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OCT. 7, 1923

The Popular Magazine

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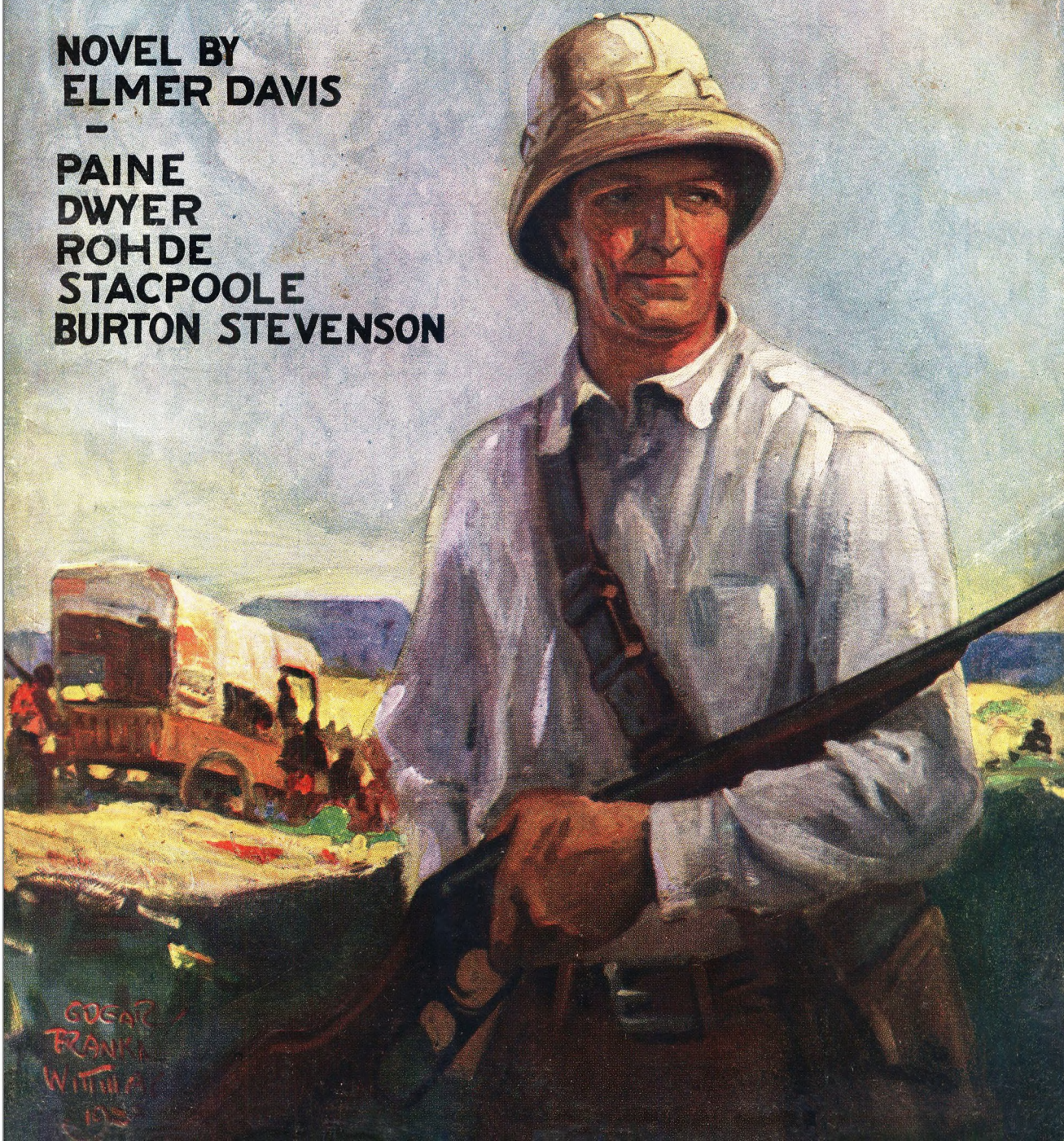
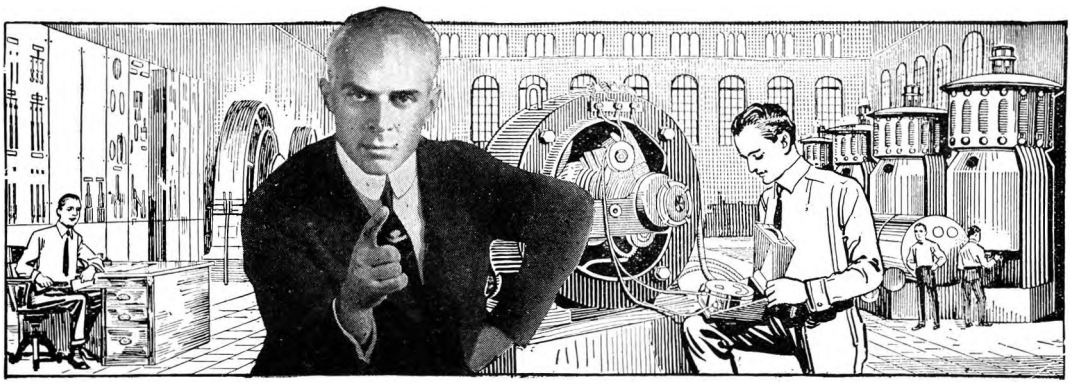


OCTOBER 7, 1923
VOL. LXIX No. 6

THE POPULAR MAGAZINE

20 Cents



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Dear Sir: You may send me entirely free and fully prepaid, a copy of your book, "How to Become an Electrical Expert," and particulars about your **Home Study Course** in **Electricity** and the **Free Radio Course.**

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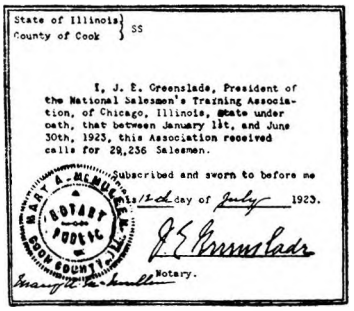
ARE you ready for a shock? Then, let me tell you that if you have average intelligence and can read and write, there is a quick and easy way for you to earn enough money to satisfy any average ambition. And after reading this offer, if you do not quickly make more money, you have no one to blame but yourself.

Don't take my word for it. By a simple test—you can make in the privacy of your home—you will know that every word I say is true—or otherwise. The test does not obligate you or cost you one penny. But make it! Then judge for yourself. It has proved to be THE opportunity for thousands. They have found the way to bigger pay—are now earning from five to twenty times as much as formerly. And the beauty of it is they enjoy every minute in the day's work. They are their own bosses.

The thousands who have made this test before you, and who are now making the money you would like to make, are now salesmen. Ninety-five per cent once thought they were not "cut out for selling" that salesmen were "born" and not made. They found it was a fallacy that had kept them in the rut. They discovered that anyone with proper training can sell, and they are making from $5,000 to $10,000 a year, because they had the vision to recognize opportunity.


State of Illinois } SS
County of Cook }

I, J. E. Greenslade, President of the National Salesmen's Training Association, of Chicago, Illinois, state under oath, that between January 1st, and June 30th, 1923, this Association received calls for 29,256 Salesmen.

Subscribed and sworn to before me this 12th day of July 1923.

MARY A. McMURRAY NOTARY PUBLIC COOK COUNTY, ILL.

J E Greenslade

Notary.

Thousands Have Proved It!

For instance, Ellis Summer Cook, 20 E. Jackson Blvd., Chicago, left a $25 a week job and last year made $9,000! H. D. Miller, another Chicago boy, was making $100 a *month* as a stenographer in July 1922. In September, 3 months later, he he was making $100 a *week* as a salesman. W. P. Clenny of Kansas City, Mo., stepped from a $150 a month clerkship into a selling job at $500 a month. He is making $850 a month now. M. V. Stephens of Albany, Ky., was making $25 a week. He took up this training and now makes 5 times that much. J. H. Cash of Atlanta, Ga., exchanged his $75 a month job for one which pays him $500 a month. O. H. Malfroot of Boston, Mass., stepped into a $10,000 position as a SALES MANAGER—so thorough is this training. All these successes are due to this easy, fascinating and rapid way to master certain invincible secrets of selling.

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As you will see by the affidavit to the left thousands of reputable selling organizations in America turn to this Association for their Salesmen. We can never take care of all the demands made on us for this better type of trained salesmen.

Make This Free Test at Once

Don't turn this page until you have clipped the coupon, filled it out, and sent it on its way. The test is contained in a free book, "Modern Salesmanship" which we will gladly send you without obligation. After reading the book through you will ask yourself the question it brings up. The answers will prove whether this is your opportunity or not. So mail the coupon NOW.

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

National Salesmen's Training Ass'n.
Dept. 4-R, Chicago, Ill.

Please send me without obligation on my part your free book, "Modern Salesmanship" which will enable me to test my ability at home, and full information about the N. S. T. A. System of Salesmanship Training and Employment Service.

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Address.....

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

Age..... Occupation.....

"THE ROGUE'S BADGE," a complete book-length novel by Charles Neville Buck, will make the next issue of the POPULAR a notable one. It is the story of a jockey who hails from the grim mountains of Kentucky and who is interested in sterner things than the winning of horse races. On the news stands October 20th.

Vol. LXIX OCTOBER 7, 1923 No. 6

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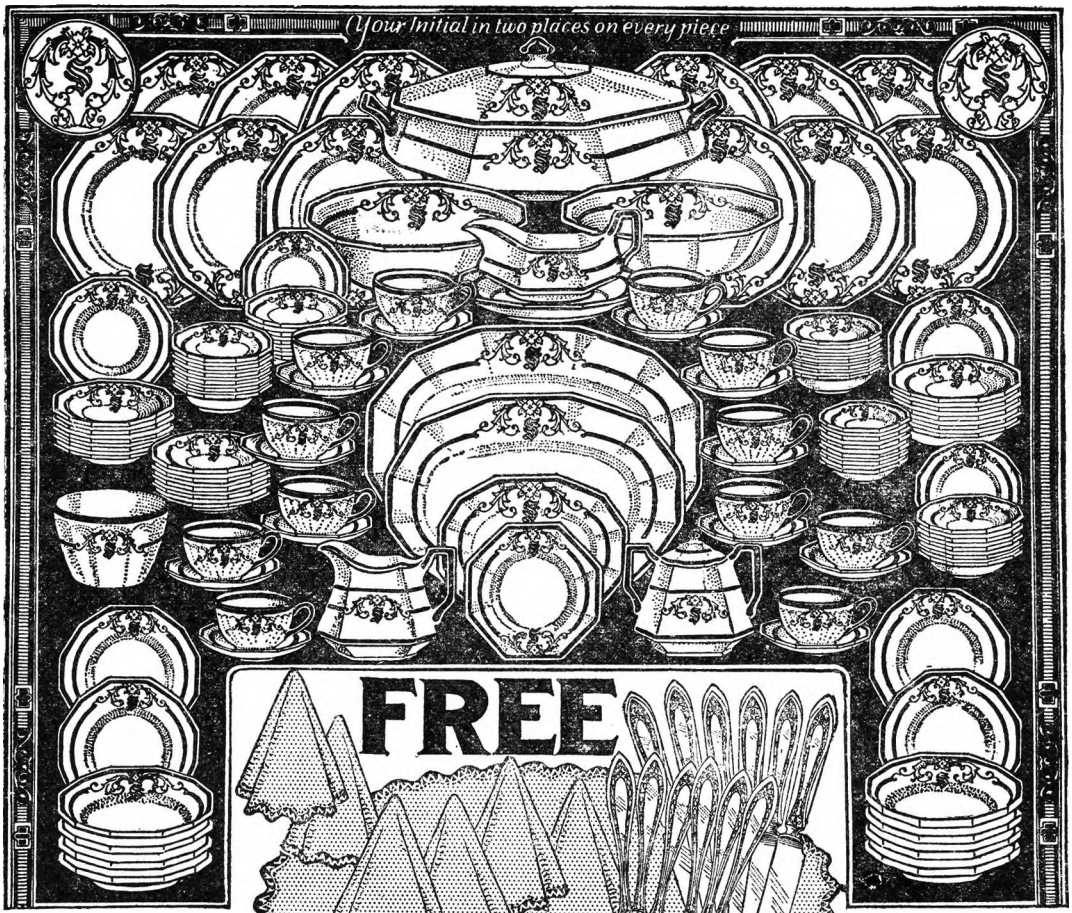

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1 Celery Dish, 8¾ inches
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Be sure to ask for our Free Book of 10,000 Furniture Bargains—anyway!

