until Mike Brennan noticed his altered demeanor and was solicitous to find out what ailed the boy. There was no resisting the fatherly persuasions, and Bowman was moved to confide in him. The old man listened attentively, and few men could have understood it so well.

"This football was to you, Bowman, what the service has been to me," said he. "Colleges is strange waters to me, but I have liked the lads that came rushin' into this war. An' no doubt I wud not ha' been drawn to you so strong but for what this football had already done to make a man of ye. 'Tis a game just to play at—an' yet the spirit is there to pass along."

"That is what I hoped to do, Mike, although I set a pretty bad example. I didn't know any better. What I wanted to do when I went back was to redeem myself. You know what I mean. I've learned to carry on."

"Ye can go back, me boy, but it will make you terrible unhappy, won't it? To stand an' look on is th' saddest thing that can come to a strong man."

"I ought not to quit college," exclaimed Bowman, "but you know how you would feel if you were chucked out of the service."

"Why don't you stay in th' service?" earnestly suggested Mike Brennan. "I have had it on me mind, but you were tied hard an' fast to your college. An officer an' a gintleman in the United States navy need sidestep for no man on God's world, Bowman."

"Right-o, Mike, and I am going to think it over."

Before the ship reached Hampton Roads, Bowman McMurray wrote several long letters and one of them was to Nancy Overton. What he said to her was this:

DEAR NAN: I have waited for more than a year for some word from you, because an explanation was coming to me. It was about your telegram from Cincinnati and when I got there you had suddenly sailed under sealed orders. It was the most mysterious thing in my whole career and it hurt my feelings terrifically. But I have decided to keep in mind what you told me years ago, that women are complex and so on, and chart my course accordingly. This is one reason why I write you now. People can't afford to have private differences that hold them apart in these critical times that try men's souls. If our country doesn't pull together, for Heaven's sake, what will become of it?

What really made us misunderstand each other all through our youth, Nan, was your strange dislike of football. You raised the issue 'way back yonder when I had to lay aboard the three cops and you did Red Cross work on me. In spite of your curious antipathy for the finest game in the world, it was then and there that I fell in love with you. Yes, this is the first love letter I ever wrote, and the first shall be last, probably. There were reasons why I decided to step into the background in favor of another. But he has never seemed to think very much of my act of sacrifice. And I should say that the claim is outlawed.

I shall never play football again, Nan. I happened to be in a destroyer which went to the bottom in six minutes and those who got away were in a good deal of a hurry. I hurt my foot in the excitement and it will always be just a little bit lame, not limpy enough to make me carry a list, but I will have to cut down my cruising speed. Now that it's all over, I do wish you could have seen me make one of my famous runs through a broken field for old Centre College. I was considered good. There is no harm in saying so, for I am a has-been. I shall probably stay in the navy. I have enjoyed the life and it has been quite exciting at times. There is every encouragement for a worthy fellow to wear sleeve stripes some day instead of hash bars. In short, to become an officer and gentleman.

Football no longer looms between us, Nan, so I speak frankly. Bo McMurray was rated a hard little customer in Fort Hawley, but he hitched his wagon to a star and he has been coming strong ever since. You were the star, using a figure of speech, and it means that you shone serene and lovely for me through all the clouds and fogs of misunderstanding and everything. I don't know that I should call this letter a proposal for the very idea might make you go up in the air. But a good woman should never feel indignant to learn that an honest man loves her beyond compare. Gone are the days when our hearts were young and gay, for war is very serious business, and we all have to get on with it. But in the meanwhile, by land and sea, I am your friend of boyhood, and present, and future servant in the bonds of true love,

BOWMAN MCMURRAY,
Quartermaster 2c., United States Navy.

The young man seemed happier after this dear task was finished, and Mike Brennan's spirits therefore rose like a barometer forecasting fair weather. They left the ship together at the Norfolk navy yard and were sent to the war base of the Atlantic fleet in Chesapeake Bay. There the mighty squadrons of battleships swung at anchor, gaining no glory, but schooling thousands of recruits to meet the needs of a vastly expanded naval force. It was Mike Brennan's desire to be assigned to a destroyer. The work would not be so wearing as in the war zone and nobody had the heart to deny his plea. The demand for seasoned chief petty officers was urgent.

It, therefore, befell that old Mike and Bowman McMurray were again in the kind of war vessel which they knew and to which they were loyally devoted. It was a humdrum life for a while, until the admiral of the fleet issued orders for a week's maneuvers at sea. Out past the Capes plowed the divisions of battleships, grim, enormous, while the seaplanes wheeled ahead, the submarines moved awash, and the destroyers and cruisers spread far in scouting formation.

At night the scores of ships were black shadows which showed no lights as they turned with faultless precision to the signals which sparked in the radio room. To the veterans of the war zone, these shrouded, unseen ships were a matter of course and they regarded the risk of collision with bland unconcern. The novices were uneasy. The commander of the *Pemberton,* destroyer in which served Mike Brennan and Bowman McMurray, was a competent officer, but he had not played the hazardous game overseas.

The admiral sat at a table in his great cabin with the chief of staff and covered several sheets of paper with penciled diagrams.

"About this Battle Order Number Four," said the chief of staff. "When those destroyers attack through the kind of smoke screen you expect to lay down——"

"Some of them won't like it," cheerfully interrupted the admiral. "It will be touch and go, by Jove! I see all that. But can you show me how to make an omelet without breaking eggs? The business of this fleet is to operate under the conditions of war."

It was on a windless day when the signal ran through the fleet to prepare to execute Battle Order Number Four. Line after line of fretful destroyers hung on the flanks of the fleet, flinging the seas from their sharp bows in white flashes of foam.

Soon the destroyers divided into two swiftly moving groups. One of these took stations to protect the battleships while the other made ready to drive home a concerted attack. Among these latter was the *Pemberton,* destroyer. It seemed odd to Mike Brennan, vigilant, impassive, as he stood beside the flag locker on the bridge, that the only men in the destroyer who had been through the punishing experience of the war zone were Bowman McMurray and himself. Bowman was at his elbow, ready for whatever might befall.

Until now the funnels of the destroyers

had been showing scarcely a trace of smoke as the draft roared from the oil-burning furnaces. Presently, however, the protective divisions of destroyers which herded the ponderous battleships began to belch huge clouds of black, greasy vapor. The volume and extent of it were amazing to behold.

The destroyers hid themselves behind the infernal curtain of their own creation and continued to spread it as they steered on prearranged courses. The battleships were emitting from their squat funnels vast torrents of this black vapor. It mingled with the screen laid by the destroyers and enveloped them all. The sea was obscured by this somber, stinking fog which was more opaque than night itself.

The commander of the *Pemberton* glanced at his wrist watch and then at the other waiting destroyers which drifted to left and right of him, keeping clear of the smoke screen. He turned to his dapper, youthful executive and Mike Brennan heard him say:

"Get set! We've got to run these courses to the second, and check the turns on the precise number of degrees, understand? I'll call the time and you watch the compass."

"Very well, sir. It is rather sporty."

"Sporty? Worse than that," growled the skipper. "If everything doesn't synchronize to a hair, somebody will be out of luck."

A gay bit of bunting climbed the flag hoist and the same signal fluttered from one destroyer after another. Like sprinters on the mark they broke forward to the slap of the sea against the thin steel plates and the hum of the whirling turbines. This division of destroyers was fast approaching the eddying, drifting black border of the smoke screen.

Before they plunged into it, the *Pemberton's* executive looked hard at the rosy young seaman who gripped the brass steering wheel. The lad had suddenly lost color. The sweat streamed from under his canvas hat. Instead of holding his gaze unswervingly on the compass card in the binnacle, he was peering at the black vapor into which the vessel was about to drive. It was a nightmare to him and the sense of his responsibility was an overwhelming burden.

The executive could read men and he had been trained to quick decisions. He turned to find another man to place at the wheel and his eye fell upon Mike Brennan, unperturbed, as calm and stable as the everlasting hills. A glimpse of him was comforting. Mike fathomed the executive's instant need and nodded to show that he comprehended. With a smile the old man laid a hand upon Bowman McMurray's shoulder and shoved him toward the wheel. Speech was unessential.

The executive dragged the panic-smitten young helmsman aside. No sooner had his tremulous fingers released the spokes than Bowman McMurray held them in his strong grasp. Fastened against a bit of board was a diagram of Battle Order Number Four, with the times, distances, and courses. Bowman's quick vision swept it and he caught the purpose of the maneuver. The executive watched him a moment and resumed his exacting duties.

The *Pemberton* shot into the smoke screen and it closed around her. At the proper instant she would make a turn of forty degrees, right, and hold this altered course until she had passed beyond the smoke screen. The other destroyers of the group, invisible to each other, were to execute this same turning movement simultaneously. Obviously the deck of one of these speeding, blindfolded destroyers was no place for a nervous man.

The commander of the *Pemberton* counted off the seconds and ascertained that the engines were turning up precisely the correct number of revolutions to maintain the standard speed. So far, so good! There was no leeway for faulty calculations or errors in handling. The destroyer that veered out of her course was likely to crash into another one.

Bowman McMurray saw the commander throw up his hand. The executive snapped out the order. Forty degrees, right, it was! The *Pemberton* swung sharply as she felt the thrust of her rudder. Just then there loomed in the veiling smoke the murky shape of another destroyer, so close that her number, 71, could be read in the tall, black figures on her bow. She yawed wildly and was moving into the course of the *Pemberton* as though the steering gear had jammed. Whatever the trouble, this menacing specter of a 71 had blundered out of her own path and collision was imminent. On the *Pemberton's* bridge the officers stood rigid a frozen instant and then the executive yelled:

"Hard left! No—hard right!"

Bowman McMurray heard this conflicting order but paid it no heed. He waited for the commander's word as the verdict to obey.

Over his shoulder he flashed a smile at Mike Brennan, whose gaze was proudly untroubled, conveying a confidence implicit and unshaken. Bowman steadied the wheel as he looked at the other destroyer which had no time to check headway to the drag of screws reversed.

The *Pemberton* was running her rightful course, true to a hair, as laid down in Battle Order Number Four. To change it was to throw the whole plan into confusion and endanger other destroyers obscured in this far-flung cloud of black vapor. And to endeavor to dodge collision, the instinctive thing to do, was to risk being rammed and sunk by this peril so close at hand.

The commander shouted:

"Steady as she goes! Damn it, don't shift that helm!"

Bowman had no thought of flinching. In his face glowed an intensity of purpose which had no room for fear or doubt. He held the *Pemberton* true and fair on her appointed course. The keen prow was aimed to strike the side of 71 far forward. The officers gripped the railing and tensely awaited a rending shock.

The impact was less violent than anticipated. It knocked men sprawling this way and that, but when they picked themselves up they saw the *Pemberton's* stem, moving with terrific momentum, shear like a knife through the fragile plates of the other destroyer. As the tortured frames flew apart, the effect was like a series of explosions. Fragments of steel were hurled across the *Pemberton's* deck, and the men dropped flat to dodge this deadly debris.

Bowman McMurray stood erect at the wheel because it was his duty to stand there. He gazed down at the shattered forward deck of 71 and perceived that the *Pemberton* was biting her way clean through it. A piece of wreckage smashed an oak stanchion on the bridge while the two ships hung interlocked and Mike Brennan leaped forward to stand in front of the man at the wheel. It was the instinct of parental protection which is stronger than the love of life. His boy was in danger and could not shield himself.

McMurray thrust out a hand to push Mike aside, but the old man was immovable. A ragged bit of steel flew like a projectile from the broken deck beams of 71. It struck Mike Brennan as he stood with arm half upraised as though to ward off the missiles from the helmsman. The arm dropped, mangled and crushed, and the chief quartermaster of the *Pemberton* staggered slowly across the bridge to lean against the rail. Then the *Pemberton* moved clear as the last rivets snapped, and Bowman McMurray muttered in accents of profound awe:

"We cut old 71 in two, for'ard, just like a piece of cheese, and we are still on our way. Could you beat it?"

They watched the crippled destroyer vanish in the smoke. She lacked a bow but was still afloat.

"She will blow her siren if she needs assistance in a hurry," said the commander of the *Pemberton,* his manner slightly dazed. "What sort of shape are we in, I wonder?"

"Crumpled up like an old hat to the first bulkhead, but able to complete Battle Order Number Four," cheerfully sang out the executive, who had been forward to investigate.

And now they discovered Chief Quartermaster Michael Brennan, who had quietly sagged to the deck which was red with his own blood. Bowman McMurray turned his head and perceived that the old man was wounded and perhaps dying. The lad fought his emotions under and resumed his attentive study of the compass card. And this was as Mike would have had it. They carried the chief quartermaster below and put him in the tiny room which served as a hospital. He was conscious but very weak as he murmured to the surgeon:

"The boy was there, doc! What did I tell ye?"

Then the chief quartermaster appeared to slumber while the *Pemberton* steered out of the smoke screen and into the blessed sunlight of the tranquil sea.

"Mike's arm will have to come off," said the surgeon to the commander. "I wish I could transfer him to the hospital ship for the operation. He would have a better chance for his life."

"I will signal at once," replied the skipper.

Before the signal was sent, a radio message came from the flagship in response to the brief report of the collision. It was signed by the commander in chief himself, and ran:

*Well done, Pemberton. Bring Mike Brennan aboard if he can be moved.*

The chief quartermaster came to himself in the spacious, immaculate hospital of the mighty superdreadnaught which flew the four-starred pennant. His misty gaze first descried the figure of Bowman McMurray who sat beside the bed, and as in a very pleasant dream he heard the boy say:

"It was *you* that did it all; but, oh, Mike, I'm not worth the price you paid."

"An excellent bargain, me son, with value received," was the faintly uttered verdict.

The admiral deferred his visit until the patient had gained a little strength. To see them together was to note a certain resemblance of aspect, far divergent though their careers had been. It was the stamp of the navy, of character so deeply graven that its marks were manifest.

"What are your findings, sorr, touchin' on th' *Pemberton's* collision?" anxiously inquired the chief quartermaster.

"She was handled in a brilliant and satisfactory manner and is to be commended instead of blamed," said the admiral, who added, with a chuckle, "You can't make an omelet without breaking eggs, Mike, and this was a bully good one. The damage? Oh, nobody seriously hurt in 71. You are the only damage that amounts to a tinker's dam."

"And the boy has your approval, sorr, for standin' the gaff? There's old hands that would ha' ducked it."

"He was splendid, and your skipper gives him the credit he deserves."

"Thank you kindly, sorr. I gave him me good right arm, but 'twas a small loss."

"Ah, Mike Brennan, you have given him a good deal more than that. This means the end of your active service, but you will still live and move in the navy. It can't forget you."

"I am passin' it along. That is what I hoped to do," said the chief quartermaster.

## CHAPTER XVII.

### IT IS HER DUTY TO AID A WORTHY YOUNG FELLOW.

At eighteen, Nancy Overton was unspoiled after a three years' term of exile in a fashionable school which had a waiting list and cultivated the simple life. This was a pose, borrowed from the effete East, and was presumed to acquaint the daughters of the rich with the blessings of democracy and frugality as practiced by the common people. Nancy Overton thought it amusingly snobbish to try to imitate "plain folks," just as she had refused to be seriously impressed by her mother's ambition to create a smart set in Fort Hawley. A clear-eyed child with a sense of humor is apt to be an inconvenience in many a modern household.

Barring this handicap, there was much to be said in Nancy's favor. Straight and supple, there was no trace of the awkward age in her easy, unhurried motions. She had the vigor of a healthy body and mind but disliked wasteful exertion. Hers was a tranquil, but not an indolent temperament. It was one of the charms which made her seem a trifle old-fashioned, almost obsolete. The girls of her acquaintance were mostly nerves and restless yearnings and incessant chatter.

There was also a touch of quaintness in the manner of parting the heavy golden hair and brushing it smoothly back to the thick coil of braids. The blue of her eyes had deepened a little and their gaze was always frank and often mirthful. Her smile had this same quality, but a sensitive response to the pitiful things in life sometimes made it wistful. Nancy's friends in Fort Hawley were of all sorts and conditions, from childhood's playmates of the grammar-school lot to elderly negro hackmen who halted their bony steeds to tell her about their rheumatism or offer her a bunch of posies.

She had thought seriously of going to college, but the mention of it made poor mother wretchedly unhappy. Her one idea, the ruling passion, was that Nancy should be a belle. And while Nancy pondered the question and was reluctant to force the issue, the war altered her destiny among many million others. The Lord had given her something of her father's common sense and business ability, and it was not long before she was an efficient member of the Red Cross committee and a leading spirit in the dances and other entertainments devised for the hordes of homesick soldiers who strayed in from the nearest Texas camps and cantonments.

The time came, however, when her own affairs required attention, even if it did mean neglecting the war. Into the pocket of her trim khaki skirt she tucked a letter which was reread again and again as she drove about in her own car, between offices and headquarters and workrooms. It was a letter which seemed the more difficult to answer, the longer she delayed. And the fact that Quartermaster Bowman McMurray, U. S. N., had given no clew to his whereabouts, made the problem even more abstruse.

As a love letter, which it professed to be, Nancy was puzzled to define it as a proposal, a confession, or a farewell. The McMurray possessed shining virtues, but he was not always logical. One thing Nancy was ready to concede, and that was, "that she should never feel indignant to learn that an honest man loved her beyond compare."

Viewing the document as a love letter, Nancy decided to defer action, although she could not help being moved to smiles and tears. What stirred her sympathy to the depths was his disclosure that he would always "be a little bit lame" and could never play football again. Just a few words, with none of Bowman's fatal fondness for melodrama in big moments, but the very repression increased the pathos of it. Nancy was unreconciled. It haunted her days and nights until she sought a confidante.

This friend was Sallie Caldwell. Fayette was flying a fighting plane somewhere in France. Fayette's wife seemed no older. She was still a girl, slim and brown and vivacious. Nancy regarded her as an adopted sister and was unconscious of the disparity of half a dozen years.

Having betaken herself to Sallie's, the pair of them found a seat in the shade of a magnolia in the war garden back of the house, where Nancy fanned her flushed cheek with a big straw hat. Seizing the opportunity, her energetic offspring "Scooch" was about to quench his thirst with the Paris-green solution in the watering pot, but his mother rushed to the rescue and bore him kicking into the house. This tragedy averted and peace restored, the breathless Sallie exclaimed:

"I surely do miss Bo McMurray when it comes to taking care of that angel child. They were a born pair of buddies."