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Almost everybody knows the price of the famous Congoleum Gold Seal Art Rugs. They are advertised and sold at the same standard price everywhere. And bear in mind that you don't send us the full amount. Only one dollar now and the rest later—taking a year's time. Look everywhere else first if you wish — stores, catalogs, magazines and newspapers. You'll find no offer like ours.

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I SELECT PATTERN NO. . . . . .

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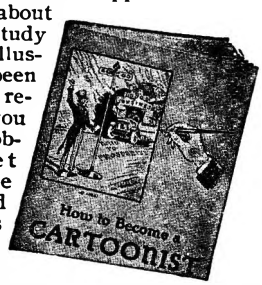

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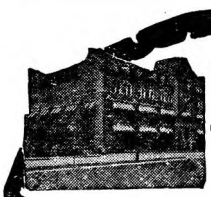

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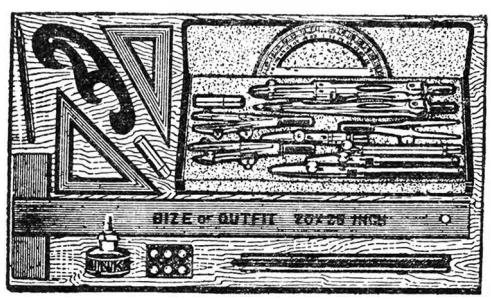

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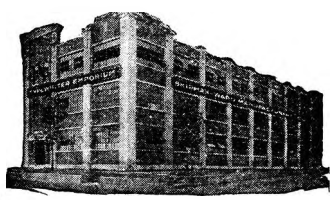

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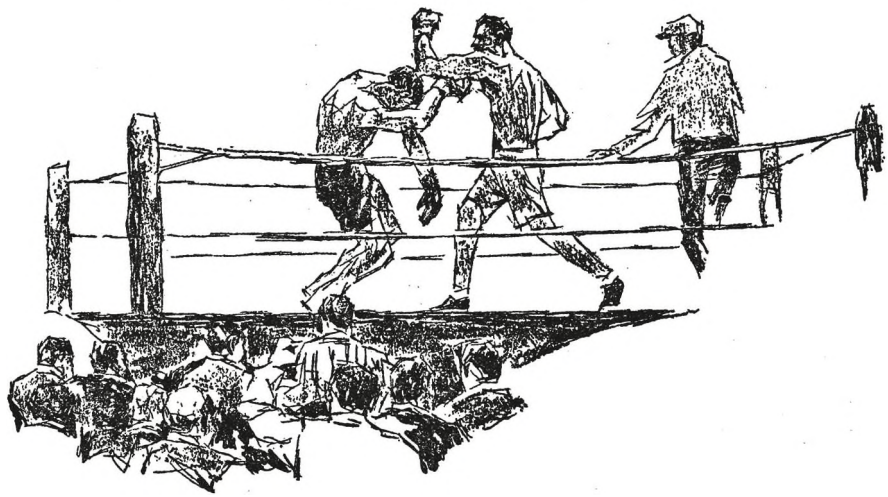


They See in the Dark

By Elmer Davis

Author of "The Winning of Hollisburg," "The Big-town Game," Etc.

Every once in so often—which is by no means often enough to satisfy our literary appetite—we discover a distinctly unusual piece of work, a product in which the intrepid author has boldly discarded the accepted forms, turned aside from the well-worn track of classic construction, and evolved a truly original concept which relies for its worth and its charm entirely upon the freshness and brilliancy of its execution and the cogency of its underlying theme. "They See in the Dark" is such a one. In length it is a novel, in weight it is a novel, but in presentation and conception it falls into no literary category. It is best described as a story—just a story—but what a story! The scene is Shelby, Montana, and the atmosphere is the atmosphere of Shelby during those surcharged days and nights of the big-fight week last summer. The theme is the spirit of youth, and high-heartedness, and fair play pitted against experience, and cynicism, and disillusion—a theme which any one can see exemplified without traveling to Shelby to witness a championship fight. And the moral is: If you haven't got owl's eyes don't try to play in the dark.—THE EDITOR.

(A Complete Novel)

CHAPTER I.

I FELT that I was making history that night. And it took some such conviction to sustain "Shad" Beesley and me as we shivered in the forward end of the dirty coal barge slowly making its way up the river under the insistent pushing of the little steamboat behind, with the waves of the Ohio, swift-flowing and whipped by a high wind, splashing against the barge and flinging cold spray into our faces. We felt like Cæsar crossing the Rubicon, for we were fourteen years old, both of us, and to-night was our first experiment in Living Our Own Life.

I had told my parents that I was spend-

ing the night with Shad, and Shad had told his parents that he was spending the night with me. It wasn't so hard to put that story over, then, for this was twenty years ago and telephones were rare in Adamsville. But in fact we were staying up all night, for the first time, which was bad; staying out all night, which was worse; and going to a prize fight, which was eternal damnation in the mind of Shad's people and my people and all our friends. The moral element of Adamsville had tried hard to prevent this fight, partly because it was a fight, partly because it was promoted by "Big Jim" Cort, proprietor of the Klondike Palace Saloon. They had invoked the sheriff in vain; they had telegraphed the governor with better luck, for the governor had ordered that this fight couldn't be held in Indiana. So Big Jim had set up a tent across the river, on the Kentucky shore, and announced that the fight would be held at midnight sharp—price of admission a dollar and a half, including transportation across the river.

That was long ago. I have come to middle life and respectability now, with no more crimes on my conscience than the minimum that no citizen of this well-regulated republic can avoid. But if I ever forge a check or crack a safe or buy a nomination I'll never get the thrill of utter, hopeless depravity, nor the relief that comes from consciousness of eternal and final damnation, with nothing more to worry about, that I had that night. Shad and I had planned this thing ever since we heard that there would be a fight. I suppose our parents would have suspected us if the fight had been held in town; but both of us were lazy, comfort-loving and rather mollycoddlish, and even if our people had thought us capable of the sin of going to a vulgar and degrading exhibition like this they'd never have believed that we'd undergo the hardship of crossing the river in an open barge on a cold November night. Moreover, it was known that neither of us had a dollar and a half.

This shortage had worried Shad and me a good deal. We supposed that maybe boys of fourteen could get in at a reduction, but we didn't know and we didn't dare ask. We couldn't have asked Big Jim anyway, for we didn't know him except by sight. Sons of church people were not supposed to associate with Big Jim, who had been a heavyweight of some local consequence around Cincinnati in his day and now maintained not only a saloon but a back room where men had been known to lose as much as twelve or fifteen dollars at a poker game on Saturday night. So there was awful trepidation in our hearts when we slipped down that night to the river front, where the sporting element of Adamsville was assembling in overcoats and arctic rubbers for this chill trip, and timorously asked Big Jim if he'd let Shad go over for eighty-five cents and me for a dollar and ten.

He grinned at us over the collar of his heavy turtle-neck sweater, out of a big genial face that was getting flabby.

"Kids of your age free," he said. "But what did you tell your daddies?"

"Oh, they know all about it," said Shad, beginning boldly and tailing off into a half-hearted gasp.

"Yes they do!" said Big Jim. "Well, don't you worry. I'll never tell 'em."

And he never did—perhaps because he knew that neither Shad's father nor mine cared to be seen speaking to such a disreputable character. Perhaps, too, he had let us in free because he welcomed two new recruits for the sporting element of Adamsville, deserters from the enemy's camp. That was what all our friends would have said if they'd heard about it. But as I look back over a distance of time and space that permits a better perspective on Adamsville I suspect that perhaps, contrary to all the moral theories that had been taught us, Big Jim had a kind heart.

So here we were, with the line of winking arc lamps along River Street slowly diminishing behind us and the wavery gasoline flare in front of the tent across the river slowly growing larger; a cold wind whipping about our ears and cold spray dashing in our faces, and wicked joy in our hearts. Around us, puffing nickel cigars and discussing the chances of the fighters with the air of old-time fight fans, were the tough young men whom we knew well enough—youths who lounged on the Main Street curb and spat tobacco juice on the sidewalks, who loafed of afternoons at the ball park in the river bottom batting flies and grounders, and teaching us younger boys the rudiments of baseball and an assortment of near-humorous bad language that hasn't been wholly washed out of my mind in twenty years. There was a sprinkling, too,

of the higher sporting element—young men of the better families who went to Cincinnati to do their wickednesses and sometimes came home with extensive tales of winnings or losses at the Latonia track. Everybody there knew us, so we pulled down our caps and turned up our coat collars and stuck to our chill exposure in the front of the barge where we would attract as little attention as possible.

Emboldened by our success thus far and by the fact that the slim young man who stood just behind us with his hands in his overcoat pockets was a stranger, I said gallantly:

"Gee, I wish I had a cigarette."

"Well, you ain't got any," observed the more practical Shad. It was kind of him not to add that neither of us had ever made a success of smoking anything but corn silks. But the thin young man behind us drew a hand out of his overcoat pocket.

"Here's a cigarette, kid."

I knew I ought to take it, and be game. But hesitation gripped me. If I smoked it I'd get sick and all the scheming and expenditure of money that had gone into this evening would be wasted. Yet I didn't dare not be game. And as I hesitated the young man gravely put his cigarettes away with the warning:

"Perhaps we'd better not. These waves are pretty bad—it might make us seasick."

I had a suspicion he was making fun of me but I was glad to be out at any price. Then, to my amazement, he asked, as he might have asked a man of his own age:

"Well, what do you think of the fight?"

Shad looked at me and I looked at Shad; then he spoke up boldly:

"Leo Pfalzgraf ought to have it all over him, mister. He's twenty pounds heavier."

"So's a sandbag. Can Pfalzgrab fight?"

"You bet he can. Why, he's bouncer for Gus Piedelheimer's saloon. That's why Gus is backin' him. When Big Jim wants somebody to match up with Freddie Hess, Gus says to him, 'All right, I'll match Leo Pfalzgraf with him and see what's left of him.' He'll knock him out, I guess."

"Freddie Hess isn't a bouncer, then?"

"No," said Shad, swelling by the second with his new importance as an authority on fighters. "He doesn't do anything but lay around the livery stable and play seven-up and maybe wash a buggy now and then. Big Jim used to give him boxing lessons but he ain't so heavy as Pfalzgraf and he ain't had the experience."

"So Big Jim, the promoter, is backing Freddie Hess, is he?"

I thought it was my turn, now.

"No, sir, Harry Keeler of the barber shop is Hess' manager. Big Jim had to be the promoter because there was nobody else that —that knew how to do promoting, in Adamsville. So he got Keeler to be Hess' manager. Big Jim wanted to be referee, too, but Gus Piedelheimer had put up a side bet of a hundred dollars with him so he kicked about that."

"I should think he might," said the slim young man. "This is a winner-take-all fight, as I understand it, all being twenty-five per cent of the gate. That looks to me like about fifty dollars, leaving a hundred and fifty for Big Jim. Out of that he has to hire this barge and the boat to push it——"

"Yes, sir," said Shad proudly, for his father was wharfmaster, so he knew all about this. "The boat costs him twenty-five and the barge ten."

"And then he has to pay the referee——"

"They got a referee from Cincinnati," I put in proudly.

"Yes, I know him. Billy Trockenmaul. If Big Jim has a side bet on Freddie Hess, and he won't make much out of this fight unless he wins his bet; why, Freddie Hess will have to go down for about forty-five before he's counted out. I know Trockenmaul."

"Oh, are you from Cincinnati, too?" I asked.

"I'm 'Tod' Maree, of the *Evening News*."

"Oh!" we gasped in unison. If he'd said that he was President Roosevelt we couldn't have been much more awed. Not that we knew anything of Tod Maree except the name that we used to see over stories on the sporting page, but that was enough for kids of fourteen.

Then I had an afterthought.

"You won't put what we told you in the paper, will you, Mr. Maree?"

He grinned at us.

"Don't you care to be quoted?"

"Well, you see," I stumbled into desperate explanation, "our folks don't know we're here."

"Ah, I see. No, I won't use your names —that's a promise. Only I'd like to know them, just out of curiosity."

"William Beesley and Cleveland Wells."

"All right, fellows. Now I'm going to ask you a favor. Don't tell Big Jim you've been talking to me. My boss used to know him when he was a fighter; that's why he sent me down to cover this bum scrap. I've heard Big Jim's side of the story but there's no use hunting trouble in the office by letting him know I've been asking questions."

"All right, sir," Shad spoke for both of us. "We'll all three keep still, eh?"

Maree laughed.

"A guilty secret binds us."

Then the barge scrunched against the pebbles on the Kentucky shore and we clambered out on the beach, a hundred yards below the spot where the gasoline flare blazed before the tent. Big Jim leaped past us and ran on ahead.

"Come on, everybody. This way to the big fight."

CHAPTER II.

The wavering light was distant and deceptive. The crowd hurried along the beach, kicking out little avalanches of pebbles to roll down into the lapping waves, stumbling over driftwood unseen in the flickering shadows until it brought somebody down with a crash and a shower of curses. Off toward the tent an owl hooted, and somebody behind me groaned:

"I wisht I was a owl. They see in the dark."

A big bulk lumbered beside me, with a shorter, slighter man, not much bigger than Shad or myself, hopping along with him.

"You watch that driftwood, Leo," the little man was panting anxiously. "Don't you fall down and break nothing, now. We gotta lick this big stiff, 'cause it's just the same as lickin' Big Jim."

It was Gus Piedelheimer, manager and backer of his bouncer. I hid behind my coat collar once more, for the fewer people who recognized us the better. But Gus obviously was too much worried about the fight to pay attention to Shad and me. Why not? He had a hundred dollars on the side, and that was a lot of money for Adamsville.

But there was more to it than that. We boys knew all the scandal of the town that wasn't true. The real scandals of Adamsville, which were mostly money scandals, drifted down to us only late and distorted from the counsels of our elders. But we knew all about the business rivalry behind this fight, which could hardly be called a scandal, but was getting to be too acrimonious for mere competition.

Even the moral element could say little against Gus Piedelheimer except that they didn't like his business. He had inherited the Teutonia Sample Room, Pool Hall and Summer Garden from his father, who had kept the most inoffensive saloon in town. Its trade was mostly with the Germans who made up half the population, and it was ninety per cent a beer trade. Old Man Piedelheimer had never had a bouncer and never needed one; his customers usually drank a couple of seidels of Beautiful River Gold, the product of the local brewery, and then went on home. In summer he did a big bucket trade for home consumption, and when he died even the moral element admitted that we had lost a good citizen.

But Gus, taking over the business, found that times had changed. Germans of the third generation were growing up and taking more to whisky; and the big whisky trade of the town was done at Big Jim's. Moreover, the Klondike Palace was the headquarters of the sporting interest. Big Jim didn't manage the ball team but his money was known to be behind it. On the rare occasions when sporting men from Cincinnati, whatever their field, wanted to communicate with Adamsville they talked to Big Jim as the acknowledged representative of the town. And then there was that poker game in the back room that drew all the youths who were inclined to take a chance. The Klondike Palace was cutting in heavily on all the other saloons, even on the old-established Teutonia Sample Room. It had more to offer.

To make it worse, Gus Piedelheimer's ambition was to be a sportsman. Nobody in town looked less sporting than Gus, with his thin whitish-yellow hair cut close, his feeble whitish-yellow mustache, his diminutive size; as an athlete he was a joke and as a patron of sports he was not much better. He had organized a ball team, managed it, and even tried to play right field till his own captain rebelled against him; but the town team backed by Big Jim had beaten it twice, so badly that Gus' outclassed outfit disbanded in shame. He tried to start a poker game in the back room, but Big Jim was a friend of the mayor and the city marshal, so that didn't last long. He hired

big Leo Pfalzgraf as bouncer but there was hardly ever anybody to bounce at the Teutonia Sample Room. Bounceable persons all flocked to the Klondike Palace, where Big Jim brushed them out with one hand if they started anything.

So Big Jim was not only cutting in badly on Gus' trade but was standing immovable and insurmountable in the way of Gus' life ambition to be the leader of the sporting element of Adamsville. We boys knew some of this and guessed more; and though Gus as a sportsman was something of a joke around town we were all for him when we learned that he had matched his big bouncer to fight Freddie Hess. Leo must win, and his victory over a boy who had learned to box from Big Jim would redress the balance of power in the local sporting world.

Clinging to the arm of his fighter, little Gus passed us, puffing. Behind, plodding steadily with his eyes on the ground, came Freddie Hess, lithe and vigilant—quicker than Leo Pfalzgraf by a good deal, but lighter, of shorter reach—no match for the big fellow, to our eyes. Of course he could box—we all remembered how he had knocked out Jimmy Mixley, middleweight champion of the State University, when Jimmy objected to some of the remarks that Freddie used to make from his stool on the shady side of the livery-stable alley; but Pfalzgraf could box too. A good deal of money had been bet on this fight, in fives and twos, but Big Jim and the Klondike Palace gang had been the only ones to put their bets on Freddie.

We came up to the tent and crowded inside. There were no tickets; whoever had crossed in the barge was passed in. Another gasoline flare lit the inside of the tent, the ring with nothing but a sheet of canvas over its pine floor, the pebbles and gravel about it on which the fight fans would have to stand. A pair of scales borrowed from the hay-and-feed store stood off in one corner; everything was to be done in order, as was proved a moment later when Big Jim's vigilant eyes, roving over the crowd, caught sight of two faces he hadn't seen on the barge. A hand on each collar, he hustled them to the tent door; one who turned and struggled caught a backhand slap across the face that knocked him sprawling on the pebbles outside. There was a buzz of approval. These scoundrels had rowed a skiff two miles upstream, against the November wind, to crash the gate and save a dollar and a half. We cash customers felt that they had got far less than such rascality deserved.

Then there was a long delay. Big Jim and the referee, Harry Keeler and Gus Piedelheimer, gathered round the scales, and after the weighing lingered in protracted discussion of something or other. We spectators stood huddled between the ring and the canvas wall, blue-gray clouds of cigar smoke rising toward the roof, to be fluttered and blown about in the hot vapor from the gasoline flare. The cold blasts were seeping in through the foot-wide gap between roof and wall. Gradually the hum of talk stilled; we shifted from one cold foot to the other; it was past one o'clock and the fight was already an hour late.

From chili, bored waiting the crowd passed again into buzzing conversation, but this time in a different tone. It was an angry crowd, now. Its members had paid a dollar and a half a head, a price unheard of for sporting events in Adamsville, where ball games cost a quarter and almost anybody could slip in without paying at the unfenced park in the river bottoms. Even at the ball park in Cincinnati the best seats were seventy-five cents and nobody but Big Jim could have got twice that price for a fight. Now the customers, cold and sleepy and chafing at the delay, were beginning to growl.

"Come on, Jim, let's go. Start her up; what's the matter? Is there a fight or ain't there?"

Off in the corner by the scales Big Jim answered, unperturbed:

"Keep your shirts on, boys; she starts as quick as we can get ready."

"Quicker the better, then." We fell back into glum silence. Shad and I, by that time, were far from enthusiastic. Staying up till one o'clock was a strain on boys who ordinarily went to bed at nine, and it would be near daylight when we got back to town. Moreover, we didn't know where to stand. If we edged up to the ringside somebody would recognize us; if we stood back in the crowd we couldn't see over the shoulders of grown men. Excitement kept us up but we wished mightily that it was all over.

A fluttering, thumping against the canvas roof made the crowd shift uneasily. It sounded as if somebody outside were throwing stones at the tent; perhaps the two gate

crashers who had been pitched out. Then a long "hoo-oo" brought reassurance, and laughter.

"That derned old owl tryin' to get in," we heard from a dozen voices. "Must want to come in out of the cold."

"It ain't hot enough in here to hurt anything," growled a man in front of us; but as he said it the people across the ring raised a cheer. The conferences were ended at last and the fight was about to begin.

Shad and I threw caution away and slipped between the men ahead of us to the very ropes. The ring was raised hardly a foot above the ground, right under the gasoline flare that swayed and shifted in the blasts from the gap in the canvas. Folding stools had been placed in the corners, and we shivered with joy as Leo Pfalzgraf and Gus Piedelheimer climbed over the ropes and into the corner almost within reach of our arms. The big fellow was stripped to fighting trunks, with a sweater tossed over his shoulders; and little Gus, his overcoat off, a big blue sweater almost swallowing him up in its billowy folds, was putting on his man's gloves and whispering over and over in nervous repetition: "We get the big stiff, Leo; we get the big stiff. You and me, we get him. Paste him quick an' get it over."

Big Jim, in sweater and laced boots, strolled across to the corner with an ironic grin.

"All right, Gus? You got a good-lookin' fighter there. Don't want to put any more money on him, do you?"

Little Gus turned and straightened, puffing at him like an angry kitten.

"Yes, I take you for a hundred more, if you want. Or two."

Big Jim laughed.

"Your man's eighteen pounds heavier. You don't take much chance, do you? Still, I'll take that. Got the cash?"