"Sallie, dear, I came on purpose to talk about Bowman," said Nancy, with her usual candor. She was seldom self-conscious. "Has he written you lately?"

"He wrote a long letter to Fayette, honey, and I read it before I forwarded it. He said he had been detached from overseas duty and would be somewhere on the Atlantic coast. I'm awfully worried about that boy."

"So am I," agreed Nancy. "He didn't even tell me that much. His letter was postmarked Norfolk, but I couldn't guess anything from that. What did he say about being lame?"

"Something went wrong with a tendon in his foot. It was badly gashed, but healed nicely. And then he discovered this permanent trouble."

Nancy's eyes were misty, but there was a new hope in her voice as she exclaimed:

"I just couldn't accept it. Something told me there might be a way to help him. Why, I have been hearing perfectly wonderful things about surgery. I went to Dallas for Colonel Boynton's series of Red Cross lectures, Sallie. He is in charge of a base hospital—one of the big men."

"But poor Bowman must have had the best of care," said Sallie.

"They patched him up and sent him back to the navy," flamed Nancy. "Perhaps there was no first-class surgeon there. Oh, they did their best, but who was Bowman McMurray to them? Merely one sailor boy among thousands. I can't feel reconciled, Sallie."

"I felt thankful to know he was alive and well."

"So do I. But I know that tendons can be repaired and spliced and all sorts of things," declared Nancy. "Colonel Boynton said so, and it's all in my notebook."

"Then something ought to be done about it. Nancy, child, you're taking a mighty sight of interest in this case—as if this boy belonged to *you*. I reckon he wrote you more than he did Fayette. Was it a love letter?"

"Perhaps, but this is really Red Cross work," said Nancy, with a twinkle.

"How delicious! Romance perished when Fayette flew off to war."

"It did not, Sallie Caldwell. It was just beginning. Bowman has been seriously peeved at me for a year or so over something that never happened at all, and a silly telegram I never sent."

"And why did he forgive you? Bless his heart, it was some sort of a beautiful renunciation, I'm sure."

"More or less," said Nancy. She mused a moment before going on to exclaim, "His only consolation seems to be that football no longer stands between us. As if I had ever dreamed of discouraging it! It has meant everything fine and noble to him. He has followed it like a vision—like a vision of the Holy Grail."

"Fayette understood that better than any one else," replied Sallie. "Bowman ought to go back to college, of course, but——"

"But he never will, as things are now.

He is too sensitive. That boy is a poet who writes in deeds instead of words. It makes him a little trying to keep up with, but we all adore him for it."

"'S'posing, for instance, and tent'ively,' as Bo used to say," boldly ventured Sallie Caldwell, "you were in love with *him,* Nan. What then?"

"Well, let's suppose," calmly answered Nancy, although her lovely color was a bit more vivid. "The war has taught me not to feel surprised at anything. Three years more of college and wouldn't you or anybody else be proud of Bowman McMurray? Great goodness, I'm as proud of him as I can be, right now. Think what he has done in the last four or five years. Fort Hawley opinion? It's ridiculous to pay any attention to that gabble!"

"Still tent'ively, Nan, your mother has ideas of her own and she——"

"Mother? Pooh!" cried Nancy. "And who were the Overtons until dad made some money in cattle and then ran it up in lucky oil leases and Fort Hawley real estate? We were just ordinary, decent Texas folks."

"I never did hear you go on like this," delightedly exclaimed Sallie. "Rave some more."

"Why, I thought you'd be shocked, Sallie Barbee that was, who married a Blue Grass Caldwell. Now we pause to consider the McMurrays. You know what the war has done for that family. Tom McMurray is a wonderful mechanic, and he invented a shrapnel fuse which times a shell to explode with almost human intelligence. I heard the experts talking about it at the bank. Tom let the government make its own contract—you can't imagine him profiteering—and the new factory is running night and day shifts. My father found all the backing needed and is really a silent partner."

"I didn't know all that," said Sallie. "Money will never spoil Tom. He is too much like Bowman."

"It won't have a chance if he keeps on giving it away to the Red Cross and the French orphans and every other war fund that——"

"His wife deserved all the good luck there is," interrupted Sallie.

"People are getting to know her," said Nan. "You are on a committee with her. Isn't she a dear? Has any woman in town more gracious manners? It has done Fort Hawley a lot of good to be shaken together by the war. And since Bowman's folks moved into the new house on the Parkway, mother's friends have actually begun to call on her."

"'Tom's forefathers were kings of Ulster,' so Bowman used to brag, and he married into a royal line, no doubt. All of which leads up to what, Nancy girl?"

"It makes no difference about Bowman," returned Nancy, who protested too much. "I thought every bit as much of him when they were so happy and so poor. He ought not to have to work so hard in college. Wouldn't it be gorgeous if he could go back and not have to earn his way? He deserves an easy spell. But this isn't what I came to talk about. Sallie Caldwell, listen to me."

"I can't help myself. I really believe you're excited. What do you propose to do about Bo?"

"Find the boy and let him know his friends haven't forsaken him. I don't intend to let him go limping through life, if anything can be done to help him. The stunt is to get him out of the navy."

"But he may want to stay in," suggested Sallie."

"Nonsense! He is trying to make the best of it. You wouldn't expect him to whine. He sees his splendid college career smashed and he takes it smiling, just the way he always played football."

"I wish we had Fayette here to help us, dear. Have you talked to Tom McMurray?"

"Not yet, but soon. I'm not very hopeful that he can show me how. But as a parent, he ought to be consulted."

"What we seem to need is a friend in the navy department," observed Sallie. "Unless we find him, I'm sure I don't know how to go ahead with it. You pine for action, Nan, I see that. As Len Garretson would say, if you have to wait, old man Overton's youngest daughter will lose her youthful bloom."

"I wish I had that Garretson boy here," declared Nancy. "He would proceed to go to it."

"Bowman has some fine friends in Kentucky, some of them Fayette's kinfolk. See here, Nancy Overton, do you know who Fayette would turn to? Colonel Harris Shelby, and he lives in Somersworth. He has been the most influential Democrat in the Blue Grass country for years and years, and I reckon he'd know how to get to the secretary of the navy. But that's not all. Colonel

Shelby knows Bowman mighty well, and fairly dotes on him."

"Can we write to him and explain things, do you suppose?"

"Yes, but if he could only see you, Nancy, there would be nothing more to it. Fayette calls him the last great gentleman of the old school."

"But he is in his old Kentucky home so far away," sighed Nancy. "You're quite sure he would understand my friendly interest in a poor, unfortunate sailor boy?"

"He couldn't mistake it for anything but the devotion of a Red Cross sister," was Sallie's solemn assurance.

"Thank you. I think I'll go and see Tom McMurray."

Nancy vanished from the garden and Mrs. Fayette Caldwell resumed the patriotic campaign against the alien potato bugs which were doubtless made in Germany.

Thomas McMurray sat at a large, flat-topped desk in an office where clicked a battery of typewriters. Clean-shaven, brawny, and black-browed, he had discarded the overalls for a well-cut business suit, but he was always ready to jump into them at a moment's notice if there was trouble in the new munition plant with its hundreds of men and women artisans and long aisles of machines. Nancy Overton halted at the office railing and surveyed the father of Bowman with a critical but approving scrutiny. He glanced up from a sheaf of blue prints and his smile was so like his boy's, respectful and winsome, that Nancy's heart fluttered.

He left his chair and advanced to meet her, moving with a certain grace for all his bulk, and exclaimed as they shook hands:

"Please come in, Miss Overton. Shall I show you through the shops? The day is brighter for a glimpse of you."

"That is blarney. All McMurrays talk it," replied Nancy. "May I sit down in a quiet corner with you? It is about Bowman."

"God bless you, come into the little room beyond and we'll shut the door. You're not used to this racket."

For all Nancy's composed demeanor, her cheek burned and her speech was a little hurried as she explained her errand. Tom McMurray's manner gave no indication that he considered the situation at all awkward. With ready tact and delicacy he suggested: "It's your kind heart that would have the boy cured of this lameness of his."

"Bowman and I are very old friends, Mr. McMurray, and I thought that perhaps this hope of mending him hadn't occurred to you. So I came to tell you about it. It was mere luck that I happened to hear some lectures on surgery a little while ago."

"Call it luck, or something else," smiled Tom. "It's for me to start out and find the boy. But how can I leave this shop? My duty is to be on the job. Your idea sounds good to me. I chalked it down as a tough deal for Bowman, to be wounded in action that way, and I was sorry for him and let it go at that. What else was there to do?"

"You can't look after him. I see that," agreed Nancy. "You have to get on with the war. And who else is there but me? I mean, who else is there that cares as much as we do?"

He took her hand between his hard palms and held it as he said: "For his mother's sake I call it very beautiful of you, Miss Overton. I am helpless, in a way, with my duty here and not knowing how to pry the boy loose from the navy. If it is money, or anything else in my power——"

"I will consult you about that, later," said she. "Meanwhile let me do my bit for Bowman."

"Have you advised with your own folks?"

"Mother is in Dallas at a food conservation convention, and you know where dad is, rambling all over the county as chairman of the Liberty Loan drive. With your permission, I'll manage this myself."

On the third day following this interview, Colonel Harris Shelby walked to the post office, as was his daily habit after breakfast when the weather was fine. His progress was slow and stately, with frequent pauses to chat with his friends and neighbors of Somersworth. As years go, he was an aged man well past seventy, but the gaunt frame was still erect and there was no hint of mental decline in the masterful countenance so timeworn and venerable. All his life he had found leisure to be courteous, and no other man in Somersworth could raise his hat and bow to a woman with so much gallant and worshipful deference. As careful of his dress as of his deportment, he liked the frock coat, the black string tie, and the waistcoat cut low enough to show a snowy shirt front of pleated cambric. In this his taste was shared by the judge of the circuit court. Together they conferred upon the town a priceless dignity.

With an eye which had not grown dim to youth and beauty, Colonel Shelby halted his promenade to observe a fair-haired girl with a rose-leaf complexion who stood in front of the hotel and appeared to be asking information of the negro driver of the battered flivver which served as a taxi. She was a stranger and quite naturally the colonel wondered if he might be of assistance. While he lingered, the driver caught sight of him and exclaimed:

"Yondah he, ma'am, Cunnel Shelby hisself! What sense in me totin' you out to his house whar he ain't?"

Baring his white head, the first citizen of Somersworth advanced to say:

"If I am so fortunate as to be the object of yo' quest, Miss——"

"Why, of course you are Colonel Shelby," cried the girl with a smile so radiant that his subjugation was complete. "You couldn't be any one else, after what Sallie Caldwell told me about you. My name is Nancy Overton, all the way from Fort Hawley, Texas."

"No wonder Fayette Caldwell lost his heart in Texas," said the colonel, twisting an end of his white mustache in a manner almost jaunty. "I have heard of Miss Nancy Overton. The son of yo' No'thern Presbyterian clergyman ran himself plumb out of adjectives."

"Red Mercer?" laughed Nancy. "Isn't he the freckled old darling? Did you play chess with him? And did the Garretson kid entice you into stud poker, or has he stayed reformed?"

"Football was the only game they lured me into," beamed Colonel Shelby, "and they made a hell-roarin' fanatic of me. Here, I am behavin' like a dunce. My house will be your home, and the longer the better. Will you pardon me while I phone for my car? We can wait in the hotel parlor."

"But I never intended to visit you, sir. I had a feeling that you were the one person for me to see and——"

"And this totterin' old person gives thanks to a benevolent Providence," said her host. "As for my wife, you will be sunshine and springtime. If you will permit me to attend to yo' luggage——"

Nancy accepted with a sense of happy security. Her pilgrimage had ceased to be quixotic. It was the most natural thing in the world to be in the kindly care of Colonel Harris Shelby who offered his arm as they entered the hotel. Soon they were in a limousine which climbed a hill at the edge of the town and swept between tall brick gateposts into a curving driveway. It was a modern house, but wide and plain and comfortable. Colored servants were numerous and most of them were elderly men and women who had been born and raised in the cabins of the Shelby farm a few miles beyond Somersworth.

Nancy did not meet the lady of the house until later in the day when she was invited into an upper sitting room.

"Miss' Ella," as the colonel called his beloved wife, was in a wheel chair, an old woman, worn and wasted, but as beautiful in his sight as when he had wooed and won her in the flower of girlhood. This was manifest by the way he looked at her, by the tones of his voice, by the little attentions which were those of the cavalier. Her eyes were the windows of a soul unbroken and courageous. They were very dark and strangely youthful, with naught of that shadowy sadness which so often betokens the end of the passage. Nancy leaned over to kiss her and the fragile fingers caressed the girl's damask cheek.

"My husband has told me your errand, Nancy," said she, in a voice still musical. "I am glad to know that a girl is unafraid to go in search of the man she loves, if her heart tells her she is needed. Has the colonel told you of another girl—it happened years and years ago——

"I was hurt in a war, Nancy," the colonel broke in to explain. "It's a heap easier to reach Washington now than as we tried it by way of Gettysburg. A girl no older than you rode all by herself over the mountains into Virginia to find me. And if she hadn't stayed and nursed me, I'd be there yet! Sorry you did it, Miss' Ella?"

"No, Harry. This time you won't be so long on the road to Washington."

"But I never dreamed of asking the colonel to go to Washington," protested Nancy. "I am perfectly willing to go on by myself, if I know what to do."

"I shall enjoy undertakin' this mission," said he. "In fact, I insist. The bargain is that you shall keep Miss' Ella company until I return."

"It would give me a most unusual pleasure," urged the invalid.

Colonel Shelby looked the intrepid old

cavalryman as he stood with folded arms and defied objections. Nancy meekly surrendered, afraid of a court-martial. She dared to ask:

"If you obtain an honorable discharge for Bowman, on the ground of disability, as you suggested to-day, are we sure he will want to accept it before the end of the war?"

"Now you have hit the problem right slam on the nose," declaimed the colonel. "I know that fool boy, and I reckon you know him better. He is full of unreasonable and unexpected kinks, which is why we all love him. Every day he stays on a ship may make it a worse bet that his lameness can be cured. But can we beat it into his head? My plan is for me to dig him out, wherever he is, and talk it over as man to man."

"But that's too much to ask of you, Colonel Shelby. I—I might talk to him myself, but——"

"But there's such a thing as getting too much romance mixed into this affair. You don't want the boy to do a thing just because you ask it, and then be sorry afterward."

"Yes, that might happen," agreed Nancy, who added with a rueful expression, "and he has an extraordinary notion that life is one misunderstanding after another, as far as I am concerned! He used to stalk out, grand and gloomy."

"Harry was difficult, in much the same way," spoke up Miss' Ella from among the pillows of her chair. "The remedy is to marry them, Nancy."

"But this has nothing to do with marrying Bowman McMurray," declared young Miss Overton, in positive accents. "I hate to disappoint you, but the idea that a love affair brought me all the way up here from Texas is all wrong, of course."

The two old people gazed wisely at Nancy and shook their heads. The colonel coughed and spoke up briskly.

"I shall leave for Washington to-morrow. And God help any triflin' understrapper that gets between me and the secretary of the navy. In case I happen to continue my journey, Nancy, and meet up with that young rascal of a Bo McMurray, is there any message to take him?"

Nancy considered gravely before she answered, with a smile, "Tell him I want him to play football again, so nothing will stand between us, and—let me see—you might say he will be a worthy young fellow some day, if he keeps on—and he may make a fine husband for some nice girl."

TO BE CONCLUDED.

## THE LADY'S DISLIKES

REPRESENTATIVE HENRY D. FLOOD, chairman of the House committee on foreign affairs in the Wilson administration, has a thick and well-nourished mustache which he frequently caresses with every evidence of extreme affection when he is either greatly bored or profoundly absorbed. One day during the last session of Congress he was approached by a militant female who wanted him to vote for a bill of which he disapproved. He stated his reasons for his attitude, but the fair emissary persisted.

There followed a tiresome half hour during which the beleaguered statesman constantly disagreed with what she said and continuously tugged at his mustache. The tugging was done in a way that suggested a deeper attention to the hirsute adornment than to the feminine argument, a fact that irritated the lady unbearably. At last her patience gave out.

"Mr. Flood," she declared, abruptly rising, "you'll regret this! I shall report to my headquarters that your politics are as objectionable as your mustache!"

"Don't distress yourself, I beg," Flood retorted suavely. "Why should you? You're not likely to come into contact with either."

# The Exploiters

By Berton Braley

JASON, Ulysses, and Cæsar, Cortez, Columbus, and Drake,
Grecian and Roman and Spaniard, Briton and Viking and Celt,
Dreamers and doers and fighters, gamblers who played for a stake
Greater than others imagined, playing the cards they were dealt
Up to the limit of fortune, recklessly eager to spend
All of their lives and their treasure seeking the rainbow's end!

These and their kind who came after, valiant and restless and strong,
Makers of trade and of empire, shouldering up from the throng—
They are the race of Exploiters, such is the stuff of the breed
Who have gone forth to the ends of the earth driven by glamour or greed.
Out of the past and the present how they bulk big in the horde,
Mighty of deed and of vision, bringing the law with the sword,
Engineer, builder, and warrior, pioneer trader and priest
Daring beyond the horizons, plunging to west and to east,
Gentle and righteous and fervid, cruel and hard and adroit,
Some for their God and others for gold, hungry for lands to exploit,
Whether for good or for evil, whether for glory or shame
Each with a fire in his innermost heart burning with equal flame.

Sitting in softness and safety, balancing morals and law
Easy it is to assay them, point every failure and flaw,
Question each motive that stirred them, test every passion that swayed,
Damn them as conquerors reeking with blood, flay them as bandits of trade;
"This is the truth," cry the scholars, "these are the facts we unfold,
Here are your knights of adventure—grabbers of land and of gold,
Plunderers, looters and pirates shamelessly trampling the weak,
Wasting the lands in their fairness, blind but to profit they seek,
Selfish and greedy exploiters building vast empires of might
Look on the idols you worshiped, naked and gross to your sight!"

That is the picture they paint us, true in the colors they paint
Under the cold glare of science thrown upon sinner and saint.
But, by the light that God gives us, filling the limitless sky,
The "truth" they have put upon canvas is ugly and warped and awry,
For all they have limned is the sordid, the gross and the monstrous and vain,
With none of the vision behind it, the travail of body and brain
That battered a path through the jungles, that conquered the swamp and the fen,
Changed clusters of huts into cities and deserts to gardens for men.
Well, call them Exploiters who did this, who plotted and slaughtered and schemed
But somehow drove on with their labor to fashion the thing they had dreamed.
The job they have done is their answer, and whether for glory or loot,
Of all that they sought and they fought for the world of to-day is the fruit.
Aye, bridges that hang over cañons, and ships that are plowing the tide,
And rails that link city with city are dreams that have come to abide
Because of the tribe of Exploiters, adventurers little and great
Who faced every manner of peril, who never asked quarter of Fate,
Who sweated and shivered and suffered, who feasted or starved as it chanced,
Who battled or wasted or plundered but always and ever advanced,
Who sometimes were grasping and cruel, and often were wicked and blind,
But strong and upstanding and fearless and fit for the purpose designed!

Shall we, as we sit in our comfort, our safety and softness and ease—
The softness and ease that they gave us—dare sneer at Exploiters like these?

# The Goat

By W. R. Hoefer

***Author of** "Barnum Was Wrong," "A Dangerous Dame," **Etc.***

**Both appearances and the cards were pretty well stacked against the Terriers' new infielder**

BOB CAMERON, the veteran scout of the big-league Terriers, turned young Larry Fallon up in late July, signed him to a contract after seeing him play ball twice and then, his gumshoeing quest for embryo baseball stars in the depths of the Far Western weeds being ended, the scout brought the youngster's contract into the club offices personally upon his return East.

Fred Whitman, a baseball writer from the *News*, chanced to be present in the club offices when Cameron landed and in a tired voice put the usual question to the searcher of baseball ivory.

"What's he got?" queried Fred, to whom diamond rookies were nothing to become excited over. Cameron mopped his perspiring, bronzed, homely face and grinned.

"Well," he replied, after lighting an evil-smelling blackened pipe, "he's got red hair, and a sassy Irish grin, and a healthy thirst, and a ukulele."

"Can he play?" asked the writer, bored at the facetious reply to his question.

"No," said Bob shortly. "But he thinks he can. If that kid can play that 'uke,' then I can play *Hamlet*. But he thinks he was just made to drag tunes outa that Hawaiian jew's-harp. Kep' strummin' that little uke all the time I was talking to him, but whatever music was originally put in that nut hula-hula piano is still there, because this kid ain't ever got none out, they tell me. If music is soul food then young Fallon is starvin' in that region right now. No, he can't play that uke! I have to say he can't."

Whitman snorted. "Can he play ball?" he asked wearily. "Not that I care a darn, of course, but I always like to hear the advance bunk and ballyhoo you ivory contractors give about the hams you dig up."

Cameron grinned good-naturedly and reminiscently. He always felt in a mildly humorous mood after a return from the small towns in the far reaches of the country that comprise the baseball "bush." He was a big-town product himself.

"Yes, I hafta admit this lad can play ball—when he's a mind to," replied the scout. "He's an awful stylish fielder. Gets ground balls either side. Got a swell arm, too; whips 'em over on a line. And he can hit. No fence buster, but a nice, smart hitter with a good eye and a free swing. Lotsa nerve; don't keep one of his dogs in the water bucket when they feed him speed, but steps right into the ball. And you have to pitch to him, too. He's a nice waiter, and these wild bimbos that got no more control than a runaway flivver won't get him wingin' on bad ones. He's a turn-around batter, this kid is."

"Never saw one outside of Bancroft and one or two more who were any good," offered the scribe cheerfully. "Ruth, Cobb, Sisler, Speaker—all the real hitters swing from just one side of the plate."

"Well, you'll see a real one when this kid comes up."

Whitman grinned and lit a cigarette. "If this busher's such a bear cat," said he deprecatingly, to irritate the other, "how is it he's been stuck with a club like Fargo for two and a half years? To hear you orate, he's almost got Eddie Collins handcuffed as a second baseman and he makes Heinie Groh look like a crippled old woman beating rugs when it comes to punching singles through the infield. And still he's evidently never even been given a tumble before you came along and pulled a bone in turning him up."

Cameron knocked some ashes from his pipe and turned placidly to the other. The inference that he picked baseball quinces failed to irritate; mainly perhaps, because it did not apply to him. He was one of the keenest judges of embryo baseball talent in the business. Also, he was enjoying the other's skeptic attitude and decided to exaggerate things a bit, to draw the scribe on.

"This lad's been invited up—several times," was the reply. "Barney Dreyfuss almost cried for him; Speaker wanted him real bad, and Dick Kinsella tried his darnedest to stick a Giant uniform on the kid. Dick wanted this boy so bad he was even gonna get Larry a season ticket to the 'Follies,' when he learned how the kid's tastes run, and McGraw told him to go on and throw in Brooklyn Bridge and Grant's Tomb to the Fargo management on top of a release price that'd make Rockefeller blink."

"The Giants couldn't have wanted him so very badly if that's all they offered," was the sarcastic rejoinder. "Why didn't Mac throw in Artie Nehf and Burns and Stoneham's racing stable together with the city hall, if they were really after him?"

"It wouldn't of done 'em any good," replied Cameron soberly. "The Fargo management was crazy to sell and get a nice piece of change, but young Fallon wouldn't leave Fargo."

"Got cold feet?"

"Nope. He's got notions—and a girl. And one of his notions is that he'd rather be draggin' down chicken feed out in Fargo and be able to see his girl than to pry off a big-league pay check every two weeks in the majors and have to tell her how beautiful she is and how much he loves her on paper and mail it."

"Then why didn't he marry her and bring her on East?" asked the club secretary, joining the conversation.

"Another one of his notions—and her's," was the reply. "It's like this: They got their eyes on a house in a little town near Fargo; they call it Tunville, and it takes three thousand smacks to buy this house, and they both got a notion that they won't get married till they can move right into this place and own it. They ain't got the price, and the girl won't leave him go in debt and get a mortgage with a marriage permit—so they can't get signed up."

Whitman displayed a germ of interest at this.

"Better than 'East Lynne' if there was only a villain in the cast and a mortgage on the house," he yawned. "But how did *you* sign him?"

Cameron accepted a cigar from the club secretary and grinned. "I got 'em together for a session at skull practice, Whitty," he replied. "I invited myself and this Larry over to the girl's house—she's an awful pretty little thing with a cranky pa and a turned-up nose and a stubborn little chin and lots of hair and determination and oh, sweet Salome, how she can cook! Her name's Irene Trask. Well, after I had dinner there I got the two together and showed 'em how to make some use of their brains, just like you have to do to a ball player at skull practice—and other times.

"I said, 'Now, sister,' I says, 'just what kind of a hovel is this place you and him want?'

" 'Hovel!' she says, her chin up in the air right off. 'It's no *hovel.* It's a *love* of a little place.' It's some place, at that, it seems, from their ballyhoo. The postmaster's second cousin owns it. And it's painted gray, with green blinds and it's got a front door and a roof and everything, with a real yard with lilac bushes and chickens and geraniums in it. And it's right plumb in the swell part of the town, too. Ira Dashell, the main owner of the general dry-goods emporium lives only three shacks away, and Mrs. Emma Hawkins, the piano teacher, who's been to Chicago three times, lives right next door, and even the Honorable Tim Callahan, who's been in the State legislature and owns a fine-bred Boston bull and a silk hat, lives only a mile away. Well, when they got through with a prospectus of the house I turned to the girl.

" 'Now listen, sister,' I says, 'why don't you and Larry use your brains a little for a change and dope out the real way to get waivers on this shack from the postmaster's second cousin and sign it up for yourselves?'

" 'How?' she asks me.

" 'By making Larry here sign up with the Terriers. He'll get good pay, and he can take his ukulele along, provided he don't play it on the bench at the umpires. And we pay so much more'n they do in this honkatonk league he could maybe save enough up in a couple or three seasons to buy it—if he proves as good as I think he is.'

" 'But,' she says, 'that's just it. He won't go away from me. He says that just as long as we can't buy the house and get married he's going to stay right here, where he can see me when his team plays at home.'

" 'That's why I say use your brains,' I

tell her. 'If this lad won't sign with me then why don't you refuse to see him until he does? Slip him the "Out for Lunch" sign when he comes a-callin'. Then he'll use his own bean a little, maybe, and see that so long as he can't see you here he might just as well be playin' ball with the Terriers out East.'

" 'I never even thought of that,' she says.

"Then this Larry butts in, real sore. 'Hey,' he says, 'don't you go butting in here and try to pull anything like that on Irene and me!'

" 'I'm on the coaching lines here, son,' I tell him. 'You go back to the bench and put on the muffler.'

" 'But, could he save enough from his pay out there?' says the girl.

" 'He could, if he's real frugal and quits shootin' craps like I hear he does and passes up tryin' to make the right guesses on the bang-tails whenever he's got any surplus lucre. It's the only way you can get that house. If you wait to get it on what pay he gets in this league you'll wait until John Evers gets lockjaw, and the Cardinals cop a flag.'

"Well, this little girl and me we talk it all over back and forth, and finally she sticks her chin in the air and looks at Larry real determined and she says, 'I'll do it.' And believe me, Whitty, that settled that. This young Fallon raises all kinds of fuss about it, but it's no use. At last he sticks his Johnny Hancock down to a Terrier contract."

"Well," said Whitman, exuding a smoke ring and glancing at his watch, "let's hope this busher stays in the league long enough to buy one of the green blinds on that house. But he'll probably boot the game away the first chance he gets at second base, and they'll play soft music while he packs his other collar and treks back west to Fargo."

And the scribe went back to his newspaper office and wrote a quite humorous story on the new ball player, the house with the green blinds, the girl with the turned-up nose, and the ukulele.

II.

Young Fallon reported to the Terriers the following week, shortly before the club was to leave for a road trip. And while his arrival was unsung, it was by no means unnoticed, either by the fans or by his new teammates. For one thing Fred Whitman's story on the sport page of the *News* had been chuckled over by the entire town, and, for another, the young man was of the vivid type, who could not long remain unnoticed if he wished.

The experienced Whitman, despite his cynical attitude, soon saw that young Fallon could play ball and was likely to remain up in fast company for a while. Jake Connors had him work out with the "Two-o'clock infield," so called because it was composed of the utility players who took their fielding work-out at two o'clock, before game time, and before either the majority of the fans or the players appeared.

And after a thorough trial in fielding practice Fallon convinced even the iron-souled, saturnine, burly Connors, the manager, that he possessed that thing called "class." The youngster showed not the slightest trace of nervousness and uncovered a brand of fielding that had the few fans already assembled in the stand emitting various cries of admiration. He covered wide reaches of territory, scooped up puzzling ground balls with grace and sureness to either side of him and threw to the bases with such accuracy and speed from awkward positions that even the sardonic manager was moved to some expression of admiration.

"Got something besides red hair and a glove at that," he grunted to Cameron.

The latter grinned widely.

"I'll say so," he replied. "Got a girl and a ukulele, too. You'll find he can hit some; besides, Jake." And Jake did find it so, for in his turn at batting practice the youth took his swing with a clean, free, snappy cut that drove the ball out on a line, and later, with big Ulric, a speed pitcher putting some stuff on his delivery, Fallon stepped right into the ball and drove it out with confidence.

The Terriers' infield was far too good for even a flashy youngster to displace any of the regulars, however. There was the captain, "Duke" Joyce, the graceful, gifted, sensational Duke, known as the greatest fielding first baseman the game had ever known, holding down the initial bag, with the veteran, but still speedy, Cramm at second, the hard-hitting, aggressive Mike Dorley at short, and "Dike" Tenny, one of the best third basemen in the game, at third base. The Terriers' infield was reputed to be the greatest in the game, and the club, despite the erratic and spotty pitching they received, were a good, first-division outfit, and at the present moment riding along easily in third place.

The Terriers left for Philadelphia at the end of the week for a series with the Athletics, and almost immediately there was evidence that Fallon's presence was not entirely unnoticed by the others. "Dud" Shaw, an outfielder, came down to breakfast at the hotel, after the club's first night in Philadelphia, with clouded brow and anger in his eye.

"I wish some one'd feed that kid Paris green or else swipe that ukulele or that he'd go and marry that girl!" snarled Shaw. "I had a headache all night long, and this kid —they stuck him in the room next to me—he keeps banging on that uke and singing: 'She's My Bee-u-tee-ful Irish Col-leen,' and that old chestnut, 'My Little Gray Home in the West,' till long after midnight."

"He let you off easy," observed Ted Porter, a pitcher. "He's already won nine dollars off me at Alabama golf."

Joyce, the captain, pricked up his ears at that.

"Kind of a sporty kid, is he?" he asked.

"Action is his middle name," replied Porter. "He's always ready for anything you want from a pinochle game or a couple of rounds with the mitts to the ponies out at Belmont or at a roof show. He ducked Jake a couple of times in New York to go to that Midnight Roof thing and didn't get in till the milkmen were rattling their cans. He's a live young kid."

"He'll be a dead one in this man's league if he shows that kind of left-handed speed," observed Ponds, the catcher. "And believe me, he won't be able to buy that little gray home in the West with the pink blinds and the cabbages and sunflowers and cows in the back yard for the girl, either, if he doesn't get some control."

Young Fallon's sporting proclivities increased rather than lessened—to such an extent, in fact, that he was fast becoming known as a bad actor. He was always good-natured though, and merely grinned at the advice offered him by other players, instead of becoming disgruntled at their well-meant interference. Even the iron-fisted Jake Connors, who was known as a driver, and who ruled by force and with a heavy hand was unable to curb the sporting activities of the youngster to any appreciable extent.

In Boston the dour manager caught Fallon coming into the hotel at two o'clock one morning in an illegally happy condition. Connors grabbed the youth roughly by the shoulder and glared at him.

"You oughta been in the hay two hours ago," the manager thundered wrathfully. "Where you been?" He sniffed at the player suspiciously. "You been drinking," he accused. "Where'd you get it?" he demanded. The other laughed loudly with sixty-per-cent glee and placed an arm lovingly about his manager's burly shoulder.

"Got it out in Dorchester," was the confiding reply. "Oh, I know the places. Friends of mine. Home-brew. Prunes an' raisins an' guncotton an' ev'rything. Some kick, Jake, ole kid! Whee-ee——"

And the youth attempted to embrace the raging Connors. The latter grimly grasped Fallon in his iron grip, roughly escorted him to the elevator, then to his room, saw that he got undressed and to bed and glared at the blissfully smiling rookie.

"And when you get your sense back enough so's you can realize figures, I'll tell you the amount of the fine I'm slapping on you," he snarled, and locked Fallon's room from the outside. The following morning the sportive youngster was apprised of the fact that his little party had cost him a fine of a hundred dollars, and he sobered up completely. He thought of the girl with the turned-up nose and the house with the green blinds, and he blinked wryly. He would never save three thousand dollars at this rate.

"And," promised Connors, darkly that evening, "the next time I find you been inhaling any kick brew, you're fired. Get that, fired."

It was not the last time the lively rookie got to bed after hours, however, and, despite Connors' warning he was not discharged forthwith, either. This, however, only because Fallon had recently been put in as a pinch hitter twice and had mopped up each time, once with a timely single that sent in the tying run, and the second time with a smashing triple that broke up an extra-inning game. Youngsters of that caliber were apt to prove valuable.

Fallon proved his value to an even greater extent in early September. Otto Cramm, the regular second baseman, broke an ankle, and the recruit was immediately pressed into active service—and immediately made good. The club was playing at home, and a double-header was staged with St. Louis on the day that Fallon broke in as a regular. He had the fans with him from the moment that he speared a murderous line drive from the bat of big Jacobson in the second inning with his gloved hand to retire the side, with the bases filled and a prospective run orgy nipped in the bud. The fans stood up and roared at that, and the red-thatched youngster had to doff his cap again and again as he came in to the bench. And from that moment, also, his job as a regular was assured. Connors saw that young Fallon could not be kept off the club.

Duke Joyce came up to Fallon after the second game, slapped him on the shoulder, and warmly praised his work.

"Great stuff, kid," said Duke. "Keep it up, and I'll help you along with all I know." And that evening the great Joyce took Fallon to the theater. This rather surprised the other club members, inasmuch as the famous, flashy, first baseman was not usually addicted to helping any one but himself and his own reputation, and his going out of his way to be civil to a new player was unheard of.

From that time on the two were together a great deal of the time off the playing field. They went to the theater together, played cards together, with one or two others, and occasionally attended the races together. Also they very frequently shot craps together, which caused young Fallon's finances to suffer considerably at times. It was after a crap game in Joyce's apartment, in which he and Fallon and "Inky" Graham, the colored trainer of the Terriers were engaged and news of which leaked out, that Connors spoke to the famous first baseman regarding the latter's association with Fallon.

"Say," said the manager brusquely, taking Joyce aside in the clubhouse after a ball game, "lay off that young Fallon, will ya, Duke? Cut out this gamblin' stuff with the kid. He can't afford to lose what he's been dropping right along. And it's bad for his playing and for his own self. He's just a young kid, and he oughtn't to be encouraged in these things."

Joyce arched his eyebrows superciliously at that. "Why light on me?" he asked snappily. "I'm no wet-nurse for young kids. If the kid wants to roll 'em or try to pick a winner once in a while at the track, I can't keep him from it, can I? And as long as he insists on taking a flyer when he feels sporty I might as well get in on him as the next guy."

"You know the rules about gambling," retorted Connors aggressively.

"Sure, I do. And I keep 'em, too. But when I'm back home in my apartment, it's no one's damn business what I do." Connors glared at that, but he knew that although he was the manager, in any big controversy between the two the famous player would be sustained by the public and, of necessity, in a crisis, by the management. A player of the ability of the gifted Joyce strode the diamond only once in a decade.

"Well, you might at least be enough of a sport to help this kid along," growled Connors. "No one but a cheap piker would take advantage of this lad's weakness. You're captain. You oughta try and help the kid."

"That's exactly what I'm doing," was the tart reply. "I guess you've noticed the inside stuff on playing that bag I've taught him. And I've boosted his batting twenty points, I'll bet, by showing him how to pull a hit through the hole an infielder leaves when he goes to cover the bag. And who was it showed him how to tag a runner when he comes in with a hook slide?"

"Sure; and you've showed him how to shoot the works on his makin' a point in African dominoes when you know darn well the odds are against him. And you've showed him how to stick fifty smacks that he can't afford to drop down on a skate at Gravesend. And I notice since he's trailin' you so close he's learned how to bat his pay check away so fast that he's always tryin' to bone Aleck for advance pay."

"Yes, and I notice you don't add to his bank account any, either, when you slap a ten or twenty-dollar fine on him," retorted Joyce angrily.