Gus reached into his trousers pocket, pulled out an old red-leather wallet and began counting out the twenties. Big Jim matched them from a mass of bills loosely thrust in his pocket.

"Doc Haney here? Come over and hold another stake? All right. I guess we're ready."

Another buzz, then silence as Big Jim took on himself the functions of announcer.

"Gentlemen, in this corner 'Young' Pfalzgraf, heavyweight champion of the Second Ward. Weight, one hundred and seventy-three. In this corner"—he paused dramatically as Freddie Hess, dark and scowling, rose and threw off his sweater to exhibit a graceful muscular body—"in this corner 'Iron Man' Hess, weight, one hundred and fifty-five. Referee, Billy Trockenmaul of Cincinnati. The fight is to a finish."

"Lord make it a quick one," breathed a man beside me, and I looked up into the face of Tod Maree.

Leo Pfalzgraf stood up, his heavy face only mildly interested. We all knew Leo; he was getting ten dollars for fighting tonight, and fifty more if he won; but anything over half a dollar at a time was useless to Leo. He looked, as usual, stolid and rather sleepy. Freddie Hess, the newly christened Iron Man, looked mad—mad through and through, as he danced lightly with his hands on the ropes. In the silence the rubbing of his shoe soles on the canvas cut harshly on the ears, punctuated by irregular thumps on the tent roof where that curious owl was trying to find his way in. Big Jim climbed out of the ring and rang a gong; the fighters came slowly out of their corners and approached each other cautiously.

Flop-flop over our heads. Through the gap in the canvas plunged a gray ball of feathers that flew blindly round and round, the owl that could see in the dark but was helpless in the brilliance of the gasoline flare. Flapping and thumping against the canvas, it drew the curious eye of Leo Pfalzgraf as he edged toward the center of the ring; and as he glanced up Freddie Hess shot forward with a catlike spring and swung his right fist against Leo's jaw. The smacking thud of leather on flesh, the heavy thump as Leo's hundred and seventy-three pounds dropped on the canvas-covered boards—then the referee's arm was going up and down as Leo Pfalzgraf lay supine, an arm or leg feebly quivering now and then, and Gus Piedelheimer, pale-blue eyes staring from under whitish eyebrows, leaned white with horror over the ropes from his corner.

"Nine, ten!" Harry Keeler was over the ropes, and Big Jim with him, shaking hands with Freddie Hess, while Doctor Haney was clambering in to feel the helpless frame of the victim. For an instant the crowd, incredulous, failed to realize that this was the evening's entertainment, the dollar and fifty

cents' worth. Then there was a roar—an angry roar from all sides at once.

"Yah—fake! Put-up job! Money back, Jim, money back."

Big Jim dragged one of the folding stools to the center of the ring and climbed up on it. His bell voice roared above the howls and quelled them. Silence came, cold and sudden like the frost that felt its way in from outdoors.

"Who said fake?" he demanded. "Who said fake? I never pulled a fake yet. I'm not the one that thought this big sack of meal was a fighter. I made the match after Gus had been whining all over town for somebody to stand up to his heavyweight champion. Is it my fault the boob looked at the owl instead of Freddie's fist? The next man that says fake goes out of this tent on his ear and if he gets back across the river to-night he'll have to swim."

He paused and looked around him, cool, sardonic. About his stool clustered the Klondike Palace mob; a hard lot all of them, and Big Jim alone could have licked any three men in the crowd.

"All right," said Jim at last. "No more hot air, now. Well, Gus, I guess I win. Better go look after your man, unless you're through with the fight game."

And little Gus Piedelheimer, blue-eyed and white-haired, thin and puny, stunned by the unexpected disaster, looked him straight in the eye and managed a gallant smile.

"Yes, Jim, you win," he said, swallowing hard. "You win. But I ain't through with the fight game. I'm through wit' Leo, yes. He got less sense dan he was born wit'." Gus' German accent, as usual, was coming out under excitement. "I don't want him; nor I don't want Freddie Hess. Freddie Hess didn't lick my boy. If I want to manage a winning fighter, I would manage de owl."

CHAPTER III.

Yes, history was made that night. Shad and I didn't make as much history as we expected, for when the barge got back to town along toward three in the morning we had to hide in a corner of the cold and drafty wharf boat till daylight, when each of us could pretend he was coming home from the other's house. Of course we went to sleep; of course we overslept and were wakened by roustabouts coming down to work long after we ought to have been on our way home. So there was suspicion, investigation, cross-examination; a comparison of stories that led to new cross-examination and a double breakdown in morale. We got our several lickings and made no further attempts for some time to lead our own lives.

But if it was a setback for Shad and me, that night was the beginning of three careers which in their time attained some prominence in the public eye—one of which, for that matter, is still flourishing like the green bay tree. Another one has nothing more to do with this story—the career of Iron Man Hess, who as fight fans will remember was a middleweight of some prominence and merit for a few years, till he collided with the rising star of Stanley Ketchel and was knocked out and on his way to oblivion in the fourth round. When last I heard of him, he was a watchman on a Los Angeles movie lot.

That fight also determined the destiny of Tod Maree and Gus Piedelheimer. Tod Maree went back to Cincinnati and wrote the story of the one-punch fight and the intrusive owl, and before the week was out he had had offers from papers in Chicago and New York. Even I, kid that I was, could see that it was a brilliant story. I clipped it out and put it away in a box of odds and ends; and only the other day I came across it again, reread it with the eye of a newspaper man of a dozen years' experience and realized that it was probably the best story even Tod Maree ever wrote. And as one editorial made William Allen White a national figure, so did this one story lift Tod Maree out of his obscurity. From thirty a week in Cincinnati he jumped to sixty in New York. Within six years he was the highest-paid sports writer in America, and I suppose he is that still.

It was a brilliant story but abominably unfair. A fourteen-year-old boy is not likely to have acquired much in the way of morals or sportsmanship, particularly if he lives in a small town where the tone of most opinion and most talk is neither sportsmanlike nor moral. Those qualities are of slow growth; yet I am proud to remember that that night my own unprompted opinion was that Gus Piedelheimer was a good sport. I forgot that, of course, the next day when I read Tod Maree's story. So did everybody else. Whether Maree's boss, the sport-

ing editor who was a friend of Big Jim's, told him to give Big Jim the edge in the story, or Maree's uncanny sense of the quickest way to popular appreciation—with no scruples to restrain it—which he has displayed a thousand times since seized on the ridiculous aspect of little Gus, I don't know. At any rate the gallant little loser appeared in the story as nothing but an absurd clown. Adamsville was one of those suburbs that the city papers like to joke about, anyway; and Tod Maree wrote a joke story about the attempt of the hicks to put on a prize fight, with Gus Piedelheimer as the originator and prime mover, and the goat of it all.

A great story but hard on Adamsville and terribly hard on Gus Piedelheimer. The only man who came out of it with any credit was Big Jim Cort, who appeared in the story as an urban and urbane sportsman, a man of the world, shrugging his shoulders with an amused grin at the boners of the country clowns; which no doubt was in a measure true. But Maree's treatment of Gus Piedelheimer was about as outrageous a warping of the truth as any man ever wrote.

It saved the face of Adamsville, however. Adamsville was sore, furiously sore—the moral element because there had been a fight at all, the sporting crowd because they had seen one punch and one only for a dollar and a half and three hours' discomfort. And the man responsible for the fight, the proper target of their animosity, was Big Jim Cort.

But nobody could be very sore at Jim Cort; it didn't pay. There could be murmurs in Jim's absence but no man dared to speak against him in his presence or that of his friends. Moreover, Big Jim was the winner; Big Jim announced openly the next day that he was going to get Iron Man Hess some fights in Cincinnati and make of him a champion who would put Adamsville on the map of American sports. And our crowd of fight fans, sore though they were, had an incurable inclination to side with the winner.

Tod Maree's story gave them the excuse. It put Adamsville in its place, to be sure, but it managed to heap pretty nearly all of the burden of Adamsville's uncouthness and inexperience and mismanagement on the shoulders of poor Gus Piedelheimer; while Big Jim stood out as the successful sportsman who was too good for the town. Is it any wonder that the whole town seized the excuse to whoop it up for Big Jim and take out its resentment at the fiasco and the high price and the cold weather on little Gus?

He stood it gamely for a few weeks. Willie Katz, the local chalk artist, used to draw a picture of an owl on the front door of the Teutonia Sample Room every night after Gus closed up, with some such legend as "Gus' Next Champ," or, "The New Bouncer." And Gus, coming down next day, would grin his foolish game little grin as he rubbed it off, and try to manage a joke about it. One night something went wrong at the light company's power house, and the crowd along Gus' bar began chanting, "We're Gus' owls—we see in the dark." Even the boys of six and seven hooted at him on the streets. No doubt he thought it would die away and be forgotten; and indeed in two or three weeks Big Jim Cort took pity on him and told his friends to lay off of Gus.

But Big Jim couldn't control the town. His friends laid off but the rest of Adamsville kept on blindly plugging away at the old joke till a new one turned up, and it was Gus' hard luck that there was no new joke that winter. When the home-talent minstrel show came on in January Gus and the owl were the staple local gags. The ten-twenty-thirty stock companies that used to come to the Grand Opera House—this was before the days of movies—learned that the sure-fire topical allusion was something about an owl, or any crack at Gus Piedelheimer. Little Gus hung on longer than most other men would have tried, but even he gave way at last. The lumber yard made an offer for the corner lots occupied by his saloon and summer garden; and Gus took it, threw away whatever good will he had left, and moved ignominiously up to Cincinnati.

When we heard a little later that he was working as bartender on Vine Street everybody supposed that he had gambled away his money and was through. Adamsville never expected to see him again; and one or two of the clergy took occasion to preach sermons about the irreparable consequences of a single error, which may not have been very scriptural but seemed to fit the evidence in hand. Tod Maree had climbed to fame over the body of Gus Piedelheimer.

CHAPTER IV.

I believe game little Gus would have beat his way back anyhow, in course of time; for he was built that way. How or when he would have done it, what plans he had as he worked behind the bar, with his money all in the savings bank—though we didn't know that till later—nobody in Adamsville knows. But he was at any rate living in Cincinnati, moving about Cincinnati, making himself a city man instead of a small-town boy; acquiring a certain finish and an acquaintance among Cincinnati sportsmen. In the city Maree's story had done Gus little harm. If he had come to town the day after it was printed some attention might have been paid him; but he came to town when the story was two months past and Tod Maree was long since installed in New York and on his way to the big money. Unlike Adamsville, Cincinnati had had other things to think about in the meantime.

So Gus lived in the shadows for a while, learning to find his way about, gradually making the acquaintance of men who were as far ahead of Big Jim Cort in Cort's own field as Cort had been ahead of Gus; and then another turn of the wheel, and Tod Maree who had ruined Gus Piedelheimer with a story, wrote another story that put him back on the map. And there was as little benevolence about this as there had been malice in the other. In each case, Tow merely saw a good story—good, that is, for Tod Maree.

He had been sent to Goldfield by his New York paper to cover the Gans-Nelson fight and one day before the fight when news was scarce he sent along one of those pleasing and obvious fictions that sports writers employ when the stock of facts runs low. I am a political writer, and have no great appreciation of this sort of humor; I deal with statesmen and affairs of state and we have high authority for the view that tragic themes should not be celebrated in the comic style. But in sports it is no doubt right enough; certainly it is popular.