"Don't make me laugh," snapped the burly Connors. "You know damn well if I didn't plaster a fine on that kid once in a while, to tone him down, he'd be tryin' to climb the Woolworth Building on roller skates after a jag instead of climbin' into his uniform at game time."

The season's end found the Terriers up in second place, a higher position than they had reached in several years, and it also found young Fallon firmly intrenched as a regular on the famous Terriers' infield, with the local fans holding him in high and noisy esteem for his peppery, effective playing. Yet, despite his success with the club, the lively youngster returned home as far from possession of that home in Tunville as when he had left. Fast living and fines by the club management had worked havoc with his pay check, and it was only by borrowing three hundred dollars from the high-salaried Duke Joyce that he was able to make even the semblance of a prosperous financial appearance when he entered Fargo that fall as a conquering hero.

But he greeted the young lady of his heart with all his old buoyancy and even more than his former confidence when he called upon her the first evening. And he glibly explained matters regarding their acquisition of the gray house with the green blinds. He handed her two hundred dollars of the amount he had borrowed from Joyce.

"I want you to save this for us, Irene," said he, as they sat on the big veranda of the girl's home. "It isn't much, of course, but you see a fellow has to live pretty well out there on the big time, and they only paid me twenty-eight hundred the first season. I was draping the bench most of the time. I didn't get a regular job till near the end of the season, you know."

She took the roll of bills and glanced inquiringly up at him.

"But Larry," she replied, big-eyed, "twenty-eight hundred dollars—and for only part of the year. Why, that's an *awful* lot of money."

"In Fargo, honey," he laughed, as he kissed her upturned lips. "But not up there in the majors. And a guy has to buy good clothes and go around some, there. He can't be a piker, you know. And I had to travel with this Duke Joyce a lot—you know Duke, the famous first baseman. And you can't be cheap with that bird; he drags down fifteen thousand smacks a year, and I had to trail around with him because he slipped me lots of pointers on inside stuff. Showed me how to duck a guy's spikes coming in to the bag when the rummy's trying to slice an ear off with 'em. And I used to fight the ball a little, and he showed me how to play it right. And in batting, why gee whiz, that guy's a hound for clever stuff, Irene. He showed me how to step up and slam the old pill on the beezer and beat the break on the ball. And how to dump a bunt down right—I used to hold the old maul stick too tight when I laid a bunt down. And he showed me how to stand back near the catcher when we're sending a bird down to steal, so's to kinda bother the catcher on his throw and make it a longer one. And how to crowd the plate with a wild guy so's he keeps stickin' 'em way outside for you all the time and you get a walk—all that stuff he showed me how to pull. And you ought to see him field that bag. He's a wiz, Irene!"

And Fallon flashed his fascinating grin and thought to himself how fine it was to be back in Fargo with his arm about Miss Irene Trask, even after the great Duke and the big cities out East, and he kissed her again. And the girl with the retroussé nose forgot for the moment the tremendous gap between two hundred dollars and three thousand, and she snuggled up to young Fallon and sighed contentedly.

"Mr. Joyce must be wonderful," she said dreamily, "to show you all those baseball things—ducking a bunt and stealing hits and everything."

"He's great," agreed Fallon. "And listen, honey, I haven't told you the best yet. I get four thousand smacks next year."

Her eyes grew big at that.

"You mean dollars? *Four thousand* dollars, Larry—a smack is a dollar, isn't it?"

He nodded proudly.

"Why, that's a *terrible* lot of money, Larry. We can save about half the house next year, can't we?"

He nodded again.

"We might even be able to buy the whole thing all at once, after next year," he replied, thinking of the "hot things," on the races his friend Joyce had promised him. Her father, however, was not so optimistic regarding the youth.

## III.

The Terriers, with a reënforced pitching staff, started out with a rush the following season. They won eight of their first ten games, shot into the league lead and held their advantage through May; lost the lead in early June, rallied and on the Fourth of July were out in front by a margin of six games after a winning streak of twelve straight games.

The fans were riotously jubilant. the owners talked pennant, and the critics conceded that Jake Connors' tribe looked a good deal like flag winners.

"They're the class of the league," opined Fred Whitman when the club continued to hold their lead toward the last of July.

"This big left-hander, Gregory, and that red-headed bunch of jazz, Fallon, have made the club." It seemed true at the time. The brilliant infield dazzled and sparkled in their sensational play and the club was hitting.

"All over but the rooting," said many fans gleefully.

But it was not. Early in August the Terriers began to slip. The lead lessened to four games, three, then one and finally the Panthers were up with the Terriers and about to engage them in a crucial series of five games. Connors, at first, attributed the slowing up to a general slump. After a couple of hitless games by young Fallon he had a session with that wild youth about his personal habits.

"I hear you been playin' the ponies again," he roared. "You stick to playin' your ukulele. Cut out this chance stuff or I'll plaster a fine on you that'll make that little gray home in the West look like a goat shed after a cyclone. Cut it out!"

Fallon grinned uneasily and said he would. But he did not. He had lost money from the start of the season; he felt a degree of remorse whenever he thought of the young lady and the house with the green blinds out West, which looked farther off to him than ever, and he secretly decided to recoup his fortunes with other bets as the only way out.

And then, during the crucial Panther series, the mere thought of which had the fans in a hectic mental and verbal turmoil, Connors first detected what he was positive were evidences of crookedness in his club.

In the fifth inning of the first game, with the speedy Sutcliff, an outfielder, on first and Dike Tenny at bat, the signal for the hit and run was given. Sutcliff was off with the pitcher's arm, but Crider, the opposing twirler, pitched out; Tenny failed to connect with the ball, and the runner was caught by ten feet.

Connors' eyes glinted at that. He watched things intently thereafter. Suspicion was creeping into his keen brain. In the next inning the Terriers got Scheer, another fast man, around to third on a pass, a steal, and an infield out. It looked as though a single run here would win the game, and the Terriers were playing for it. For, with both pitchers going wonderfully, neither club was hitting. Ulric, the Terriers' big right-hander, was, in fact, in superb form and pitching almost hitless ball.

Connors gave the signal for the squeeze play. Scheer dashed in from third with the pitch. But again Crider pitched out, and the runner was caught easily. Nor was that all.

In the Panthers' half of the eighth, with Ulric still apparently possessing all his stuff, Gage, a notoriously weak hitter, who had been shying away from the plate at the pitcher's speed all through the game, stepped confidently into a fast one and laced out a ringing double against the short right-field wall. The next batter, also a weak hitter, gauged the break of a fast curve nicely and cracked out a single. Before the inning was over five solid hits and a steal had produced five runs, enough easily to win the game.

Big Ulric was dumfounded at the reception accorded his offerings. But Connors was not. He grimly strode across the field after the game, entered the clubhouse, stood at the door until the last player had entered and then locked it. The players sensed something from his grimly quiet manner. Then the manager addressed Ulric.

"Bib," said he, "you had all your stuff when they hopped on to you in the eighth, didn't you?"

The pitcher nodded emphatic assent.

"Never had more," he replied, puzzled. "Swell hop on my fast one. Ask Ponds. And my curve breaking great. They ought never to of got even a bunt off me. And then all of a sudden the rummies shell me right off the hill. I don't get it."

Connors glanced about the room, a hard glint in his keen eyes.

"I do," he replied grimly. "We got a crook right here in this room," he went on, slow passion in his resonant voice. "And he's a foxy crook, too, that I'll say. He had more savvy than those Black Sox. He wasn't taking any chances, he thought, by crooked playing himself. No, he was smoother. He tipped off our signs to some one on the Panthers. I thought there was something rotten on this club a couple of days ago. Now I know it. Some dirty crook, right here in this room, listening to me now, tipped our signs—even our pitching signs—to the Panthers."

There was heavy silence at this. The players glanced uneasily at each other. Connors glanced about slowly, his keen gaze resting for a long moment on young Fallon, his eyes smoldering in rage. To Connors it seemed unbelievable in the gay youngster

—but there were incidents that came vividly to his mind that seemed ominously indicting. Fallon's wildness; the bad company he sometimes kept; his being in debt; his desperately wanting three thousand dollars for the house out in Fargo that had been the subject of much humorous comment.

"Even our pitching was tipped off," continued the burly Connors in a slow voice, brimmed with suppressed wrath. "This Gage—he couldn't hit a fat man with a handful of bird seed! He'd kep' one hoof in the water bucket all through the game, until the eighth; then he walks right into a fast one and cracks it. He knew it was comin'. Them other guys, too. They weren't afraid of getting crossed and beaned by either a curve or a fast one. They knew what was comin'."

Again he glanced slowly about the room. Again there was heavy silence.

"We oughta be 'way out in front by now," he continued slowly and impressively. "But one of you guys has sold the rest of you out of a flag and a series bunch of kale." He glared. "I'm gonna find out who it is, all right; don't make any mistake. And any one here, who is innocent of actual crookedness, but who knows anything about this, better see me this evening. And they better come clean and make it damn good and snappy, or by God they'll get the same dose as the actual crook when I find it out. That's all—now. Dress."

That evening Duke Joyce met the manager in the lobby of a downtown hotel. He got the manager off to one side where they would not be overheard. Then:

"I know the yellow dog who sold us out," said Joyce bitterly.

"Who?"

"Young Fallon," was the short reply in a tone of disgust.

"Fallon?" repeated Connors. "How do you know?"

"Because," replied the captain, a savage note in his usually smooth voice, "he had the crust to come up to me last night and try to get me and Inky Graham in with him. Said a gambler would pay each of us three thousand dollars to toss off this present Panther series—there's a lot of interest all over in this series, of course—may decide the flag—and Inky was to get a thousand as go-between for us and to keep his trap shut. The little crook thought just because I was a little friendly with him and palled around with him he'd get me in it. I know now I made a mistake in gambling with the kid. I s'pose his being broke tempted him. But even that's no excuse for a dirty thing like this."

"Why didn't you tell me right away?" asked Connors.

"Graham wanted me to, but I told him we'd wait until to-day and try to get him with the goods on in the game. Then we'd have proof. But he was too foxy to toss it off himself. So he tipped off our signs. Must have flagged Joe Ponds' signs from his position at second to some one on the Panthers he fixed—who tipped the signs to the batters. They probably thought one of their coachers had just swiped 'em. The Panthers have always been clever at that, anyway."

The session that took place the following morning at the club's offices behind locked doors was brief, but decisive. Stillson and Gedding, the two club owners were there, as were Connors, Joyce, Graham, and Fallon. It was the word of Joyce and Graham, two old and trusted club members, against that of a wild youth, of wild habits, in debt and desperately needing money. And an hour after the meeting began, Fallon, his brilliant smile gone, his buoyancy flattened and with a white look to his ordinarily deeply bronzed face left the offices with the brand of a baseball pariah upon him, an outcast of the great national game.

Four days later he boarded a train for the West. Leaving Philadelphia, two men, several seats to the rear noticed him sitting hunched up in his seat, his cap over his eyes, a forlorn, friendless-looking piece of humanity.

"There's that dirty little crook, Fallon," said one. "Sold out the Terriers. And they had a grand chance for the pennant, too." The other nodded contemptuously.

"Had the crust to try and turn the whole thing on Duke Joyce and the trainer when they 'got' him, I hear. But his story didn't go. It's too bad they couldn't jail him for it. But they couldn't actually prove it on him and so all the club could do was to let him out."

The story had leaked out into the newspapers, and when Fallon returned to his home town he made his silent way past the contemptuous eyes of the town to his home. That evening he called at the Trask residence. Irene Trask's father met him at the door.

"You contemptible crook," almost screamed the older man at sight of the ball player. "And you have the audacity to come here—after betraying your mates. I always knew your loose ways would get you into trouble. Get out!"

"I want to see Irene," said Fallon determinedly, thrusting his foot inside the doorway, and determined to see her.

"She doesn't want to ever see you again," roared Trask. "Get out, or I'll horsewhip you!"

Fallon's determination collapsed at mention of the girl.

"She doesn't want to see me?" he gulped. "You don't mean she said——"

"I do. Get out!" snapped the old man. And Fallon slumped away.

The following day he had spent almost the last of his meager funds for a return ticket back East. If even the girl with the retroussé nose didn't want to see him, home was no place for him. Some hours later he was back again in the town of the Terriers. "Like a murderer visiting the scene of his crime," said Joyce, when he heard of it.

Three days later, entirely out of funds now, he obtained a job in a garage. Early in October, after the pennant race was over with the Terriers having finished a bad second when they might have won a flag but for dishonesty on the club, Fred Whitman, on his way uptown from the *News* office ran across Fallon. The latter turned away at sight of the newspaper writer.

"I want to see you, Larry," persisted Whitman, catching the other's arm. Fallon squirmed in the grasp.

"I didn't suppose you'd want to talk to a crook," said he testily. "Might as well be one, anyway. Even my girl thinks I'm one."

"I never did think you were one," said Whitman. "Exactly what happened? I've a reason for knowing aside from getting you cleared."

Fallon gulped at that and turned to Whitman impulsively, his eyes suspiciously moist, at first. Then his lips curled to a snarl.

"It was Joyce, the rotten cur," said he. "If I ever get a good chance to slam that jaw of his——"

Whitman grinned. "What happened," he persisted.

"He and Inky Graham got me up in Joyce's room, and they said they were in with a gambler to toss four of the five games of that Panther series. Joyce offered me a thousand dollars for every game I'd toss."

"What did you do?"

"I punched him in the nose. But then he and Graham grabbed me so I couldn't do anything. And they said if I said a word to any one they'd get me croaked. I tried to see Jake a couple of times, but the first real chance I had he went at me first, awful mad, for staying out late the night before, and so I waited until I could see him when he wasn't so mad and all alone. And before I could the two of 'em got to Connors and had me framed."

"About what I thought," replied Whitman. "I've suspected Joyce for some time. I've noticed even some time ago that he made his errors on easy plays mainly in close games. He flashed most of his brilliant stuff in games that were already won by good scores. He's been laying down and throwing games for some time, I'll bet."

He took a soiled piece of paper from his pocket. It was a note, scrawled as follows:

Fred Whitman, the *News*: I seen that piece in youre collum where you say this Fallon aint been proved guilty and its a shame hes gott to work in Reedys garage when hes inocent and shood be playen ball. Youre dam right. If you want to no whos the crooks ask inky Graham. He even done me crooked. And he nos the other one, a player which is so big hed surprise you. Bud.

"This is evidently in reply to something I had in the paper about your case," explained Whitman. "I explained that in baseball a player under a cloud had to be presumed guilty and dropped until proved innocent. It was necessary and for the good of the game, to keep it free from even the taint of suspicion. But that it might be unfortunate, also, because an innocent player could be framed out of the game, inasmuch as he was not accorded the rights of the citizen in an ordinary case at law and assumed innocent until proved guilty. And I said that I personally believed you innocent, despite the circumstances and the way you had made a damn idiot of yourself. Don't you want to see Graham?"

"I'll say so," replied the other, with outthrust jaw. And the two left to call upon the colored trainer. They found him at home, uptown, and, upon being admitted into a large room, Fallon noted a key in the door, locked the room, placed the key in his pocket, and faced the colored trainer.

"Now," said the player, his eyes narrowed and his lips a straight line, "you tell Whitty and me just who framed me." The other protested his innocence. "All right," was the quiet reply. "If you don't come clean inside of five minutes, I'm gonna beat the life outa your colored carcass." He strode over and stood by Graham, fists doubled up, venom in his eye.

"Jig's up, Graham," said Whitman, with easy confidence. "Bud spilled the beans. So it's no use stalling. But we want a few more details from you."

Graham looked up quickly from one to the other. He took in Fallon's menacing attitude. And also Whitman's confident glance.

"Bud?" he repeated. "That niggah squeal on me?"

"Yes," replied Whitman. "Because you trimmed him." And then the scribe decided to take a long shot. "And Bud isn't the only one. We know the real big crook; he peached on you. We just thought you might like to give your story before we print his confession in the *News* to-morrow."

"Who's the othah one?" asked Graham, defiantly, sensing a bluff.

"Joyce," replied Whitman promptly. "We got the goods on him and he told everything; and he put the entire blame on you. Says the proposition was merely made to him, but he turned it down. Says you tipped off those signs. We thought you might want to say something for yourself."

"Why, ah nevah tipped off no signs. Duke done that hisself," cried Graham in angry protest before he thought. Then, seeing from Whitman's triumphant look that he had given himself away and it was too late to bluff the thing out, he confessed completely.

"Joyce an' a gambler—'Perly' Goodman—planned the whole thing. Duke's crooked as a ram's horn. Why, he's even rung in phony bones on me in a little pikah crap game. When he saw Fallon was inclined to be kinda wild he laid foh him. He got friendly an' palled around with him. He wanted to get him to gamble an' drop all his money so's he'd have to get that money foh that house in Fahgo some desprit way. Then he was gonna make Fallon the goat. He was gonna give him three thousand bucks to th'ow them games. That a way Duke couldn't be connected up with it, if it come out. Fallon was the goat."

"Then what happened when you approached Larry?" asked Whitman.

"That theah boy he jus' off an' he punched Duke right plumb on the nose. An' then we grabbed him an' held him an' got him out the room. Then Duke he says we better beat Fallon to it with a story to Jake Connors. An' so we framed Fallon. An' they took Duke's story 'stead of this heah boy's. Why not? He'd been with the club foh eight yeahs."

"Got any proof of this? Joyce might brazen it out and tie the whole thing on to you."

"He won't do no sucha thing; no *suh,*" replied Graham. He went to a table and took an envelope from a drawer. The envelope was addressed to Joyce, care of the baseball club office. On the reverse side was some writing in pencil. Graham showed this to Whitman.

"See that theah envelope an' the writin'? It's Duke's envelope—but it's Perly Goodman's writin'. Any sportin' man in town'll prove that. Perly's signed enough markers foh bets to have any one know his writin'. Goodman done wrote that theah note on a envelope of Duke's he found on a desk in Duke's room in Boston one day, when I was theah an' Duke was out. Ah was 'sposed to give it to Duke. It was a note to meet Goodman. But Ah told the message to Duke a few minutes later when he come in an' Ah kep' that theah note evah since."

"Hand it over," ordered Whitman. The other did so.

"And now I guess we've got enough to clear you and get these two crooks on," said Whitman to Fallon. "Let's go." Fallon stopped near Graham.

"S'pose I just bust this bird one on the chin for luck, Whitty," said he longingly.