To cover up the fact that there was no news in Goldfield that day Tod Maree wrote a story about the arrival of Gus Piedelheimer of Adamsville, Indiana, with his troupe of trained owls. The story of that fight in the tent was retold but this time with a different slant. Gus appeared now as what he actually was, an enthusiastic amateur who wanted to learn the fight game. When he realized the attraction of owls for his fighter he came to the conclusion that there must be other fighters with the same temperament, so he had bought and trained a dozen owls and had come to Goldfield to entertain bids for their services from the rival managers. "No man can escape a knock-out," Mr. Piedelheimer was quoted as saying, "if I set my owl on him."

Well, I didn't think much of it; but it was syndicated all over the country—in Cincinnati, too—and it seemed to suit Maree's readers. It gave Gus a little brief fame and he took his money out of the bank and prepared to capitalize it. Before long we began to see in the box scores of semi-professional games that the Cincinnati papers carry by the column on Monday morning reference to a new team, Piedelheimer's Owls. They were a fast team, a very fast team. Gus had trouble holding them together against minor-league raids on his stars, but if he lost a good man he went out and bought another. Wherever they played, too, he advertised them with big posters—the picture of an owl, the name of the club, and the motto, "They See in the Dark."

It happened that that summer the Adamsville ball team, backed by Jim Cort, was better than usual. Gus began to dicker for a game; and Jim Cort dated the Owls for a Sunday late in August. The two had been seen putting up a thousand-dollar side bet in Spinney's sporting-goods store in Cincinnati; and as neither team had lost a game that season the event attracted more attention than any other semiprofessional affair of the year. It was played in the Adamsville ball park in the river bottoms, before a crowd of two or three thousand—about all the Sabbath breakers in town; and several hundred members of the moral element who were opposed to Sunday baseball, but not to healthful strolls on Sunday afternoon, took occasion to do their strolling up to the hill overlooking the ball park, where they sat down to rest and didn't get up until Gus Piedelheimer's Owls had won in ten innings, five to four.

That was a historic meeting between Gus and Big Jim Cort after the game, but I didn't see it. Shad Beesley and I, remembering the disastrous consequences of our trip across the river to the fight, saw that ball game from the hill. But we heard that Big Jim, rising to the moment with his

natural dignity, had gracefully felicitated Gus; and Gus had complimented Jim on the playing of the home team; and then added that as an old Adamsville boy he didn't want to take money out of town, so he would contribute the thousand he had won from Jim to the local charities.

That was an astounding overturn; Gus whom we had kicked out was coming back as a benefactor of the town. We all felt there was something wrong somewhere, though there was difference of opinion as to whether the wrong was in kicking him out or being weak enough to take his money afterward. Anyway, that was Gus' only year as a baseball promoter. His stars were all bought away at the end of the season, so he turned to something else. We thought, of course, it would be prize fighting; but Gus was apparently only an amateur enthusiast for the manly sport just now. He had rolled up more money on top of what he had got for the saloon, so he went to Chicago and looked into the show business. The next year we began to hear about a new company on the burlesque wheel—"Piedelheimer's Owls—They See in the Dark."

This was a new inspiration to the Adamsville preachers, for burlesque was of course even more offensive than prize fighting. Gus Piedelheimer, who had provoked sermons about the irretrievable ruin that follows a single false step, now drew more sermons about the vanity of ill-gotten wealth and success based on iniquity. Preachers who brewed their own sermons welcomed a fresh topic and those who merely built up on the "Five Hundred Skeletons for the Busy Pastor" found it easy to stick in Gus' name and a few timely allusions.

To offset this the sporting element of Adamsville was all for Gus now. They were always for a winner. When his Owls played at the People's Theater in Cincinnati half of Adamsville sneaked up to see them, and of those who attended at least ninety per cent called on Gus beforehand to ask for free seats. They found him glad to see old friends, politely interested in affairs in Adamsville, but adamant and unapproachable on the question of passes. Returning they reported that Gus was getting rich and stuck-up and thought he was too good for his old friends and the old home town.

Those rumors must have come to him, for when his show played in Cincinnati in the second year he made a visit of state to Adamsville in the first limousine we had ever seen. He paid formal calls on the mayor and the bankers and a few other leading citizens, displayed a great deal of politeness and some enthusiasm, but expressed surprise that the town still had no paved streets. With automobiles becoming so common, he said, dust and mud were bad business. If we couldn't afford it, he would start the reform himself by giving his old home town, in memory of happy boyhood days, an asphalt motor boulevard two miles long, where it was most needed. The city council fell over itself to accept the offer and Gus built the boulevard—from Main Street to the cemetery. It was his parting shot. Adamsville never saw him again.

The high point of that final visit should have been Gus' call on Big Jim Cort. After that ball game Big Jim had sworn he would get Gus yet; and Gus, hearing this from Cincinnati friends, had merely grinned his foolish little grin and said that Big Jim was a good man and maybe he would do it. Big Jim had become the great man of the Adamsville sport world after he was through in Cincinnati; Gus had become a considerable figure in Cincinnati and Chicago after Adamsville had run him out. Despite their polite gestures after the ball game there was still an unsettled quarrel between them, the more bitter because the difference in size made it impossible for them to fight it out. What Gus would have said to Big Jim on that visit and what Big Jim would have said to Gus would have been worth going some distance to hear.

But Gus couldn't call on Big Jim, for Big Jim wasn't there. He had been killed in an automobile accident a month before, when his car stalled on a grade crossing in front of an express—he and his wife and their two older children. Big Jim died standing up; when he saw that the car was stalled he leaned over to the back seat, picked up the youngest boy and threw him out to safety just in time. The little fellow went to live with his mother's sister somewhere in Ohio, the widow of a school superintendent, and we heard that she brought him up to forget that his father had ever been a fighter or owned a saloon. Well, no doubt Big Jim was a bad citizen and a menace to the community; but a lot of people found Adamsville a sourer and duller place when he was gone.

I didn't, for I wasn't there. Shad and I went away to college. He came back to run his uncle's drug store and I believe he's mayor now; but I went on to New York and eventually to a job on the *Morning Record.* And Gus went West, to Los Angeles, and into the pictures. I heard of him vaguely once or twice from picture men I knew; he had made big money in the early days of the industry, then lost it on a bad guess as to the trend of the public taste. But there was nothing novel about that. I became a specialist in politics and lost even amateur contact with sport; and I suppose if anybody had asked me who was traditionally associated with the owl I'd have said Pallas Athene instead of Gus Piedelheimer.

It was near the end of June, 1923, when I saw him again.

CHAPTER V.

I was in St. Paul after a hard three weeks' trip all over the Northwest, writing about the spread of third-party sentiment among the farmers; and I needed a rest. When the office said I could have a couple of weeks off I concluded that Glacier Park, inhabited only by Indians not taxed and Rocky Mountain goats, neither of which classes had the franchise, would be the best place to forget politics and the journalism of politics; but I was no sooner on the train than I found that it would be two days more before I should be out of the company of my own kind. The first man I saw in the club car was Chanler, dramatic critic of one of the Park Row papers; and he hailed me surprisedly with:

"So you're going to cover the fight, too, eh?"

Of course I knew that Dempsey and Gibbons were going to fight at Shelby, Montana, on July 4—or were not going to fight, as the case might be; for there had seemed to be some doubt about it in the latest news. The whole Northwest was talking about nothing else and about the prowess of Gibbons, the local hero. But I was more interested in the fight for the Minnesota senatorship between Preus and Magnus Johnson.

"I'm not a sports writer," I told him.

"Well, neither am I, but they send me to whatever looks dramatic and I suppose they send you to whatever looks political. From all I hear this Shelby affair is going to be both."

"I'm on vacation," I said. "Bill Corliss is at Great Falls with Dempsey and Mullane is at Shelby. I guess they can handle it."

"You'll find a lot of the gang on this train, anyway," said Chanler. "There's Barton, McAvoy, Tod Maree——"

Now it was a curious thing that I had never met, never even seen, Tod Maree since that night when we crossed the river together, though we had both been newspaper men in New York for the last decade. Maree had his own syndicate for the distribution of his sports stories and though he had occasionally written feature stories from national political conventions, just as Chanler the dramatic critic was going to write feature stories from the fight, we had never happened to come together. So Chanler insisted on dragging me into Maree's stateroom on the theory that we mustn't remain in ignorance of each other a moment longer; though I believe his real reason was an unfounded suspicion that Maree was hiding out a couple of bottles of Chicago beer.

The great man was at a table, tapping away at a portable typewriter—tall, thin and sour, his face lined behind his shell-rimmed nose glasses. Indigestion and prosperity had ruined his disposition though he had so far managed to keep their effects out of his stories. He greeted me with the precise shade of measured courtesy due from a sixty-thousand-dollar man to an eight-thousand-dollar man in the same business, and observed that all the fight fans were bound for Shelby.

"Cleve says he isn't a fight fan," observed Chanler; "he's a solitude fan. But he'll be coming down from Glacier Park to join the gang before the big day. Just you watch him."

"I wouldn't go to see this thing for fun," said Maree. "Dempsey will kill this poor creature. All I hope is that he kills him in the first round so we can get away and file early."

I wondered whether to remind him of the first time we had met, but decided that it would be better to let it go. After all, there must be a lot of people who hastened to remind Tod Maree that they had met him before, and while I didn't want to borrow a dollar, he didn't seem the hospitable and

conversational person that he had been when he was making thirty a week in Cincinnati. So when he saw that I had no conversation, and Chanler saw that he had no beer, Chanler and I left him to his work and went back to the club car.

And there we talked fight or listened to fight talk for the next two days. At that, the fight was a pleasant interruption to the monotony of the usual club-car conversation. My job compels me to talk—and listen—to everybody I meet in smoking cars. What I can get out of any one man about politics and crops and business—which is about all that I can use—I generally get in ten minutes; and I generally have to sit for two hours more listening to local and personal gossip of which only about one quarter of one per cent ever does me any good. So, since this was a holiday anyhow, it was a pleasure to find that the Northwestern farmers and local capitalists whom I met in the club car were all talking fight instead of the good-crop year and Henry Ford's presidential chances. The great Maree never deigned to join us, but other newspaper men bound for Shelby drifted in from up and down the train and their comments would have given an air of authority to the fight talk if any of the other talkers had ever heard of them. As it was, they counted as only so many voices.

It was a relief, late at night, when we simmered down to four—Chanler, Cullop of the *Herald's* sports staff, myself, and a boy just out of college. He was a clean, handsome chap—the sort any man would like his son to be at twenty-one—tall and well made and looking at us out of clear blue eyes.

"I'll bet you're a football player," said Cullop.

"Football and baseball, too," the lad admitted. "I won my letter in both at Wewausa College."

"That's in Ohio, isn't it?" Chanler asked. "I once knew a man from there."

"Wewausa?" Cullop mused. "Wewausa? Ohio State, thirty-six; Wewausa, seven—that's all I can remember of Wewausa."

The boy flushed.

"Well, sir, Wewausa's a rather different sort of college. We go in pretty hard for interclass and interfraternity athletics, so that everybody plays something. Of course we play intercollegiate games, too, and we do the best we can; but we don't offer scholarships or inducements of any sort for players. If a man who comes to college anyway happens to be a good player we're pretty glad; but we don't go out and buy them."