"Suppose you just come along with me—to the club offices and get yourself straightened out." And the two left. The exposé of the famous Duke Joyce and Graham and their expulsion from the game followed, to the utter amazement of the fans. But the following morning, even though young Fallon's good name had been cleared and the news of it would soon be spread broadcast over the country, Whitman, upon entering the Reedy garage, came upon the red-haired youth in any but a happy frame of mind.

Fallon was standing near a roadster, glaring at it, occasionally muttering naughty words and ever and anon registering hearty kicks upon the defenseless auto tires, first with one foot, then with the other.

"For the love of Mike, aren't you happy yet, after all the trouble I just got you out of?" asked the scribe. "And what's the idea of trying to kick the tires off the car?"

Fallon looked up and frowned.

"Oh, sure, darn it all; sure I'm happy I got cleared," he growled. "But what's the use? The girl wouldn't leave me see her and now she won't even write to me!" He gave a front tire a vicious kick with his left foot. "And I don't give a darn if I never get that house in Fargo!" And he swung his right foot vigorously.

Whitman yawned. "Well, here's a letter addressed to you, care of me at the *News;* came in this morning," said he. "And," he continued in a bored tone, "it's in a lady's writing. The way she makes her I's looks like her nose might be turned up a little and by the way she writes 'Larry' I wouldn't wonder if her name isn't Irene."

Fallon grinned. "Gimme that letter," said he. And he read the following:

DARLING LARRY: When I found out what father said to you it made me just *furious.* I *know* you're honest. It must all be some terrible mistake. But don't you care, Larry. I'm not the *only* one who knows you're honest, dear. Mr. Stengelshaner says he's *positive* you didn't disclose the baseball tippers or whatever it was. And even though he's got three buyers, he's going to keep the place for us until we have the money. Lots and lots and lots of love and don't you care what *anybody* says. Affectionately, IRENE.

P. S. I would have written right off but didn't know where to send it. Then I saw a piece in our paper, reprinted from the *News* out East and I'm sending it to you care of Mr. Whitman. I.

P. P. S. But you will promise, won't you, *never* to gamble again or be wild? I.

Fallon's grin became broader and broader as he read the note. Then he requested Whitman to wait while he inscribed a reply. He wrote:

DEAREST IRENE: Maybe I wasn't kind of tickled to get your letter, Irene. Maybe not, hey! Oh, boy! But I was cleared of the crook charge yesterday through Mr. Whitman, and the real crooks were that dirty dog Joyce—I always said he was crooked, you remember—and Inky Graham. It'll all be out in the papers and then you can tell all the people out there to go you know where. And I hope your old man chokes and tell the old geezer I'm coming right out to Fargo on the quickest train as soon as I can pack up and tell him I'm going to see you and what is he going to do about it.

And, honey, you don't need to worry about not getting that house. I already signed my contract for next season and they gave me a raise of five hundred dollars and a bonus of one thousand dollars for having me fired off and disgraced when I was innocent. Affectionately, LARRY.

P. S. I got the thousand in a check right with me. We'll pay it to Mr. Stengelshaner soon as I get home. L.

P. P. S. And believe me, honey, no smart gambler can get that thousand berries away from me. Why, Irene? Because they won't have any dog-gone chance. I've swore off gambling for life and also drinking hooch. There ain't anything in it, except maybe some dynamite. L.

"Some letter from the girl, hey, Whitty?" said Fallon, when the scribe had finished reading the epistle.

"You bet," agreed Whitman cordially. "But tell me, who is this Mr. Stengelshaner?"

"He's a great old geezer. He's got a grocery store in Tunville. He's the one that owns our house," replied Fallon.

"Not the gray house with the green blinds?" asked Whitman.

"Sure. That's him," said Fallon. "He's the postmaster's second cousin."

*Mr. Hoefer will have another short story, "Shades of Shakespeare!" in the next issue.*

## MEETING THE DEMAND

"UNCLE JOE" CANNON, former speaker of the House of Representatives, had gone out to see a baseball game in one of the small towns of his congressional district. It was a holiday, and the crowd exceeded all expectations. A few minutes before the game began, an old crony of Mr. Cannon's, who was known far and wide for his stinginess, and who had the sandwich concession for the grounds, ran up the aisle where the speaker was seated. He paused long enough to wheeze out a greeting:

"Fine crowd, Joe, ain't it? Mebbe a thousand more people here than I expected. I dunno, but I guess that means I got to have about eight hundred more sandwiches made."

"In that event, Mike," drawled Mr. Cannon, "you'll probably have to cut another ham, won't you?"

# Sparks From the Capital

By James Hay, Jr.

WILL HAYS, postmaster general of the United States and commander in chief of the army of electioneers who put Harding into the White House, is a whole lot bigger mentally than he is physically. In fact, in the matter of towering stature and bull-like physique, Mr. Hays is by no means a star.

One evening, when he was at a stag dinner with a group of United States senators, all of whom were above the average in height, one of them remarked jovially:

"Well, general, here's a party in which you can't help feeling small."

"That's right," replied Hays with a grin; "I feel like a three-cent piece among a lot of pennies."

The late Chief Justice White, of the United States Supreme Court, had a rich fund of anecdote and reminiscence, particularly concerning himself. One of his best stories described at length his perturbation and diffidence when he went into a Louisiana court to try his first case. His one consolation was that his opponent was a man as young as he and almost as inexperienced.

But this comfort faded away when, in arguing a point to the judge, the other lawyer launched into an oratorical effort which, although it was florid and a thousand miles away from the point, showed the speaker's self-assurance. Young White was picturing himself as beaten at the start when, as the young Demosthenes took his seat and looked around for approving glances, the bored and crusty old judge remarked to him in a conversational tone:

"My young friend, sometimes it's well to pluck out some of the feathers in the wings of one's imagination and stick them in the tail of one's judgment."

Just as soon as Mr. Harding had settled most of the fights for patronage and all the deserving party workers had been comfortably ensconced in the political plum tree, he summoned General Dawes—the man who shouted "Hell and Maria!" in the faces of a congressional committee—to Washington to cut down expenditures in the government's executive departments.

After a few weeks of back-breaking labor, the general reported that he had lopped off a little more than $100,000,000 from the annual bills.

Harry Maynard, of Virginia, who used to be in Congress, was asked if he wasn't surprised that Dawes had not saved more than that.

"I did expect him to," replied Maynard; "but I can well understand why he didn't. He couldn't get enough coöperation. He probably found the plum tree too full of prunes."

J. Steger Black, the Michigan philanthropist, dropped into Secretary Hoover's office during a recent visit to Washington and had a chat with him about affairs in Russia, particularly about that country's material resources.

"I've noted a new complaint from Russia lately," said Mr. Hoover; "they have practically no supply of soap."

"Oh, that's relatively unimportant," shot back Black; "there's very little serf bathing over there."

One day, when the "medicinal beer" question was before the judiciary committee of the House of Representatives, a constituent asked a Western member if he thought the beverage was a medicine.

"I do," said the congressman, who had a red nose, "but I ain't going to say so as long as the fellow who says it ain't medicine gets the most votes."

# The Bridegrooms of the Orisquibo

By Theodore Goodridge Roberts

*Author of "Musket House," "No Chances," Etc.*

**Marlow found something much finer in the Orisquibo jungle country than he had set out after**

TUCKER, secretary of the Planters' Club, introduced Marlow to Laval. A genial soul was Tucker and, at the same time, the flower of discretion. He knew nothing of the visitors beyond the facts that they looked bored and lonely, that one was from the North and the other from the South and that both had been put up at the Planters' by members notoriously indiscreet in their chance acquaintanceships and offhand hospitalities.

Marlow's sponsor had once introduced an international spy to the club, and Laval's had once extended the club's privileges for a period of three weeks to a professional card sharp. Naturally one had to be careful; and so, neither of the sponsors being present, Tucker introduced the guests to each other in his happiest manner, thus safeguarding resident members, fellow islanders, from the possible risk of social or financial damage and at the same time maintaining his reputation as a genial official.

Marlow and Laval were grateful for the introduction. Laval ceased yawning and Marlow laid aside a month-old number of *Punch*. They sat before a window overlooking the harbor, with a low table between them.

"Beautiful island," said Laval. "Salubrious climate."

"Exactly—but devilish dull," returned Marlow.

"Oh, deadly!" exclaimed the other, with a gesture of shoulders and hands. "Deadly dull! Health without life! Good for the constitution, like porridge—but of no zest."

"You have put your finger on it," said Marlow, with a slow and engaging smile. "What will you drink?"

"Ah! a question not to be lightly answered. The zest of life in this island lies in the drinks. A swizzle, my friend—of the green variety."

Marlow signaled a waiter and gave an order.

"Excitement is a thing I adore," continued Laval. "But I do not seek it here. Ah, no! For I have been here before. I travel for rest, for soothing change. I stop off here and there at my sweet whim, perhaps for no more than a swizzle or two, perhaps for a week, perhaps for a month. I look on at life as at pictures in a book. I travel to turn the pages."

"You are lucky," said Marlow. "I am not so fortunately circumstanced. Fact is, I am looking for an opportunity to take part in the business of life—and a business part, at that. I seek a commercial opportunity."

"Commercial? You, sir? Your aspect does not suggest it! A soldier, a rider after the fox, an explorer of the jungle—any or all of these I see in you—but nothing of commerce. The desk, the great ledger, the ink, the closed door—I do not see you in that connection. But success to you, my friend, whatever your path in life!"

"Thanks. The same to you. You're sharp, Mr. Laval. I'm not yet a business man. I know nothing of the game."

"Ah! Now I understand."

They dined together a few hours later. They became very good friends. They rode and bathed together next day; and after their sport in the surf, while they lay on their backs in the warm sand and smoked cigarettes, Marlow told Laval all about his commercial aspirations.

W. L. B. Marlow had gone to a good school and distinguished himself as an athlete. He had gone to Sandhurst, where he had displayed dexterity as a swordsman and bayonet fighter, skill and understanding in horsemanship, keenness of eye and steadiness of hand generally and soundness of heart and temper in every situation. But, alas! he had also displayed a lack of comprehension of the intricacies of the science of mathematics which had queered his military ambitions for several years. For a time he had lived at home, playing cricket for his county, hunting, and sitting often with his widowed mother and an uncle in consultation over his moribund career.

Then had come the Great War, into which he had leaped enthusiastically and from which he had emerged, five years later, with a few scars, a complete grasp of the practical branches of the science of holding and hammering hostile forces, and a profounder ignorance than ever of the productive branches of the business of peace. He had emerged in time for his mother's funeral. Things had gone badly with the modest Marlow fortune during the war. The uncle had given Marlow what was left of it—two thousand one hundred and ten pounds, sixteen shillings and sevenpence—and a great deal of advice. Marlow had very wisely decided that the first thing to be done was to get himself and his money out of England.

"I want a living with a bit of excitement in it, physical adventures, don't you know; and I'm afraid this island hasn't what I want," he concluded.

"You have nailed it on the head, my heroic friend," said Laval, sitting up and brushing dry sand from his elbows. "There is no business here for so modest an investment or so adventurous an investor. The Orisquibo is the place for your romantic heart and pounds, shillings, and pences. This is so, undoubtedly. Orisquibo! A happy thought!"

"Sounds interesting, like books I read when I was a kid—'The Orchid Hunters' and that sort of thing. Is it a river?"

"Yes, a river—but more than that. It is a country, a wilderness, a jungle, a land of romance!"

"Romance? And you spoke of my romantic heart a moment ago. I'm no monk, Laval, but if there's a bunch of girls in that Orisquibo country—well, it won't do for me, at this particular stage of my career. But perhaps that's not what you mean, old son."

"Girls?" laughed Laval. "Girls in a jungle! No, my Marlow. A fine country, the Orisquibo, but not so damn fine as that! By the word romance, I mean what you mean, not what you think I mean. Romance of action: The high adventure with nature; the new visions; the chance; the spice of peril, and the lure of mystery. Romance, I bow to her! Had I but the constitution and energy to woo her on the Orisquibo, not now should I be reclining here beside the ocean, but there upon one of her bars of golden sand."

Marlow sat up.

"That's all very well for a gentleman of leisure like yourself," he said; "but what about me? Where's the business on the golden sands of the Orisquibo? What's the investment?"

"The investment is in those golden sands," replied Laval.

"Gold?" asked Marlow.

The other nodded. "Do not fear that I contemplate the sale of a lemon," said Laval, smiling. "I do not offer you the Orisquibo, for she is not mine to give or to sell. Nor do I tell you a tale of the cock-and-bull variety. I only tell you some things well known to me, in the spirit of friendship."

"That's very good of you. Both my ears are up. Fire away!"

"It is a country I am familiar with, the Orisquibo country, for it is my native land. My father had interests there. He built a house twenty miles up the river, on a hill; and in that house I was born. He took some gold from the river; he owned much land, also; but he was not a worker, my poor father, nor yet expert at business; and now all belongs to Madame DeSalberry. She is a friend of mine, this madame, and charming—though no longer in any stage of youth. She is a grandmamma. And she holds the key to the Orisquibo country. She is the warder at the gate. He who would dig for gold in the sands of the upper reaches of that river must first pass madame."

"Well, why not? One has to pass somebody to get anywhere."

"True. But the gold seeker who seeks on the Orisquibo must have Madame DeSalberry's approval."

"Does she own the whole river, then?"

"No, only a few miles of it immediately below and above her house. But she is the only rancher in that country, the only navigator of the river, and the sole employer of labor. She is the one source of supply in that region. There is no other trader on the river. There is no town even at the river's mouth. All the boats and skilled boatmen of the Orisquibo are hers. More than this, all the people are under her thumb—the hunters and fishermen of the lower river, who are Indians and blacks and breeds, the coolies and negroes and Indians on her ranch, the rubber hunters, the jungle folk and hillmen of the upper river—all honor and obey every wish of that lady. She is the Queen of the Orisquibo.

"He who would seek for gold on that river must obtain his outfit from Madame DeSalberry or else from the nearest trader on the coast, who is more than one hundred miles away from the golden sands; in which case he must also take in boatmen from the coast; and they do not know the river. And perhaps they would not ascend the river very far—would not, even if they could. For the wild people of the upper waters are not polite to strangers who come without the sanction of Madame DeSalberry."

"So this precious old lady charges what she pleases, I suppose?"

"What she pleases, yes—but she is honest, even generous, my friend. When the adventurer pleases madame, then it is her pleasure to outfit him at a cost far below the charges of any trader on the coast or on any other river."

"You have had dealings with her yourself, I take it?"

"Yes—but, like my father, I am not a consistent worker. To live by the sweat of my face is against my nature and beyond my physical ability. However, I am as you see me, neither rich nor poor, looking comfortably on at life."

"Do you know anything about the other Johnnies who have gone up the Orisquibo with madame's permission?"

"They are few—only six in all. Three are my friends, from whom I occasionally receive letters. Of the other three I have lost the track. Maltby lives in England, where I visited him last year. He is a baronet now and very rich—but I do not say that he found either his title or his riches on the Orisquibo. And Henry Knolton Dodds, of New York. But I do not say that he commenced his great banking business with gold washed from the sands. And there was poor Dick Robinson, who became an earl when his brother died. He lost one leg in the war. There have not been many adventurers on that river of late—six only in twelve years. Madame is very particular."

"So it seems. Sir John Maltby, Dodds, the international banker, and the Earl of Ribsdale! I have met Maltby and his wife in London. Lady Maltby is even more renowned for her beauty than Maltby is for his pelf. And I have run across Ribsdale in Flanders. Not rich, Ribsdale—for an earl, that is. What is Madame DeSalberry's game? It sounds snobbish to me—if nothing worse."

Laval shook his head, smiling.

"Is she crazy?" asked Marlow.

Again Laval shook his head, still smiling.

"Does she personally conduct the operations of her chosen gold diggers?"

"No. She supplies you with provisions and laborers and gives you her protection and her blessing—if you are of the right sort."

"Yes, the right sort—her sort! Then where do I come in? I am not the heir to an earldom, a baronetcy, or a bank. I have already inherited all that's coming to me in that way, and the sum of it now is less than two thousand pounds. My father was a soldier, colonel of an infantry regiment. Both my grandfathers were soldiers and one of my great-grandfathers became a major general and married the youngest granddaughter of a duke. An uncle of mine copped a V. C. in the South African war and died of wounds, and a cousin repeated the trick in the last war. I am proud of my family, Laval—but I don't pretend to qualify for the Orisquibo."

"But you do qualify, my brave Marlow! The Orisquibo will receive you like a friend; and I cannot think of any other land of promise, of romance, of adventure in the whole world where you and your capital will be so safe as in Madame DeSalberry's country."

"Safe!" exclaimed Marlow. "Do you think I'm afraid to take chances—or that I am asking for protection—or that I'll consent to being tied to the apron strings of a meddlesome old snob?"

Marlow took ship for the south three days later. His friend, Laval, was with him to the last, and the two parted on the best of terms.

"I hope we'll meet again, old son," said Marlow. "Don't hold it up against me—my refusal to take along your recommendations and introduction to that lady. I don't object to accepting favors from you, but I do object very strongly to placing myself under obligations to that tuft-hunting dame. I'll try the Orisquibo—a dozen meddlesome madames couldn't stop me—but as my own master! Frankly, I think that you have exaggerated Madame DeSalberry's importance and power."

"However that may be, I wish you all the luck in the world and all the gold on the Orisquibo, my friend! Adieu."

Three weeks later, Marlow found himself in a steaming town on the coast of the mainland one hundred and sixty miles to the north of the Orisquibo. There he outfitted. He guarded his tongue against mention of the Orisquibo. Laval's talk of Madame DeSalberry had made so powerful and sinister an impression on his mind that he half suspected every man he met of being an agent of hers. At first he had thought of her as a meddlesome and grasping old woman who had somehow or other blinded that decent little chap Laval to her real character and game. But as the weeks passed the picture of the Queen of the Orisquibo took on startling colors and lines in his mind, and his distaste for her sharpened and darkened to hate.

He coasted southward in a native fishing boat. That was a voyage to kill the zest for tropical adventure in a less heroic breast than Marlow's. The stench and motion of the boat and the glare of the sun were sickening. They played havoc with Marlow's stomach, but they left his heart and nerve undismayed. He went ashore every night with his outfit and all his stores. He carried such money as he had brought with him next his skin. He had two pistols on him day and night, inconspicuously placed—but he knew where to find them quick.

Marlow was within forty miles of the Orisquibo's mouth when one of his three boatmen informed him in villainous English that it was pay day.

"Are we there?" asked Marlow.

"Seexty dollar," said the boatman, grinning.

Marlow looked at a map with which he had furnished himself in the town. In drawing the map from his pocket he had drawn something else with it, concealed in its untidy folds. From the map he looked at the boatmen, one at a time, then all together.

"We are not at the mouth of the Orisquibo," he said. "We have still more than thirty miles to go. When there, you shall be paid as arranged—fifty American dollars."

"Seexty dollar!" cried the skipper of the boat. "You pay heem now, damnation!"

"Damnation is right," returned the adventurer calmly.

He sat alone in the stern sheets, with one hand in the folds of the map on his knee and the other on the tiller.

"Drop that knife overboard, you, there," he continued. "And the same with that rusty revolver. Drop it, or you're all meat for the sharks! I have you cold! Mind the sheet there, or I'll hole you! You would, would you!"

The hidden pistol spoke, and a bullet punctured the map and the patched sail. The three boatmen flopped like one man.

"Get up out of that!" commanded Marlow. "Attend to the sheet, you sixty-dollar fellow. Now be good, all three of you, or I'll really shoot at something."

He shook the map clear of his hand and sat with the blue automatic in open sight. He watched the sail, the men forward, the fellow at the sheet, the coast and the open sea.

"I make leetle joke dat time," said the skipper.

"Don't do it again," replied Marlow. "Your next joke will be your last."

The hours and the coast crawled past and slipped astern. At noon the little sail cast no shade. The boatmen sagged on the bottom boards and the fishy bilge stank to heaven. Marlow sat hunched forward, the tiller under his arm, his deadly right hand on his knee. He looked steadily forward from under his big helmet. Twice he laid the pistol beside him for a few seconds while he picked up and examined the damaged map. Thrice he lit cigarettes. Now and again he drank from his water bottle. Again the sail made a shadow which lengthened gradually. The men sat up and whispered together. They smoked and ate bananas and cassava cakes and a mess of cold salt fish. The skipper offered food to Marlow, but it was refused sharply. And so the glaring day wore on and out.

The sun went down, the wind fell, and Marlow headed in for the surf by the shine of sudden stars. He ordered the sail down and oars out to steady the boat across the sliding hurdles of foam. The men sprang over the bows as the keel touched the sand.

"Run her up!" cried Marlow, standing and lifting his right hand; and the fellows laid hold for fear of their lives and pulled her up beyond the drag of the backwash.

Then Marlow stepped ashore, dry-shod, the damaged map in one fist and the blue pistol in the other, and ordered and superintended the unloading and landing of his bags, boxes, and tent. He had everything carried up to the edge of a thin grove of coconut trees. He rushed the operation with a few telling words and an occasional gesture of the hand, standing motionless himself, halfway between the trees and the thin froth of the tide. The starlight shone on the blue iron in his hand.

When the last package was up, he told the skipper to approach, halted him four yards off and with his left hand tossed a gold coin on the sand at the fellow's feet.

"Five dollars, American gold," he said.

The skipper picked it up, examined it, pocketed it. Marlow tossed another coin and another, and so on up to ten.

"Ten five-dollar pieces," he said. "Fifty dollars. Now, clear out of this, you blackguards, or you'll be getting quite a different variety of metal from me."

"Make sleep here," said the skipper.

"It'll be your last, long, everlasting sleep, if you try it," returned Marlow. "Launch your boat and beat it! Get out! Push off!"

"No good wind to-night," said the other.

"I'll raise the wind for you!" cried the Englishman; and instantly the small weapon in his hand spat fire and a spurt of sand went up at the skipper's feet.

Then the boat was launched at the double and rowed vigorously over the three low, white barriers of surf. There it lay rocking for ten minutes: but at another spit of flame and a skipping bullet, the mast was stepped and the sail hoisted and sheeted home. The small boat sailed well on a beam wind. The wind was off shore, and she ran northward just beyond the outer line of surf.

"A bit more offing would suit me better," thought Marlow, following her course along the sand; and with two more twitches of his finger he conveyed the idea to the boatmen, who accepted it in a hurry. Marlow returned to his stores, slept for an hour, then took another scout along the shore to make sure that the boat was not working back to his encampment, then went to his blankets again and slept until dawn.

Morning is as sudden as nightfall in those latitudes—a quick flame along the east, an upwelling of green and saffron, wide washes of rose and gold, the paling and vanishing of stars and then the sun on the sea's rim like an open porthole into everlasting glory.

Marlow made a fire of dry twigs gathered from a thicket of whitewood trees and breakfasted on quinine, hard-tack, jerked beef and tea. He took his time over the meal, sitting with his back against the brown stem of a coconut tree and glancing seaward and to right and left in a glow of adventurous anticipation, without misgivings. By his reckoning, he was within five or six miles of the mouth of the Orisquibo; and he congratulated himself on having come so far without accident, realizing that he would already have lost his money, and doubtless his life into the bargain, had he weakened for a moment before the impudent demand of the boatmen. He thought of Laval's warning against the fishermen of the coast and against all the people of the country except those supplied by Madame DeSalberry.

"The little man was right," he said, lighting a green cigar. "He knows these people and he wishes me well; but the personally conducted tourist adventure isn't my line. I'm this far, safe and hearty; and if I can't make the rest of the trip on my own, I'm a duffer!"

The level sunshine was cool despite its radiance. The wind, which had faltered for a little while just after sunrise, now blew in fresh and steady from glittering sea spaces. Gleaming lines of surf slid shoreward, burst in thin froth on the sand, spread and vanished in bubbles; and ever three new white lines blossomed from the deep to flash and run and vanish. Marlow inhaled the brisk, salty breeze and gazed at the singing surf, planning that he would soon get to his feet and go southward thereon along the sand to the little village of fishermen marked on his map and there hire canoes and canoemen for the ascent of the Orisquibo.

It was all very simple. Should the canoemen show any signs of dishonesty then he would teach them better. A firm hand and a watchful eye were required and both were his, already proved. He would pass the house on the hill without so much as "by your leave." If the river did not belong to that old woman, then what right had she to police it?

His eyes closed. The green cigar slipped from his fingers and smoldered on the sand. His head nodded, heavy with the gusty music of the surf and the palms. His chin nestled on his chest. He slept.

Marlow awoke suddenly and sprang to his feet at the moment of opening his eyes. His right hand went to his pocket as he made a swift and apprehensive survey of his surroundings—but he did not produce the gun. Instead, he stared in abashed astonishment at the men before him, realizing that he had been entirely at their mercy for minutes, for an hour perhaps. But a minute would have been long enough—a second, even.

The men, six in number, sat on the sand in front of him. They were of the color of roasted coffee beans. They wore hats and scanty cotton drawers. Their noses were high and thin. One wore a shirt; and that was the one who smiled faintly and fleetingly and got lightly to his feet.

"Canoe?" he queried.

Three long dugout canoes lay beached behind him.

"But who sent you here?" asked Marlow. "Whose men are you?"

The spokesman of the six shook his head, placed a finger on his own breast, and said "Poppy," then turned slightly, pointed southward along the coast, and said "Orisquibo."

"Orisquibo," Marlow repeated after him. "Right you are! But how did you know I was here? Who sent you—you and your canoes?"

"Canoes!" exclaimed Poppy, smiling and nodding and holding up his right hand with the thumb and little finger palmed. "Orisquibo," he added, making motions with both arms as if paddling with desperate energy. Then he said a great deal more, but in a language unknown to the adventurer.

"Can't you talk English?" asked Marlow.

"Inglis?" asked the other, evidently in a haze, but anxious to oblige.

Marlow walked forward to the canoes. Poppy followed him and the five shirtless ones followed Poppy. Marlow pointed to the canoes, one by one, then to Poppy and each of his followers.

"How much?" he asked.

Poppy gazed at him hopefully and anxiously, but finally shook his head. Marlow produced a coin from his pocket, a silver half dollar, and exposed it between thumb and finger.

"How much?" he asked again, again indicating the canoes and the assembled canoemen. "Orisquibo," he cried, as an afterthought, waving a hand inland.

Poppy's face lightened with intelligence. He nodded his head, eyed the half dollar intently for a second, pointed at the sun, then at the eastern horizon and then, sweeping a wide arc with his hand, leveled it at the western hills showing low and blue above sultry jungle. All this clearly indicated a day. Marlow nodded. Poppy pointed at the coin, then raised both his hands with all the fingers extended.

"Ten," said Marlow. "Ten half dollars. Five dollars a day for six men and three canoes; and I had to pay those blackguardly fishermen fifty dollars! This sounds too good to be true—but it's worth a try."

He nodded to Poppy and pointed to his boxes, bags, and bundles.

Poppy and his five were expert and willing canoemen and efficient servants despite their ignorance of Marlow's mother tongue. They asserted their utter ignorance of English with shaking heads and despairing gestures and yards of gibberish. Marlow pretended to believe them—but he suspected them strongly of being clever liars. More than this, he suspected them of being allies or servants of the mysterious Madame DeSalberry and so robbers as well as humbugs, as likely as not. In his opinion, they were the Queen of the Orisquibo's outer guard. The chances were that they had paddled and cooked and carried for all six of the adventurers mentioned by Laval and could talk English as easily as smoke cigarettes. But those six had adventured on the river with madame's consent! They had doubtless bought their complete equipments and stores from the old woman and paid toll to her in many more ways besides. Marlow wondered what Poppy's instructions were concerning uninvited adventurers.

The mouth of the Orisquibo was wide and its lower reaches were deep and sluggish. Mangroves bordered it; and behind those dismal trees, along both shores, ran savannas of varying depth and interminable length backed by tangled jungles. The village at the river's mouth, the home of the canoemen, was a poor affair.

Noon rests were long; and it was not until close upon sunset of the second day on the river that Marlow sighted the house on the hill from the hindmost of the three canoes. His canoe, Poppy's canoe, was more than a mile below the house when he first made it out. The hill was less of a hill than he had pictured, a wooded mound rising abruptly from the savanna at a distance of half a mile or more from the river. White walls and a red roof gleamed through the trees on the summit.

Marlow sat amidships, facing forward, with his most highly valued possessions stowed in his immediate front and rear. He pointed a hand at the distant house and at the same time looked over his shoulder at Poppy who paddled in the stern.

"Who lives there?" he asked, raising his eyebrows to point the question.

Poppy looked, shook his head, raised his paddle from the water, and struck the haft sharply on the gunwale three times. The steersmen of the other canoes glanced back at the sound. Poppy motioned toward the far side of the river, then dipped his paddle again and swung the bow toward the northern shore. The others followed his example. Poppy put his weight into his work and the bowman did the same. The others also mended their speed. The three long canoes raced for the farther shore nearly half a mile away.

This was not what Marlow had expected. Now if ever was the time for the canoemen to show themselves in their true colors, and yet here they were paddling away from the vicinity of Madame DeSalberry's house as if in fear for their lives. Again Marlow glanced over a shoulder at the headman. He saw that Poppy's face was somewhat distorted by the earnest efforts of the muscular arms; and then, as their eyes met, he read mental as well as physical distress in the coppery visage.

"What are you afraid of?" he asked.

The other did not answer, but continued to dig desperately at the water with his broad blade.

"Here's a queer thing," reflected Marlow. "This fellow seems to be as anxious as I am to avoid that old woman. This must be an independent lot of rivermen. Looks as if I had fooled the Queen of the Orisquibo this far, at least. First trick to me. Little Laval rather overdrew her importance and vigilance, I fancy."

Once in the shade of the mangroves on the northern shore, the sweating canoemen again turned their prows upstream—but, taking the pace from Poppy, they continued to ply their paddles as if for a wager. The three canoes slid along in file within a few feet of the brown roots, in a screen of drooping, trailing vegetation.

"The old girl must be a hummer," said Marlow to himself.

The sun dipped, the brief twilight faded swiftly after it, and the stars appeared. Then Poppy struck on the gunwale again and the canoes slid out clear of the forest screen. The strokes of the paddles slowed as if immediate danger were passed—but it was not until two hours later that Poppy ran his prow ashore with the air of one who has completed a day's work. A fire was lighted and Marlow's hammock and mosquito bar were slung in ten minutes. Odors of coffee and strange cookery soon gave a tang to the stagnant air.

Marlow stretched his legs by walking around the fire a dozen times. After that, he retired to his hammock, and there his dinner was served to him by Poppy's own hands. He ate with relish, took quinine with his coffee, and then lit a green cigar. He felt a sense of security, a thing to which he had been a stranger ever since his departure from the town on the coast. This was due to the sudden change in the attitude of his mind toward his six canoemen. He had seen with his own eyes that they were as anxious as he was to avoid and outwit Madame DeSalberry and her people. Good! He and they were not only in the same canoes but in the same boat so far as the Queen of the Orisquibo was concerned.

They were good canoemen and good cooks, and now he believed them to be honest. So sharp was his distaste for Madame DeSalberry by this time—for his own conception of her—that the fact that Poppy and his fellows were not in league with her was in itself quite sufficient to warm his heart toward them.

Marlow and his party encountered swift water for the first time three days after passing the house on the hill. There was strenuous paddling, a certain amount of towing with ropes, and at one point they were forced to unload the canoes and make a portage. Between the house on the hill and the place of the portage they had met only one small party of river folk and one solitary fisherman. Poppy had talked to these with an air of one confiding secrets of state. They had passed two villages under cover of night, seen the red waverings of fires through the mangroves and heard the barking of dogs.

They came upon the first sand bar five or six miles above that first reach of white water. Marlow, all agog for the life, wanted to unpack there and commence operations immediately. Poppy knew better than that and shook his head and pointed forward. So they passed that bar, and another and yet another. They fought their way into the lower hills, up roaring reaches of swift water. They made five portages in one sweating day. At last Marlow refused to go a yard higher, without first testing the quality of the sand.

Two days of hard work on that bar failed to produce even a glint of gold. Poppy pointed upstream—but Marlow shook his head and went at it again. Next day he got the color—a pinch of coarse gold. He drove himself and the canoemen; and after five days of sweltering toil on that bar he had an ounce of gold.

"It's here, right enough," said Marlow, "but not in sufficient quantities to constitute a practical business."

Poppy pointed upriver and Marlow nodded. Camp was struck, and the battle against the swift river was resumed.

There was gold in the sands of the Orisquibo, as Laval had said. The trick was to find enough of it. On the morning after leaving the bar of the laborious and inadequate ounce of gold, they came to the foot of a long reach of black and white water. It was heavier than any rapid through which the canoes had been towed, and yet to carry around it would mean a portage of more than half a mile. For a few minutes the canoes swung in the deep pool where great clots of foam circled slowly, while they considered the way. Then Poppy herded them all ashore, rigged a line to the bow of one, manned the stern himself and set the five to the towing. Marlow followed close behind the towmen, fending the bow of the canoe off the rocky shore with a pole. Poppy kept the narrow craft steady with his weight and broadest paddle—but even so, water was shipped by the tubful. The passage was accomplished at last, however; and after a short rest the second canoe was likewise worked up to comparatively calm water. After another brief rest, the line was fixed to the third and last of the loaded canoes.

For fifty yards all went well with the third canoe. Poppy crouched like a great ape in the wriggling stern, stroking and steadying with his wide blade and shouting directions at the fellows ashore; the five pulled like plow horses; and Marlow jumped along the spray-wet bowlders and fended off the lurching craft as if his whole future depended upon his present agility. And then the unexpected happened, as it so often does on the best regulated expeditions.

The line broke with a crack like a rifle shot. The five fell to earth in a kicking heap; the canoe slid back and swung outward and turned over in the sloshing rapids; and Marlow, suddenly relieved of all resistance to his fending pole, lost his balance and plunged head and shoulders and arms into the river. Marlow pulled back and scrambled to his feet. He saw the canoe plunging sluggishly like a log, articles of his equipment now wallowing on the surface and now smothered in foam, Poppy's great paddle riding the "ripples," but neither hair nor hide of Poppy. He turned and followed the course of the canoe for twenty jumps; and then he glimpsed something for a second—a hand and arm suddenly elevated, suddenly immersed again. He tore off his boots and plunged into the river.

Marlow was a powerful swimmer. But now he felt more like a wrestler struggling with snakes and wild cats than a swimmer. His legs were flung one way and his shoulders another. He was pulled down, heaved up, rolled over. But he kept his mouth shut, his wits clear and his eyes open. He caught glimpses of the five on the bank following him down and waving their arms. Again he saw something of Poppy, this time his head of straight, black hair awash for an instant.

He raced straight for it down the twisting currents and dived where he had seen it. He gripped something—hair for a certainty! He held on to it with his left hand and clawed the surrounding smother with his right. He arose through churning depths of brown, green, amber, and white, maintaining his grip all the while on that heavy hair. He reached sunshine for a moment, filled his tortured lungs, renewed his hold on Poppy, and sank again.

After that it was like a fight in an agelong nightmare. He was conscious of the depths and the surface of the deep pool below the rapids. He was conscious of being relieved of his burden and then dragged and lifted ashore; and then all the world went purple and black.

Marlow was absolutely sure of the loyalty of his six canoemen after his daring rescue of Poppy from the river. Every man of them showed it in his manner, his looks and his works—in everything except his speech. They operated again in a place of flashing movement and resounding clamor, in a mist of flying spray, between rocky banks overhung by twisted jungle. Marlow had lost one third of his outfit in the accident in which he had come so near to losing his headman, but he neither drooped nor wavered on that account. He had still enough to go on with for three weeks or more. His tent and the canoe had been salvaged. The loss of the medicine chest was the thing that hit him hardest, for there was all his blessed quinine.

Marlow found gold up there among the waterfalls, specks and grains and tiny nuggets of the fascinating stuff in quantities sufficient to place the venture on a commercial basis. Close upon an ounce was washed one day and something a little better than half an ounce day after day.

Marlow often explored beyond the operations of his faithful six, making his way from jutting rock to rocky ledge, between and around the ripped and plunging channels, testing every rift and pocket of sand among the clamoring menaces.

One day, while working at the edge of a green arc of water, with the steep and jungle-crowned bank looming above his left shoulder, he felt suddenly that he was being observed. He started, glanced up and beheld a face regarding him from the jungle greens and browns. For the time of six amazed heartbeats he beheld it, gazing upward at it eye to eye, and then he lost it. It was gone as though it had never been; and yet he stood staring, wide-eyed, for a full minute.

"It couldn't have been," he said. "Impossible! My eyes played me a trick."

But he climbed the bank and blundered around in the dense and snarled growths for half an hour. He returned to the spot from which he had seen the face, bathed his eyes, and set to work again. Here he was using one of the simplest contrivances for the washing of gold-bearing sands, an iron pan. Poppy had taught him the trick of it, and now he was an expert. Squatted at the edge of the swift water, washing the fine brown sand gradually away, the tireless motion of his hands suddenly ceased. He stared at the reduced contents of the pan.