"Ah," said Cullop. "That puts you at a certain disadvantage."

"No, sir, not as we see it. We like to win, of course, but we think that playing, and playing straight, is more important than winning."

We three older men avoided each other's faces and I think we all had a sort of guilty feeling. I know I did.

"Something like Tom Gibbons," said Chanler to break the tension. "He's fighting for a percentage of the second three hundred thousand of the gate and there ain't goin' to be any second three hundred thousand. And very possibly no first three hundred thousand either. All he gets out of it is the pleasure of the sport and the new sensation of a sock on the chin and a tumble on the canvas."

"Then you don't think he has a chance?" the boy asked.

"He might stay five or six rounds," said Cullop, "if he's a good sprinter. If Dempsey ever catches up with him, he's gone. You figure it different?"

"Why, yes, sir, I do," said the lad, divided between respect for age and authority and a stubborn firmness in his own opinion. "I've seen Gibbons fight—he's a clever boxer, a good clean-living fellow—I don't believe Dempsey will put him out."

"Faith removes mountains," said Chanler in his easy drawl, "but it don't win championships. Stick to your views, boy, but don't put any money on them."

From the lad's flush and silence I surmised that this advice had come too late.

"Going to the fight?" Cullop asked him.

"I think so. I'm bound for Glacier Park now, but I think I'll run down a day or two before the Fourth. A friend of mine has some money in an oil company at Shelby and I'd thought I might go in with him if I liked the looks of the thing."

"Hah!" said Cullop. "Take a long, long look, son. I've bought oil stock myself, but not recently."

"Well, I may not do it," said the lad. "I want to look things over—not that I have very much to invest, but I haven't any people and I have to go somewhere and grow up with the country. So I thought I might as well go to a place that would grow fast.

And while I'm in Shelby I guess I'll look over the fight. But I have to go on to Glacier Park first."

"You and me, too, son," I told him. "We'll leave these wild fight sharps to their explorations and go on to the eternal hills, where the goats have four feet."

Later, as I smoked a good-night cigarette with Cullop on the back platform, we fell to talking over the lad who was as sound asleep in his upper berth as if he were on the softest bed in Christendom.

"Isn't it wonderful?" said Cullop. "He thinks Gibbons will stick to the finish and he wants to buy oil stock. And yet, Cleve, don't you kind of wish you were twenty-one again, with all that freshness?"

"No," I declared. "With all the wallops of my soft head against the granite cliffs of fact still to come? No. It's beautiful but if that's the sort of thing they teach in colleges nowadays the curriculum needs some revision. It won't wear."

"Oh, hell, he didn't get that in college. His college must be different, of course—you heard what he said about not hiring football players. The average kid of twenty-one with a brand-new diploma has been trained to think that a triple-threat man is worth his weight in gold and ought to get it. But this boy's disposition is the kind that just grows—maybe helped along a little bit by a widowed mother or a maiden aunt. A pretty thing, Cleve; but hasn't he got it coming to him! And he's a nice kid, too."

He was all of that. By the time we reached Shelby, late in the afternoon of the second day, all of us were calling him "Dick"—we'd never got his other name—and liking him better every moment. For a lad with such impossibly wild opinions and such stubbornness in sticking to them he had less priggishness than could have been imagined. Straight and clean. I could see that Chanler and Cullop too, hard boiled as they were, were genuinely sorry when they shook hands with him and prepared to get off at the fight town.

"Don't let Cleve Wells lead you into any trouble, now," Chanler cautioned him. "If you want to do any glacier skating, hire a guide."

This was a dig at me, my distaste for cold and physical exertion being fairly well known among my friends; but Dick missed that.

"I expect to meet some other friends," he said, flushing, "and if I tour the park I'll have to do it with them. But I'll see you on the Fourth, anyway."

"Better change your mind, Cleve," said Cullop, "and come with us"

I waved my hand at the flock of tents and unpainted pine shacks, the rows of sidetracked Pullmans, and the single street of one and two-story houses at the foot of the bare hill, that made up Shelby.

"Make the best of it, gentlemen," I advised them. "Make the best of it. You won't see me."

"All the gang will be there," Chanler called as the train pulled out. But it wasn't my gang and I had no yearning to see such a pale imitation of a real fight as this promised to be.

Dick and I hung over the back railing of the observation car as the train started westward, our eyes on the big arena of unpainted yellow wood.

"So that's where it's going to be," he mused. "I haven't a seat yet, but I suppose I can get one. Mr. Wells, do those other fellows really know what they're talking about?"

"They're experts," I said. "An expert is a man who isn't wrong much more than half the time. Speaking as an expert, in a different field, I can tell you that. But this time nearly all the experts are agreed and the chances are they're right. Maybe in six rounds, maybe in eight—maybe in the first—you can't tell; but some time the champion's sock will end the fight."

"Well," he sighed presently, "I'm young, and maybe I'm a fool; but I stick to my opinion."

"Did you bet on it?"

"Well, yes, sir, I did. I bet two hundred, in Chicago, that Gibbons would still be on his feet at the end of the fight."

"What odds did you get?"

"Two to one."

"Son, that isn't a bet, that's philanthropy. If you'd shopped around a little you could have got fifteen to one. Though I wouldn't have that bet at fifty to one."

He was evidently losing the fine edge of his confidence in several things but he came back gamely:

"Well, I wouldn't make a bet at fifteen to one. Either there'd be no play at all, which would be foolishness, or else there would be a chance, in which case it wouldn't

be fair to the man taking the long end. I shouldn't call that sportsmanlike. I like to bet, but on something where there's a fair chance for a difference of opinion—something where the betting end doesn't overshadow the game."

Then he changed the subject.

"I never did get your name, sir, but as those other fellows were telling you goodby I thought—are you Cleveland Wells, the political writer?"

"Yes."

"Well, then I want to tell you I like your articles—what I've read of them—awfully well. They're syndicated, aren't they, in the papers around over the country? I thought so. Yes, Mr. Wells, I'm mighty proud to have met you."

"That goes both ways, son. And I never got your name, either."

"Cort, sir. Dick Cort."

CHAPTER VI.

Beyond any doubt it was Big Jim's boy—the one survivor. I learned in time that he was an orphan who had lived near Cleveland with his aunt, and was doubly orphaned now that she was dead too. That confirmed the evidence of the uncommon name, the still stronger evidence of that tall strong body, the upstanding courage and easy geniality that were like what I could remember of Big Jim. But of course I didn't mention his father; nor did he. We had heard, and it seemed rightly, that he had been brought up in forgetfulness of Adamsville and the past. Whether that was good sense or not, one could easily see how his aunt had felt about it; and there was no point in upsetting her work and disturbing the boy for nothing. For he was a miracle as he stood—a boy who had inherited Big Jim's good qualities without the evil—at least without the evil atmosphere of the Klondike Palace Saloon, and it was obvious that the vigilant aunt who had killed even the memory of those distant days had kept out of sight, as yet, any outcropping of Big Jim's faults.

One other quality was missing, and I hardly knew whether to call its absence a blessing or a disaster; though the question was not of much importance, since this quality would doubtless come in time, and at a price. Big Jim had been hard boiled.

You can't get grapes from thorns or figs from thistles—we have that on high authority, yet the human race would still be gnawing bones in the cave if you couldn't do it, now and then. Or, rather, since we're all such an inextricably intertwined blending of grapes and thorns, or figs and thistles, you never can tell which side is going to come uppermost. Big Jim was a pretty thorny customer, yet he had a good deal of the grape strain in him. His son was all grape so far; indeed, the only thing I could say against him was that he might be better off for a little touch of thorn.

We sat together while the snow-flecked Rockies rose steadily ahead of us, thrusting their way into the sky in front of the sunset; and then when the sun was gone behind a humped peak, leaving a half-rolled curtain of gilded cloud as a memento, we came to the entrance of the park and the big log hotel two hundred yards back from the track—with a knot of high-school boys in khaki scurrying for our baggage, and groups of handsome, comfortable, well-dressed people coming down the platform to greet their arriving friends.

I passed off the earth for Dick Cort. Peering eagerly, he flung himself past me down the steps and as I followed my baggage toward the hotel a moment later I saw him talking to a girl in sport clothes who had come down to meet the train. Her name, I learned later, was Rose Gailey, and she looked both parts of it. She was a slim, easy-lounging person in a belted jacket and knickers of soft brown wool, and brown stockings of silk-and-wool mixture, with a fluff of brown hair and one of those soft rose complexions that only the San Francisco climate can produce. As I passed them she and Dick were holding each other's hands at arm's length, under the eyes of her father and mother, and looking at each other like two electric currents trying to break through a wall of insulation and get together. Dick had seen Shelby, and here was his girl; if he left her and went back to that town, fight or no fight, he was a bigger sucker than Big Jim's boy had any right to be.

It was an hour or so later that I saw them again. I was sitting out on the open veranda behind the hotel, letting my nerves get untangled. The mountains were lofty and stationary, and for all human purposes permanent; an agreeable change after politicians who were none of those things.

Night was falling, but I sat and looked at the stars in the afterglow above the peaks, at the fir-clad slopes in the foreground, drawing in the tang of the cold brisk mountain air, the scent of the pine logs of the hotel, the intermittent aroma of wood smoke from the fires about the Indian tepees below the hill. Two or three other people sat in rockers far down the veranda, but we were only spots in its long emptiness. Behind us a sport-coated, knickerbockered couple paced up and down, arm linked in arm—Dick and the girl. They'd shaken the parents somehow. That must have been her doing, for they'd looked coldly enough at Dick. And as they strolled, turning at the farther end to pace back with monotonous regularity, I could hear snatches of their talk when they passed me.

"But, Dick, we'll have to wait. I don't like it either."

"I know, darling, seven hundred isn't much, but it's all I have."

"Of course I'll stick to you, but I do think you might——"

"Lots of people have made money in oil; Kinney will let me in on the ground floor."

"No, there's no use counting on father; he'll only be stubborn. But——"

"Now, Dick, I don't object to the principle of betting, but when anybody has as little money as you——"

"That's just it. Two hundred less won't leave me much worse off; four hundred more would help."

As they passed out of hearing again I thought that this was about as fallacious an argument as I'd ever heard. Dick had had, I supposed, something over a thousand dollars when he left college. He'd bet two hundred of it on Gibbons, at ridiculously low odds; with what he'd spent coming out here he had seven hundred left. Seven hundred dollars as the nest egg of a fortune to sustain this costly looking girl. Well, it had often been done; oftener, it hadn't. And I knew, if Dick didn't, that the difference between a thousand and eight hundred, going down, was bigger than the difference between a thousand and fourteen hundred, going up. When you're down to the last thousand there's nothing to do but hoard it carefully, spending it drop by drop, or plunge with it all.

Evidently they were in a jam; the girl's parents talking cold sense, Dick talking hot romance, the girl oscillating between the two viewpoints. When I went in to bed they had stopped marching and were seated together on the railing at the farther end of the veranda—close together; it was no rash conjecture that they were in each other's arms. I wondered which of them was trying to win the other over with this final argument; though perhaps it wasn't that at all. They might simply have tired of the hopeless job of trying to think things out and fallen back on the easier and more agreeable pastime of love-making.

But I had no more time to think about them that night, for when I went indoors a bell boy met me with a telegram, and as I read it my vacation fell in with a crash. It was from the managing editor:

> This Shelby fight is no longer a fight story. It is high finance and low intrigue, both of which are in your line. Mullane and Corliss are overloaded. Hop down to Shelby and help them out. CARMODY.

Cursing the slave life of the newspaper man who must leave his address with the office whenever he goes away on vacation, I asked about the next train. But there was none till ten-thirty in the morning; so I made use of my last chance at the mountain air to sleep late.

As I stepped up to the desk after breakfast to get my bill I found Dick Cort beside me.

"Checking out?" he asked. "So am I. I think I'll go down to Shelby this morning and take a look at the oil business."

I had nothing to say. He was changed this morning, unmistakably if indefinably changed. There was an edge of hard determination in his manner, a steely ring of boldness in his voice. That might mean one of two things: that the girl had sided with her parents and he was going out to show them, or that she had sided with him and he was going out to make a fortune for her. Whichever it was he certainly looked more like Big Jim to-day.

I knew the answer a moment later when the girl came down to the desk to ask about the next horseback party through the park.

"What, going again, Miss Gailey?" the manager asked. "Most people find that one trip a year is enough."

"Dad and mother are staying here," she said in a voice as cold and clear as a mountain lake. "But I want to get out on the peaks—above things."

As Dick passed she nodded with cool

suavity. That, of course, might have been a bluff to fool the bystanders—women seem to get these things by instinct. But one look at Dick, staring at her with blazing eagerness as if he'd never see her again, told me it wasn't that. They'd had some sort of quarrel; he was going out to show everybody.

There wasn't much I could do for him in that situation, but such as it was I tried to do it. I sat with him in the smoker going down to Shelby and talked politics and oil and the fight as one man of the world to another. But I couldn't cure his restlessness. After a cigarette or two he was up and out, pacing along the Pullman corridors. I was glad that the ride would last only two hours and a half.

Presently he thrust his head in the door and asked if I wanted to play auction. Now I like to play auction, with people I know. On the train, where you don't know who is who and what is what, I have less enthusiasm. Still, this was a short run, and there was no chance of losing much at any stakes at which I could afford to play at all. Besides, I was curious—curious about the company Dick was getting into, curious as to whether Big Jim's boy had inherited any of his card sense.

There was nothing perilous in the appearance of the stranger to whom Dick introduced me in the corridor, with an apology for not having got his name; he wore a round hair cut and several fraternal emblems, and looked like any other business man from a Western small town.

"Mr. Harbrey, of Kalispell," he announced. "I have a drawing-room to Minneapolis and it gets kind of lonesome sitting in there by myself. I understand you gentlemen get off at Shelby, but maybe you can help me kill an hour or two. Saw Judge Daly on the train a while ago—Federal judge from Spokane. He plays a pretty good hand, if we can bring him in."

So Dick and I waited in his drawing-room till he returned with a towering crimson-faced man who smiled agreeably over two ramparts of gold teeth.

"Couldn't get the judge," said Harbrey, "but this gentleman plays auction. Mr.—Mr.—what was your name again?"

"Turl. Henry Turl of Fargo. I'm in the grain business there," boomed the newcomer in a jovial voice that filled the whole drawing-room. He nearly filled it too as he squeezed into a seat, took off his coat and showed the sleeve of a yellow silk shirt decorated with diamond cuff links. A wonderful face, that man had—like an old mahogany table, dark red and considerably nicked.

"How do we play?" asked Harbrey. "As we sit? Or cut for partners?"

Mr. Turl of Fargo looked surprised.

"Did you mean auction bridge?" he inquired. "I thought you meant auction pinochle. I can't play bridge."

"And I can't play pinochle," said Dick. "How about hearts?"

"I can't play hearts," I confessed.

"Guess we'd better try seven-up," Mr. Turl suggested with a genial laugh that rattled the windows.

"Oh, hell," said Harbrey. "We can all play stud, I reckon. Call the white chips a nickel, the red ones a quarter, and nobody can loose much."

Stud is a game I've never liked since I played the seven-card variety with some naval officers who had a habit of calling all the black cards wild. Five aces was a poor hand in that game. But to-day nobody made any such revolutionary proposals and we started out quite calmly. The blue chips were out in a hand or so, worth a dollar apiece, but still nobody could lose much. We had been playing perhaps a quarter of an hour when Mr. Turl bet a blue on the third card and Dick raised him one. Mr. Turl saw it and flung a five-dollar bill on the table besides.

"Looks as if what's coming to me is worth that," he declared with the genial laugh that shook the water bottle in the washstand. Dick saw it, saw another on the next card, and won the pot. Thereafter five dollars became the standard unit of betting. Dick was winning a little, I was losing a little; Mr. Harbrey was well ahead and Mr. Turl was the sufferer.

So we had come up from five cents to five dollars, but we hadn't really started yet. The next deal was Dick's. He showed a ten-spot for Mr. Harbrey, an eight for me, a king for Mr. Turl, and an ace for himself. I peered cautiously at my hole card and saw another eight; things were looking up.

Dick, the high man, opened temperately with a nickel. Mr. Harbrey raised it a dollar. I stayed along, and Mr. Turl raised it five.

"If a king's worth five an ace is worth

ten," said Dick with that steely ring in his voice. Everybody came up to the water's edge and the cards fell again. Dick with an ace queen was still high; he bet a blue one and Mr. Harbrey gave up the ghost. I rode with him, though I had nothing that seemed likely to help my pair of eights. Mr. Turl with a king jack showing raised it five. Dick raised him five more.

Ace queen showing against king jack. Dick was betting as if he had an ace in the hole. Mr. Turl seemed to have a king in the hole. I was whip-sawed, but unfounded confidence in my pair of eights made me stay along, and Mr. Turl was content to see Dick's raise.

The fourth round. Dick dealt himself another queen; gave me a five, which was of no particular interest in my life; and Mr. Turl a four. If my guess was right Dick now had aces over queens. He bet five, and I was fool enough to stay along in the hope that a third eight, being nowhere in sight, might still come my way. Mr. Turl, with king, jack, four showing, looked around the board, looked at the deck which Dick held, ready to flick off the last two cards with his thumb. Then he met Dick's five, and raised it a hundred.

I folded my cards like the Arab and as silently passed away. A hundred dollars was four days' pay for me, and I needed it. But Dick, to whom a hundred dollars meant one seventh of his capital, reached for his roll and carefully laid four fifty-dollar bills on the table. Mr. Harbrey wore the look of a plainsman taking his first look at the eternal hills. Mr. Turl's dark-red face was immovable; he saw the raise and waited for the last cards. His was a jack, Dick's a ten.

Dick now had an ace, two queens and a ten showing; Mr. Turl a king, two jacks, and a four. If my guess was right Dick had aces over queens, Mr. Turl had kings over jacks. Dick might have a third queen. Mr. Turl might have a third jack. But it looked like two pair each way, with Dick high. Like a wise boy he checked it and I could hear Big Jim Cort's ghost clapping approval. And Mr. Turl, with his merry laugh that almost blew the electric fan out of its rack, pulled a five-hundred-dollar bill from his pocket and flung it on the table.

"I come from the Red River," he observed, "where we play 'em when we catch 'em. How about it, Mr. Cort?"

I was trembling with anger at this miserable trick. Turl was obviously prosperous; Dick, just as obviously, was only a college boy, and Turl with an inferior hand was trying to run him out of the game. It was contemptible, yet it might well succeed.

But it didn't. Big Jim's boy went down into this pocket and that. He brought up bills, silver dollars, halves; he stacked them up on a corner of the table while Mr. Harbrey counted them.

"Four-ninety-five and a half," said Mr. Harbrey.

"All right," said Dick. "I'm four-fifty shy."

I tossed a five-dollar bill across the table; he thrust it into the pile and drew back half a dollar.

"There you are, Mr. Turl," he said with a calmness that I couldn't have matched in his predicament. "Is it a king or a jack?"

Silently Mr. Turl turned up his hole card —the third jack.

Dick laughed—an easy, unforced laugh —the very laugh I'd often heard as a boy when I passed the Klondike Palace.

"I'm not much of a dealer, am I? Oh, yes, I had an ace in the hole, but it looks as if I needed a queen. Gentlemen, I'm sorry, but this lets me out."

"Too bad," said Mr. Harbrey solicitously. "You'll watch us play three-handed, won't you?"

"He'll watch two of you play double Canfield," I observed. "Your game has too steep a grade for me, gentlemen. I'm not used to the altitude. Want to come back for a smoke in the club car, Dick?"

Out on the platform he turned to me with a wide grin, the grin of a man of the world who knew a joke when he saw one, even if he was the victim. The boy had grown ten years overnight.

"Lucky I dealt them myself," he observed. "If anybody else had flung them I'd have been ornery enough to think there was something queer about the deal; but I can't say that now. I felt sure it was a king; he bet it that way. Now didn't he?"

"So I thought," I confessed. "You and I both had the same idea—a fixed idea that happened to be wrong. That was what lost the battle of Austerlitz."

"There have been battles since Austerlitz," said Dick.

"Good boy!" I cried. "Come and lunch with me."

"No, we're almost at Shelby. When we get there I'll let Jim Kinney buy me a lunch; and then I'll break the news that I'm not his new capital that he needs but only a member of the unemployed. Maybe he'll give me a job as driller."

I knew that an oil driller's work was highly skilled labor but I'd let Dick learn that from Mr. Kinney. If Kinney couldn't give him a job at least he might lend him carfare back to Cleveland.

So we got off at the Shelby station—livelier now, with any number of idlers standing around to watch the train come in. Most of them were clad in ordinary store clothes, except that their mud-splashed trousers were tucked into heavy boots; but there were two real wild Westerners in fringed trousers and big sombreros with colored cords. I stared at them curiously while Dick was giving the Pullman porter his last half dollar, then gaped in recognition. It was Chanler and Cullop.

They were on us in a moment, jeering.

"Well, Cleve, thought you weren't coming back to Shelby. Didn't like the climate of Glacier Park, eh? Rocky Mountain goats dull company?"

"Go to hell," I said bitterly. "Where's Mullane?"

"Up at the hotel. Oh, yes, he's waiting for you—waiting with open arms. He got word last night that you were coming to help him; so he waits only for the sight of your smiling face to begin taking a day off."

"Is the hotel a good place to lunch?"

They laughed with coarse complacency.

"There are no good places to lunch, except the Pullmans laid up on the side track, where we live. Oh, no—you don't live there. Your room's reserved at the hotel. The hotel is at least honorable enough not to pretend that it serves food. The restaurants have no such scruples. Look them over and take your pick."

They were about to leave us when Dick stopped them.

"Do you happen to know where I can find the offices of the Sunny South Oil Company?"

"On Main Street," said Cullop. "I never heard of it, but if it's here it's on Main Street. You can look the whole thing over in five minutes. This is one bird of a town."

We carried our bags along the tortuous path, drying in the sun, between the quagmires that separated the right of way from Main Street; past tents, a shack or two, back doors behind which heaps of garbage smoldered and smoked—and then we came out on Main Street, a long bog flanked by sidewalks covered with caked mud and buildings that rarely attained the dizzy height of two stories. Every other door was an oil office.