Were his eyes playing tricks with him again? He slid the stuff from side to side slowly, felt it with his fingers, then fell to washing it again with breathless intentness. At last all the sand was washed away and only the gold was left. He poured the precious stuff from the pan to the palm of his left hand. It filled the palm of his hand. From his hand he transferred it with infinite care to a little bag of stout canvas. He weighed the bag in one hand, then in the other. He opened it and peered in at the coarse, irregular gold. It was there, beyond a shadow of doubt. It was real, this gold of the Orisquibo—three ounces of reality, if a grain. And all from one pan!

Poppy found his master still at work four hours later. The circumscribed pocket of sand was almost all washed away, and the little bag contained eight or nine ounces of gold. The sun beat straight down into that narrow place of rocks and torn waters—but despite the heat and Poppy's protests, Marlow continued at his work for another hour. He stumbled several times on his way back to camp.

Marlow emptied the pocket that day, taking sixteen ounces of gold from it in all. Next day he struggled higher, searching every crevice he came to in which there was any deposit of sand or soil. The apprehensive sensation of being observed came to him twice during the morning, and though he looked up swiftly each time at the nearest point in the screen of jungle, he failed to detect either face or eyes of any observer. He wanted to see that face again, and at the same time he was relieved at not seeing it. He feared it because he knew it to be a creation of his own eyes and he longed for it because of its beauty. Again Poppy urged him, with gestures and grimaces, to remain in camp throughout the afternoon—but he refused absolutely; and when the devoted fellow tried to follow him upstream, he drove him back with threats of his dire displeasure.

The sunshine was level from the west and the rocky gorge was flooded with amber twilight when Marlow looked up suddenly and saw the face for the second time. As before, only the face was visible. It shone from the sun-burnished greens and browns of the jungle wall, red-lipped, dark-eyed, alive—as alive as a bird or a flame of fire. Its expression was mutable—abashed, anxious, questioning.

Marlow knew it to be the creature of his own sun-dazzled vision or disordered imagination, and yet it fascinated him like witchery. Its fascination was stronger than that of the river gold—so strong that the pan fell from his hands and lay unheeded at his feet. He knew that he needed quinine, he even suspected that he needed something for his liver; and yet he stood and gazed at the face which he knew to be no face, with unveiled eagerness and delight in his eyes. He moved a pace toward the bank—and the vision was gone!

He sprang forward, leaping blindly but in safety from bowlder to bowlder, clambered up the bank in hot haste and broke violently into the jungle. He laughed derisively at himself as he smashed his way here and there in pursuit of that which he knew did not exist. He felt strangely, crazily exhilarated! But suddenly a sobering dizziness assailed him, the coppery twilight of the jungle changed and darkened to purple against his eyes and he sank to the ground.

Marlow got slowly to his feet ten minutes later, made his way slowly out of the tangle of trees and vines and down the rocky bank, knelt and bathed his face and head and arms in the swift water. He was thus employed when discovered by the trusty Poppy.

No gold had been found that day, either down on the big bar or up among the waterfalls. But Marlow did not care. He tried to, but he couldn't manage it. And he tried to worry about the evident ill condition of his eyes and liver—but that, too, in vain. He felt entirely too hazy and comfortable and airily exhilarated to take such things as health and business seriously. Poppy gave him quinine that night—a biting dose of it in a glass of rum and water. He recognized the bite and he wondered vaguely where Poppy had obtained the drug; but he did not worry. Poppy was a clever fellow and he, Marlow, was a clever fellow. Poppy could find quinine in the wilderness, and he could find beauty where no such beauty existed. He was cleverer than Poppy!

Marlow spent the greater part of that night in a state between sleep and waking, in a haze of visions that were half dreams, half conscious thoughts: But he was up betimes in the morning, clear of head though somewhat tremulous of hand and eager to be alone among the little waterfalls and darting chutes. He remembered the face, but now as a thing unreal, as a dream. All his thoughts now were on the gold.

He got away from camp, shook Poppy off his trail—so he thought—and climbed and scrambled toward the place where his practical labors had ended so suddenly on the previous evening. Within an hour and thirty minutes of leaving camp he was again in the exact spot from which he had last seen the vision of the face. He found his pan as he had left it, overturned on the sand. He rested for ten minutes, then knelt above the overturned pan and lifted it—and there, in the sand that had spilled from it the night before, was gold!

Marlow stared at the color, then he set to work at washing the stuff with feverish haste. Yes, it was here! In this panful, at least. He thrilled with the greedy joy and wonder of it; and then, suddenly, he felt that other thrill. He raised his head and looked up. There it was again, that observant face of witchery! And now there was a light of recognition in the eyes and a suggestion of smiling about the lips.

Again Marlow forgot his mission on the Orisquibo and the vanity of pursuing figments of a fevered imagination; again he dropped the pan, leaped from rock to rock, climbed the bank, and tore his way into the jungle. There sudden weakness and dizziness overcame him again. He retraced his steps painfully, with a weight of weariness across his neck and shoulders, staggered out of the tangle and fell. He clutched at vines, at soil, at knobs of rock—but all in vain.

Poppy carried his master back to camp.

Fever, a touch of sun and a broken head, constitute a combination of physical distresses not to be ignored by even the most robust of adventurers. Marlow made no attempt to ignore or combat the fate which had overthrown him. For the space of several days and nights he failed even to realize it. He lay in his hammock, only dimly conscious.

Nights and days passed uncounted by him. He lived in a world of unreflective, uncontrolled mental activities into which the anxious and vaguely recognized visage of the faithful Poppy swam at intervals. Here were neither doubts nor fears. He delved lightheartedly in golden sands, dived and played in pools of amber water without effort, and ran through endless jungles without fatigue in the pursuit of a face forever appearing and forever vanishing. Once when he was in the borderland, hazily conscious of the hammock and the mosquito bar and the canvas roof, he saw the face above him, gazing down at him. He raised his hand to touch it—and it was gone!

The fever passed, leaving Marlow as weak as a baby and indifferent to everything except his memories of the playtime world from which he had emerged; and in this state he was carried a day's journey down the valley in his hammock. Next morning he was transferred from the hammock to a mattress in Poppy's canoe and the journey was continued. An awning of woven grasses was rigged above him. The canoe was run ashore frequently so that Poppy might feed him with fresh milk and limewater, eggnogs and quinine. He accepted all this as a matter of course for two days—even the fresh milk and the fresh eggs.

On the third day after his transfer from the hammock to the canoe, Marlow began to ask questions and protest at Poppy's high-handed procedure. But for all the effect it had on Poppy, he might better have saved his breath to smoke cigars with.

"What's all this about? Where are you taking me? Where d'you think you're going to? Who the devil told you to come down-river? Take me back, d'ye hear! Wait until I get onto my feet again and I'll teach you a lesson, you wooden dummy! I'll teach you English with a stick, confound you!—and obedience, too, damn your eyes! —and manners into the bargain!

"Where are you bound for? What's your little game? I've got business upriver, d'ye hear? Oh, Lord! if I had my pistols, I'd show you what I mean! Where are my pistols?"

And so on, only more so, every half hour. But Poppy did not so much as bat an eye and the indignant invalid did not once refuse to take his nourishment. An eggnog is an eggnog, especially so if laced with rum aged ten years in a sherry cask and ten years in a jug, whether you are being taken up country or down.

Marlow slept heavily that night.

Marlow awoke in a bed. It was a real bed in a real room. Sheets of fine linen lay beneath him and lightly over him. A door opened and a person in white entered with a tray and came swiftly to the bedside.

"Laval!" exclaimed Marlow.

"Drink this, my dear friend," said Laval, stooping over him with a long glass.

Marlow obeyed. Then, "Where am I?" he asked.

"In my mother's house," replied Laval. "My name is Laval DeSalberry—John O'Malley Laval DeSalberry at your service."

His smile was affectionate, but embarrassed and conciliatory.

"So that's your sort, is it?" returned Marlow. "A liar and a trickster! I don't quite see your game, but I see that I've lost my venture. A safe investment for two thousand pounds! But I didn't bring much of it in with me, you'll be sorry to hear! However, I'm in your power."

"Not so fast," begged the other. "Listen to me, my friend; and after that, when you are strong enough, go your own way, up river or down. But now give me your attention. My mother was born on the Orisquibo, but not in this house. Her father's house was in the hills and was shaken down by an earthquake many years ago. Vast wealth of lands and cattle and slaves was his. My mother had brothers and sisters, all older than herself, all born to misfortune. The girls were educated in the cities and married to grandees, with consideration of nothing save family pride. It was the custom of our class and country in those days—but the results were tragic in the cases of my mother's sisters.

"One soon died by her own hand, one fled into shameful oblivion with a lover, and the third retired from the world, took the veil, when her husband was slain in a mad revel by one of her own brothers. Both brothers came to violent deaths. The wrath of Heaven had descended upon the proud and heartless race of DeSalberry. Then came young O'Malley to the Orisquibo country, in search of gold. He saw my mother on the river—a young girl whom her parents had hidden from the world in fear and remorse —the only remaining child of that house.

"There was romance, my friend. There was love without thought of blood pride or worldly place. They were married by a country priest. Fear and grief had humbled my grandparents. Happiness followed, though lands and worldly power dwindled year by year. When the old house was shaken down, burying my grandparents in its ruins, this house was built.

"My mother vowed that no daughter of hers should ever risk such miseries as her sisters had known. She vowed that no daughter of hers should leave home until love had found her on this river. Fate brought Maltby into the country. You have met Lady Maltby. My mother repeated her vows to my father on his deathbed. Governesses and tutors, accomplished and elderly ladies and worthy priests, educated my sisters under this roof. Then came Dodds and

Dick Robinson; and in their cases Fate enjoyed my humble assistance. But they passed the tests. Others came, only to depart in ignorance of our family history and my mother's vows. They failed in the tests."

"Why do you tell this to me?" asked Marlow. "It's madness even if it's true!"

"It is sanity, my honest friend. Only the properties, the stage tricks, give it an air of madness to your English eyes—the quest of gold, the endless river, the mysterious jungle. The old way was madness."

"Is Poppy one of your servants, may I ask?"

"He is, and one of our best. I sent a message to my mother a week ahead of you, warning her that an honest, fearless, poor, and very independent English gentleman might be expected on the river at any time. I asked her to see that you came to no harm. I warned her that you suspected her of profiteering, perhaps even of robbery under arms, but that your adventurous spirit defied her to keep you from the gold of the Orisquibo. She is as clever as she is good, my mother. So she sent Poppy and his men down to the coast, with artful instructions. They found you asleep, with three fellows from the north creeping upon you with knives. The three fled. As for the rest, you know more than I do."

"Granted that all this is true, what do you want of me?"

"Nothing, my friend. When you are strong enough you may take Poppy and the others and return to your work among the waterfalls, or you may go down to the coast. The river and the labor of the river are at your disposal, for you have passed the tests of the river. Your gold and outfit are safe. You are your own master, my dear Marlow; and I really believe that your successes up in the foothills warrant further operations in the same locality. I congratulate you, my friend."

"All this is dashed decent of you, Laval—and I'm sorry for the rude things I've thought and said about Madame DeSalberry. I've made rather an ass of myself, I fear. I'd have behaved differently if you had told me the whole truth back in Bados, perhaps."

"Would you have come to the Orisquibo if I had told you the whole truth?"

"No! You're right, Laval. I wouldn't have come within fifty miles of it, and I'd have thought you a liar, and worse, into the bargain."

"True, my friend—so I did what I could."

"It still seems madness to me—but mighty decent! May I ask—just curiosity, you understand—if you—ah, have a sister—unmarried?"

"Yes, indeed. The youngest. Natella."

"Then I'll clear out in a day or two. Only thing to do under the circumstances, of course."

"You are free to stay or go, my friend. As for Natella—ah, I must speak seriously to her! She has led me to believe that you are already madly in love with her. I warned her that it was more likely an affection of the eyes than of the heart, due to the sun and the poison of fever."

Marlow raised himself on an elbow, his heart and brain thrilled by an amazing, bewildering suspicion.

"What do you mean?" he whispered. "Have I ever seen her?"

The other laughed gayly.

"You have pursued her into the jungle on several occasions," he answered. "She didn't want to run away from you, but her governesses dragged her away."

Marlow sank back on his pillow and lay silent for a full minute.

"Do I have to clear out?" he asked in a faint voice, staring straight up at the ceiling.

"My boy, my advice to you is to stick to the Orisquibo," replied Laval briskly. "Now I shall bring your breakfast."

## A FINE TRIBUTE

THE eighteen-year congressional service of John Jacob Esch, of Wisconsin, is an unbroken record of hard work to protect the public traveling on railroad trains. He fathered the idea of the steel car on railroads, the law shortening the working hours of railroad employees, the statute requiring report and examination of railroad accidents by the Interstate Commerce Commission, and other similar legislation. His prodigious activity in this field is his tribute to the memory of his brother who was killed in a railroad wreck.

# A Chat With You

AT odd times—say when we are going through a long tunnel on a train that burns soft coal, or sitting in a dentist's chair, or having our hair cut by a country barber who looks—and acts—like Jack Dempsey—at such times as these we have a habit of dreaming dreams, just to pass the time away. Here is our favorite dream:

One fine morning, just as we are leaving the house, the letter carrier, with a cheery greeting, hands us a long envelope. We are about to cast it aside, thinking it an advertisement, when we notice, on the upper left-hand corner, the important name of a famous firm of New York lawyers. With a steady hand, we open the envelope and unfold the letter. For a moment we read, then things begin to swim before our eyes. We try again and finally grasp it. The truth sinks in, the meaning penetrates, the message gets across, understanding dawns upon us. A relative, hitherto unknown, has most opportunely and obligingly died, leaving us his entire fortune. The lawyers have attended to everything. The inheritance taxes are paid, the will probated. There are no debts, no obligations, nothing but a simple, chaste, restrained, unornate five million dollars in government bonds. In confirmation, a yellow slip falls out of the envelope and we catch it deftly in midair. It proves to be a certified check for the first large wad of interest.

JUST now, the train comes out of the tunnel, the dentist hits a sensitive tooth, the barber asks us if we won't have a singe and shampoo. We have rehearsed the dream, up to this point, so often that not Henry Ford, not J. P. Morgan, not John D. Rockefeller could receive an unexpected five million with greater imperturbability than we. We challenge them to a contest. We could do it without batting an eyelash.

AS to what we would do with the money once we had it, we are not quite so sure. Sometimes we think one thing, sometimes another.

Sometimes we think we would like to go into business for ourselves, not humdrum, small-time stuff, but the kind of thing that Cecil Rhodes would have reveled in. We would like to swing big deals, control chains of banks, put through big engineering projects. We would be the Big Boss and astonish people at the way we took hold.

And then for a vacation, in midwinter we would start out for Southern California. There in the warm sunshine, we would ride and dance and golf and swim and play tennis. Yes—you said it—there would be a girl there, so pretty and clever and smart, that it would seem a miracle that she should be interested in us. And there would be another fellow and we would beat him to it. Not bad, so far, eh?

THEN again, in another mood, we might not do that at all. We might start out for a life of travel. Not the regular tour, but the kind of life that leaves a man hard and tanned. We could take in Alaska and try the Canadian Rockies. We could rough it anywhere.

Then, too, we might try the theatrical business. Everybody has a secret idea that he can act and manage a show and with five millions you could travel quite a way even in that business.

We might have leisure enough to take a whirl at baseball or football; we never gave ourselves a fair try-out at some things.

Whatever we went in for, we would want it to have a little more color, a little more interest—well, say a little more jazz in general, than the ordinary thing.

WE have heard people say that they would not take great riches if handed to them. Would we? Certainly. We would do it with such a flash of promptitude as to dazzle the bystanders. We hate to boast, but to take five million dollars is one thing we could do and do well.

Furthermore, in defiance of those who think money is a curse, we would like to send a million or so to each of our readers. Inasmuch as this magazine has the largest circulation in its class, a few minutes' figuring with pencil and paper will show the intelligent reader that such a feat would be scarcely a practical thing to do.

Were we to attempt such a thing, we would derange the finances of the world to such an extent that the Federal Reserve system and foreign exchange would be put, to express it crudely, on the blink.

Civilization would stagger to one side and the readers of THE POPULAR would be left to rescue starving Europe, single handed.

BUT although, balked in our benevolent wishes, humane considerations, and several other things, we cannot send you the actual cash, we can at least do something to make up for it. We can give you the *effect* of having five million, without any of the tedious details of cutting off coupons and paying income taxes.

When, where, how?

Two weeks from to-day. At any news stand. By seeing that you get your copy of THE POPULAR.

ALL the desirable things we have mentioned as possible to the man with money and more besides, happen in the next number.

It is the peculiar gift of the really great writer to take the reader with him in adventures so vivid and experiences so real that they become a part of life itself.

Do you want to know how it feels to do all sorts of interesting things, to know the sharp tang of life at its keenest? Five million *might* do this for you and might not. The next POPULAR is sure to.

# A $1000 Raise

"—Williams is making $1000 a year more than you are, but he is leaving the first of the month.

"You may not know it, Carter, but I've had my eye on you for some time—in fact, ever since I found out that you were using your spare time to read up on our business. That study has paid you, and us too, mighty well.

"Judging from the way you made good in your other positions I am convinced that you have the training and the ability to do Williams' work. Therefore, beginning with the first of the month you will be promoted to Williams' place at a $1000 a year more than you are now getting."

## You Want a $1000 Raise Yourself

and a position of which you can be proud. Our PROMOTION PLAN will help you get it. Carter's case is only typical of thousands of others who got big money and real jobs through our PROMOTION PLAN. It will work just as happily for you.

If you were to look through our files, you would find case after case of big success. Men and women with no more and probably less ability than you have are making good with astonishing progress. There is no reason why you should lose out in getting more money and substantial promotion. Luck or pull won't give it to you but—the PROMOTION PLAN will.

**DON'T TURN THIS PAGE** until you have made up your mind to find out HOW TO GET A $1000 RAISE. Put a mark on the coupon against the line of work in which you are interested and we will send you full information on our practical PROMOTION PLAN. Mark and mail the coupon today.

**AMERICAN SCHOOL**

**Dept. G74 Drexel Avenue & 58th Street, Chicago, U.S.A.**

**AMERICAN SCHOOL**

Dept. G74 Drexel Ave. and 58th St., Chicago

Send me full information on how the **PROMOTION PLAN** will help me win promotion in the job checked.

| | |
|---|---|
| .....Architect | .....Lawyer |
| .....Building Contractor | .....Machine Shop Practice |
| .....Automobile Engineer | .....Photoplay Writer |
| .....Automobile Repairman | .....Mechanical Engineer |
| .....Civil Engineer | .....Shop Superintendent |
| .....Structural Engineer | .....Employment Manager |
| .....Business Manager | .....Steam Engineer |
| .....Cert. Public Accountant | .....Foremanship |
| .....Accountant and Auditor | .....Sanitary Engineer |
| .....Bookkeeper | .....Surveyor (& Mapping) |
| .....Draftsman and Designer | .....Telephone Engineer |
| .....Electrical Engineer | .....Telegraph Engineer |
| .....Electric Light & Power | .....High School Graduate |
| .....General Education | .....Fire Insurance Expert |

Name.........................................................

Address......................................................

.............................................................

# BUY TODAY
# 10 MONTHS TO PAY

SPECIAL TERMS—Ten months' credit on any article selected from the SWEET catalogue. NO MONEY IN ADVANCE. Shipment made for your examination. First payment to be made only after you have convinced yourself that SWEET values cannot be equalled. If not what you wish return at our expense.

**SPECIAL VALUE**

**Sweet's Cluster**
7 Fine Diamonds set in Platinum. Looks like 1¼ carat solitaire.
**Only $3.80 a month**

## No Red Tape—No Delay

Every transaction CONFIDENTIAL. You don't do justice to yourself and your dollars unless you inspect our unusual values in Diamonds, Watches, Jewelry, Silverware, Leather Goods, etc. Send TODAY for SWEET DeLuxe Catalogue. Write NOW to Dept. 181-R.

**Capital $1,000,000**

"THE HOUSE OF QUALITY"
**L·W·SWEET INC.**
1650-1660 BROADWAY, NEW YORK

---

# 10 MONTHS TO PAY

For this
## Portable Typewriter

Now you can buy the famous, 9-pound National Typewriter on time—direct from the factory. Same as used by thousands of doctors, lawyers, bankers, salesmen, students, writers and business men in 31 countries. Every feature of best, standard size machines. 28 keys, 84 characters. Brand new—not a rebuilt typewriter. Neat, compact carrying case free with every machine. Send today for our 10 Days' **Free Trial Offer and 10 Months' Easy Payment Plan.**

***National Typewriter Co.,* Dept. 14J, *Fond du Lac, Wis.***

---

# Don't Wear a Truss

MR. C. E. BROOKS

**Brooks' Appliance, the** modern scientific invention, the wonderful new discovery that relieves rupture, will be sent on trial. No obnoxious springs or pads.

## Brooks' Rupture Appliance

Has automatic Air Cushions. Binds and draws the broken parts together as you would a broken limb. No salves. No lies. Durable, cheap. Sent on trial to prove it. Protected by U. S. patents. Catalog and measure blanks mailed free. Send name and address today.

**BROOKS APPLIANCE CO., 212F State St., Marshall, Mich.**

---

## Home Study
# Business Courses

The urgent need of business today is for high-salaried executives, managers and departmental specialists. Under the LaSalle Problem Method you can get, in your spare time at home by mail, under expert guidance, training which parallels actual business practice. The University's staff of 1750 people includes 450 business authorities, educators and assistants ready at all times to give prompt counsel and advice to enrolled members on any business question or problem. This is a service not obtainable from any other educational institution.

Write your name and address at the bottom and mail today. We will send full information and book of remarkable records of advancement made by LaSalle trained men; also our interesting book, "Ten Years' Promotion in One." Low cost and convenient monthly terms which anyone can afford. Money refunded if dissatisfied upon completion of course. Nearly 300,000 have enrolled. Find out what LaSalle training can do for you. Check and mail the coupon NOW.

**LaSALLE EXTENSION UNIVERSITY**
**The Largest Business Training Institution in the World**
**Dept. 1065-R Chicago, Ill.**

Gentlemen: Send without obligation to me information regarding course indicated below, also a copy of your interesting book, "Ten Years' Promotion in One."

- ☐ Business Management
- ☐ Higher Accountancy
- ☐ Traffic Management—Foreign and Domestic
- ☐ Railway Accounting and Station Management
- ☐ Law—Degree of LL.B.
- ☐ Commercial Law
- ☐ Industrial Management Efficiency
- ☐ Business Letter-Writing
- ☐ Banking and Finance
- ☐ C. P. A. Coaching for Advanced Accountants
- ☐ Modern Foremanship
- ☐ Personnel and Employment Management
- ☐ Business English
- ☐ Commercial Spanish
- ☐ Effective Speaking
- ☐ Expert Bookkeeping

Name................................................

Present Position................................................

Address................................................

---

# DIAMONDS WATCHES CASH or CREDIT

New "Vassar" Diamond Ring $115 Values
**$75**
Cash or Credit

Stores In Leading Cities

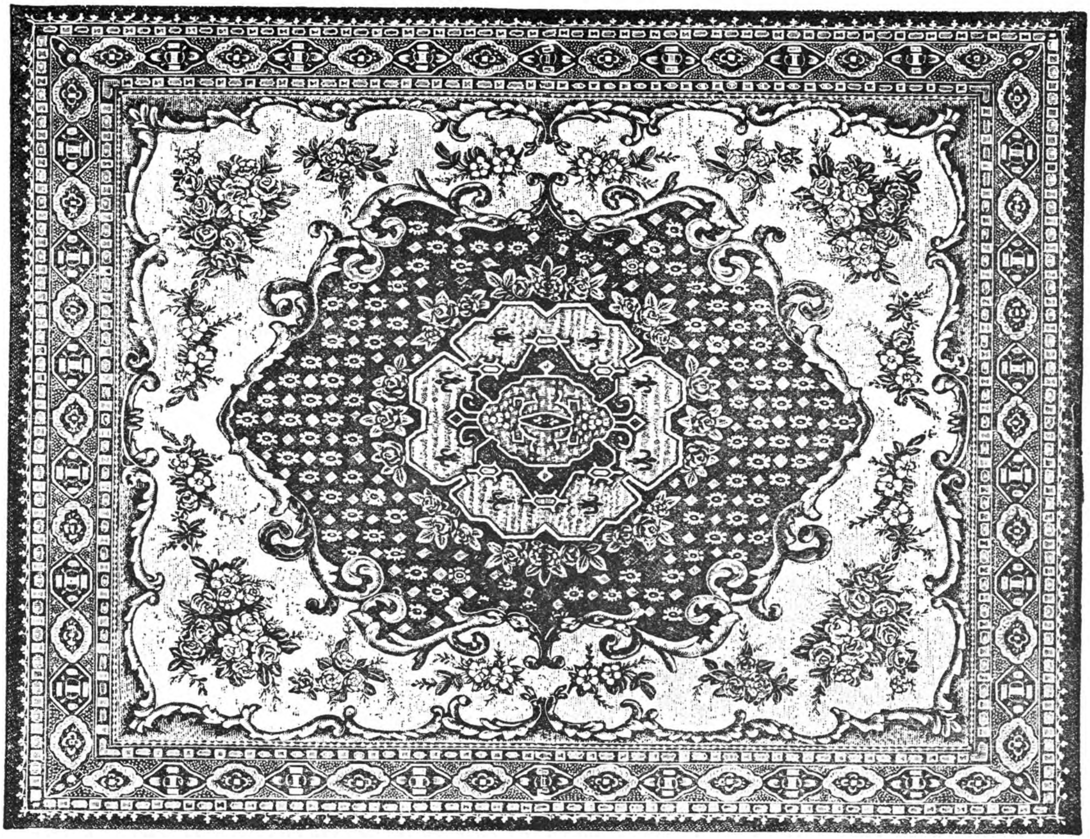
**DIAMOND PRICES REDUCED 33⅓%**

## Send for Catalog

Do your Gift buying early—NOW. Selections will be held for later delivery, on request. We pay shipping charges. Satisfaction guaranteed or money promptly refunded. Send for large 128 page Catalog telling all about our easy Credit Terms.

**Liberty Bonds Accepted**

**LOFTIS BROS & CO. 1858 THE OLD RELIABLE CREDIT JEWELERS**
**Dept. F222, 108 N. State St., Chicago, Ill.**



# $1 Brings this Seamless Wool Face Brussels Rug

***Hartman's Newest Pattern—Full Room Size, 9 Feet x 12 Feet***

Only $1 to send now—and we ship this magnificent seamless, wool face, tapestry Brussels rug. Use it *30 days* on *free trial*, then if not satisfied, return it and we refund the $1 and pay transportation both ways. If you keep it, take nearly a year to pay—a little every month. And note—the price is cut—you save over a third. Even before the war this rug would have been an amazing bargain at this phenomenally low price.

## Superb Coloring—Artistic Floral Medallion Pattern

***Woven from Fine WOOL Yarns*** A most artistic design. Soft, rich and harmonious colorings. Brown, tan, red, green and light colorings are beautifully blended. An attractive floral pattern with large medallion center, surrounded with harmonizing floral sprays; finished with a pretty border. Made seamless of fine wool yarns. **Order by No. 34CCMA16. Price $26.85. Send $1.00 now. Balance $2.50 monthly.**

**Nearly a Year to Pay** When our stock of these rugs is gone we may not have this particular pattern to send at any price. So act quick! You take no risk. Keep it or return it—30 days' free trial!

***IMPORTANT!***

This seamless wool face Brussels rug is a close, firm weave which gives it much greater durability than you get from the ordinary kind. Be sure to examine the texture and weight. Judge by actual quality and see what an amazing bargain you get in this rug.


392 Pages

## FREE BARGAIN CATALOG

392 pages of stunning bargains in furniture, rugs, linoleum, stoves, ranges, silverware, watches, dishes, washing machines, sewing machines, aluminum ware, phonographs, gas engines, cream separators, etc. 30 days' free trial on anything you send for—everything sold on our easy monthly payment plan. *Post card or letter brings it free.*

"Let Hartman Feather Your Nest."

# HARTMAN FURNITURE & CARPET CO.

**3913 Wentworth Ave.** Copyrighted, 1921, by Hartman's, Chicago **Dept. 3665 Chicago**

**Hartman Furniture & Carpet Co.**
**3913 Wentworth Ave. Dept. 3665 Chicago, Ill.**

Enclosed is $1.00. Send the Rug No. 34CCMA16. I am to have 30 days' free trial. If not satisfied, will ship it back and you will refund my $1 and pay transportation charges both ways. **If I keep it, I will pay** $2.50 each month until full price, $26.85, is paid. Title remains with you until final payment is made.

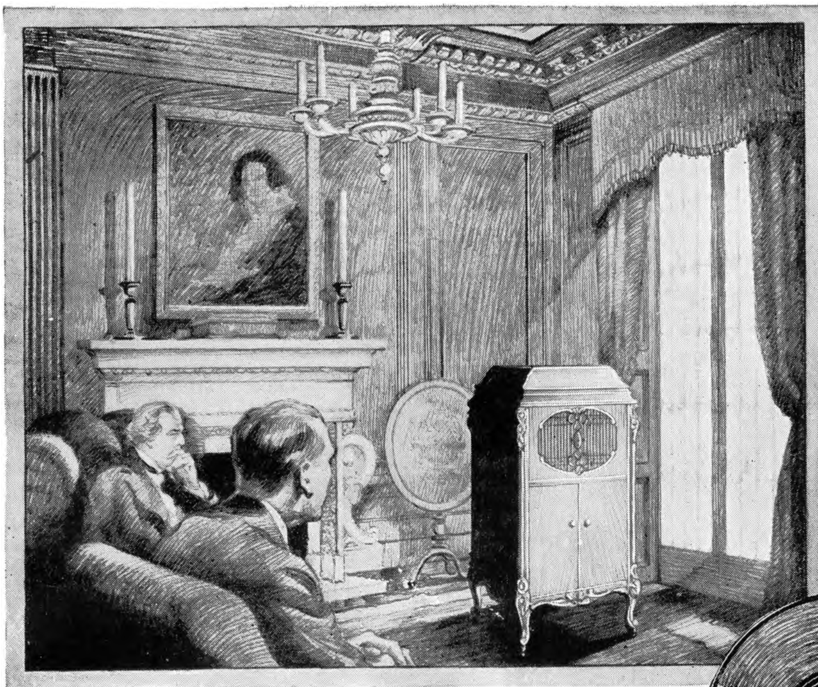
Name........................................................

Street Address..............................................

R. F. D........................Box No.............

Town.... ........................State...............

Occupation.....................Color...............



# What They Say
## in High Musical Circles

Ask any musical authority which phonograph he prefers. Ask music teachers, musicians, critics. And the number who say The Brunswick will surprise you.

Ask which *records* they prefer, and again you will hear The Brunswick.

And they will tell you, too, that while these records are sweeter and more beautiful, on *any* phonograph, the *ideality* is attained with a Brunswick Record on a Brunswick.

### *Exclusive methods the reason*

Due to *exclusive* methods of Reproduction and of Interpretation, Brunswick achieves perfect rendition of the so-called "difficult" tones—the piano, the harp, the human voice; attaining even soprano High "C" without "metallic" intrusion, "chatter" or vibration. *Methods which apply to no other phonograph or records.*

The Brunswick Method of Reproduction is *exclusively* Brunswick. The Brunswick Method of Interpretation, in producing records, has not been successfully imitated.

*Hence, buying any phonograph, without at least hearing The Brunswick, is a mistake. And to be without Brunswick Records is to miss much of what is best in music.*

Ask your nearest Brunswick dealer for a demonstration. The Brunswick plays all records—and Brunswick Records can be played on any phonograph. Hear, compare—then judge for yourself.


## Three Brunswick Super-Feature Records

The musical sensation of the day—widely discussed throughout the entire musical world. A revelation of what the new Brunswick Method of Interpretation is doing for phonographic music. *By all means hear them.*

10022 *Rustle of Spring* . *Godowsky*

13021 { *I'll Take You Home Again, Kathleen* . *Theo. Karle and Crescent Male Trio* / *Lass o' Killean* *Theo. Karle* }

10001 *Absent* . . . . *Chamlee*

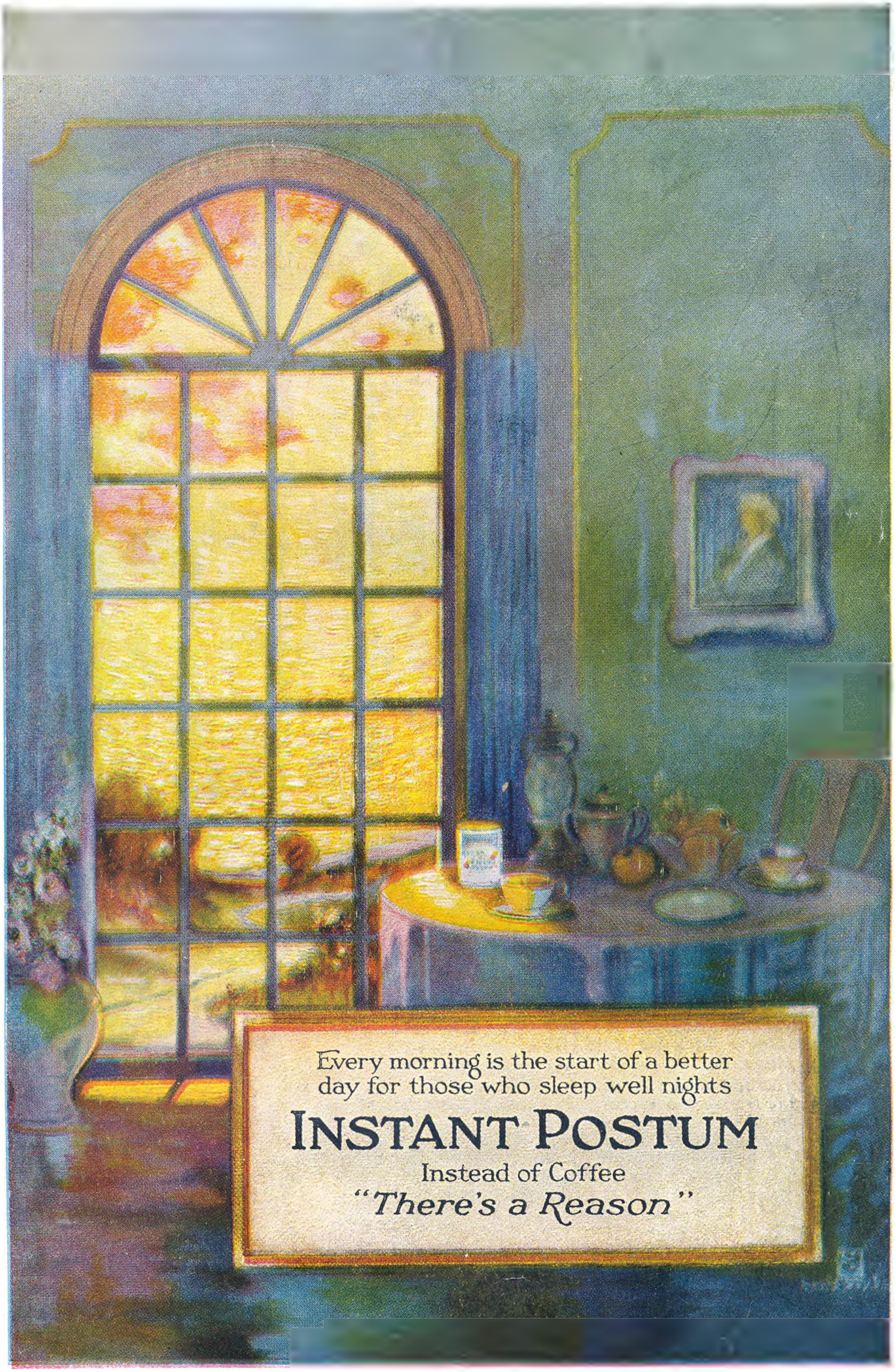
Any phonograph can play Brunswick Records.



THE BRUNSWICK-BALKE-COLLENDER CO., Chicago
Manufacturers Established 1845

*NOTE—New Brunswick Records are on sale at all Brunswick dealers on the 16th of each month in the East, and in Denver and the West on the 20th.*

# BRUNSWICK
PHONOGRAPHS AND RECORDS


Every morning is the start of a better day for those who sleep well nights
INSTANT POSTUM
Instead of Coffee
"There's a Reason"