"There it is," said Dick eagerly. "Beyond the poolroom there."

Splashing across through the squashy gray mud we came up to a one-story frame building almost hidden by the sign:

SUNNY SOUTH OIL COMPANY.
Authorized Capital, $500,000
J. F. Kinney, Resident Manager.

The door was locked and on it was tacked an unobtrusive little notice to the effect that on application of H. C. Warner, dealer in stationers' supplies, Great Falls, Montana, a writ of attachment had been issued on the properties of the Sunny South Oil Company. A symbol of oil-town optimism—a company with authorized capitalization of half a million dollars had gone broke because it couldn't pay for its letterheads.

Dick turned away savagely and seized on a passing native.

"Do you know J. F. Kinney? Do you know where he is?"

"Sure, I know him. But I hear he went back East yesterday."

Dick turned to me with a grin.

"Mr. Wells, you can buy me that lunch after all."

CHAPTER VII.

I fed the boy as well as I could, for there was no telling when he would eat again; and as we smoked afterward, perched on the high stools before the lunch counter, he seemed quite cheerful.

"What are you going to do?" I asked. "If you want to go back East I'll lend you carfare, and running expenses till you get started."

"Why should I go back East? I've got to grow up with the country—might as well stay here. There must be jobs in a booming oil town."

"There may or may not be jobs," I commented, "but there's no money. From what I hear Shelby has thrown its last nickel into the fund to pay Jack Kearns the champion's guarantee. There's another hundred

thousand due Monday night and they can't raise that. Do you see anybody around here hiring more help? Besides, the town's overcrowded already—full of outsiders drawn in by the fight."

"Sure," Dick grinned. "They've come to see the fight—not to work. I'm looking for employment. There ought to be enough to meet my modest demand."

"Here's hoping," I told him. "But I want you to promise me one thing—if you don't find a job or some money by to-night, come up to the hotel and bunk with me. I have a room reserved, which is unusual luck; and we'll make them put a cot in it. Now, son, pride never got anybody anywhere. I've accepted the hospitality of my friends when I didn't have the price of a bed; it's the common lot of humanity. Don't set yourself so far above the rest of us that you won't let fellows who are running in the smooth help you over the rough. It isn't sense."

"Well—maybe I will," he assented after a little reflection, though the concession obviously came hard. "I'll look up and down Main Street and see what chance there is of getting work first."

"What sort of work do you want?"

"Oh, I'll do anything. Digging ditches, if there are any ditches to be dug. I want to make money but I don't have to have a million next week, or anything like that."

His face was strained and I knew he was thinking of that girl back at Glacier Park.

"Good sense, son," I told him. "More sense than most of us have at twenty-one. I took a few wallops at your age—only the ordinary ones that everybody gets—and I thought the sun had stopped shining and the moon and stars had gone out. If anybody had told me that fifteen years later I'd have been fairly comfortable and fairly contented I'd have been sure he was crazy. Yet so it is. There are a lot of years in the average span of a life and one bad one doesn't kill them all. The cards run badly, but give them time and they'll turn."

This was more of a sermon than I'd ever preached before—too much, I was afraid. Apparently all of it that stuck with Dick was the last sentence.

"Oh, yes," he said absently. "I'll get the cards, some time; and when I get them I won't play them on a fixed idea. I've got rid of a lot of fixed ideas in the last two days—quite a lot. Well, good-by, Mr. Wells. I'll look you up this evening if nothing turns up."

He walked out with an easy rolling stride—shoulders swinging, head up—Big Jim's boy in every inch. I could have killed that stubborn hard-headed girl. For there was a growing recklessness in Dick's manner. He was likely to do almost anything foolish if we didn't keep an eye on him. He needed a guardian.

I was thinking over possibilities of guardianship when a little voice squeaked over my shoulder:

"Excuse me, but you ain't Clevie Wells, are you?"

I looked around into a face that had the faint familiarity of a caricature. Gus Piedelheimer, but Gus Piedelheimer older and more shriveled, with his forehead bald and his tow hair a dirty whitish-yellow-gray, his face lined under curling whiting eyebrows; but a shrewd expression in those pale-blue eyes and a good-natured little grin wrinkling his mouth. As I stared I saw that the changes that had shocked me at first glance were only those of time. If I was thirty-five, Gus must be past fifty. Of course he had aged; of course I had aged too. And perhaps it was only the force of old association that made me see in that shrewd face under the curling eyebrows some faint resemblance to a wise, benevolent owl.

"Hello, Gus. Good to see you. All us fight fans are getting together, aren't we?"

"Sure we are. I hear you're in the newspaper business, now, eh? Somebody told me that, I forget who. You come here to see Shelby try to raise the money, huh? Well, you'll look a long time before they find another hundred grand in this town. It ain't there, that's all. Well, well, it's queer us meetin' like this. I hear that fellow call you Mr. Wells, and I look up, and there you are sittin' on the stool—I knew you in a minute. You look just like your father. Say, Clevie, can you lend me a quarter?"

"Why, yes, I can lend you a quarter," I said, trying to suppress my surprise, for Gus didn't look like a person who needed to borrow a quarter. His trousers were tucked into the mud boots that all-wise persons wore in Shelby, but his clothes seemed good enough—a gray-mix suit, a white sports tie, the camel's-hair cap that was the uniform of the real fight fans of the higher grade. He grinned as he pocketed the money.

"I pay you back this afternoon, Clevie.

Now that you lend me this money anyway I will tell you how it is I need it. It is Saturday afternoon and the bank is closed. I forgot that and didn't draw enough cash. At three o'clock I meet some Los Angeles fellers that will cash me a check, but just now I have only seventy-five cents.

"Well, I been eatin' here every day this week, so I tell the cashier how it is and he says, all right, if you eat more than seventy-five cents' worth I trust you. So I let myself go and eat ninety cents' worth, and while I eat it my cashier goes off for the afternoon and another one I don't know comes on. And nobody's got credit in Shelby now, not a soul. So I don't know what to do till I see you, and think you would lend me this quarter, and then I get to thinking, what chance that I could borrow a quarter off anybody from Adamsville. I guess I'm still wrong with that town, huh? If I go back there they give me the ice. But not you, Clevie. Not you. I don't forget it."

"I'm from Adamsville," I said, "with the accent on the from. Just as far from it as possible. What are you doing now, Gus?"

"Oh, this an' that. I was in the pictures for a while and then I run a sporting club at Santa Monica—one thing and another, this an' that. I see you this afternoon and tell you all about it, Clevie. Thanks."

In New York I might have yielded to my weakness for trying to figure out how and why things are—an enterprise in which I've never yet been successful—and philosophized on the strangeness of this meeting. But there was no time for philosophizing in Shelby, and strangeness was all around. Not the strangeness of the wild West, but the strangeness of a muddy mushroom boom town that had boomed itself a little too hard and blown up with a bang. Everybody was talking about that last hundred thousand that had to be raised for Kearns and Dempsey. Would they raise it or not? It was a relief to get to the hotel and go up to the room where Harry Mullane would be waiting for me, with authentic news instead of the speculations of oil-town optimism.

I found him lying on the bed with half a dozen other men around him—Chanler and Cullop, and two or three more, and even Tod Maree. Yes, Tod Maree. The upstage plutocrat of sports writing had unbent when he found that Mullane had dug up a quart of liquor in this town which vigilant prohibition agents were keeping very dry.

"Well, Mullane, got some work for me?" I asked.

"Only getting your own ice out of the bucket and pouring your own liquor. The story's down in Great Falls to-day, where they're trying to raise the money. This town is flat. Corliss will have a hard day, but you and I can take our time."

"I was told to help out," I said. "I suppose, then, I ought to help Corliss out. Is there a train to Great Falls?"

"Yes, but it won't get there till Corliss' story of whether they did or did not get the money—yes or no, sink or swim, survive or perish—is on the wire. So you'd better stay here and help me cover Shelby."

"He's quite right," Chanler drawled. "I'm staying in Shelby, you see. The picture is in Shelby."

"One fine picture, too," Cullop grunted, reaching for the soda. "We've written about the mud and there's nothing else to write about except Prince Kaiole and his Hawaiian Hula-Hula Belles. They play in a newly built pine auditorium next door to the jail and after the show they all go up to the big large dance in the King Tut Pavilion. The metropolitan journalists have bought the front row for the week. Chanler here wrote quite a story about 'em. Said they had the 'Follies' backed off the boards."

"The Princess Aloha isn't so bad," Chanler protested. "I've seen far worse on Broadway. Not in leads, to be sure, but she could be built up—like this fight. We got very confidential at the dance last night. Her real name's Irma Fishbein; she's twenty-one, and she has ambitions."

"Did she tell you she was married to Prince Kaiole?" Cullop asked. "Oh, no; she didn't tell me. I heard that from another lady—a jealous one in the chorus. Hawaiian? No! Kaiole's the only real Hawaiian in the lot and he's only a quarter blood. I believe his real name is Murphy, but so long as he's black Irish he can make up all right. Want to watch out for him, Chanler. The black Irish are vindictive. He'll cling to his little wife. If you lift her to Broadway you'll have to lift him too."

"He'd better cling to her," said Chanler. "His show would be a flop without her. Luckily our friend Dick didn't stop off at Shelby. He'd tumble for her hard."

"Dick's in Shelby," I said.

"Couldn't resist the lure, eh? Is he an oil magnate now?"

"No," I answered glumly. And then—for I had a plan in mind—I told them about Dick's misfortunes. Not all of them—not the girl; but the stud game and the failure of the oil company.

"That's too bad," said Chanler, for his heart was soft to all but playwrights who failed to observe the Aristotelian laws of drama. "Damn' shame. You say he's looking for work?"

"Yes, and looking hard, if I know him."

"He could have found it while they were building the arena," said Cullop, "but there's no work here now. The concessionaires are all going bankrupt. He might wash dishes in a restaurant, but that's a mean job with a mob like this in town. I think we'd better pass the hat and send him back to Chicago."

"He wouldn't go," I objected, "and he wouldn't take our money. Not that way. I have an idea that will save his face and will keep him going till the fight's over, anyway. There are five New York morning papers and all represented in this room. Maree, your syndicate makes six. We'll all get telegrams from our offices, frequent telegrams, from now on till the fight's over——"

"If there is a fight," Cullop put in.

"Precisely. If there is a fight. Some of those telegrams will go to fight headquarters on Main Street, some will stay at the Western Union offices down by the station, some will come to the hotel. I propose that if Dick hasn't found a job by dinner time we six contribute a dollar a day each and hire him as a messenger, to keep going the rounds, collecting telegrams and bringing them to us. There will be times when ten minutes' delay in getting a wire from the office would be inconvenient. It would be worth a dollar a day to every one of us. It could legitimately be put on the expense account, I think. If the auditors back in New York think otherwise—why, we could all afford a dollar a day for a week, couldn't we?"

"A messenger wouldn't be worth a nickel a day to me," said Maree. "I'm my own boss. Why should we support this kid just because he plays stud like a blind bull calf?"

"Hell!" said Chanler. "I'm in for a dollar a day. Was this game straight, do you think, Cleve?"

"I sat in it myself and it looked all right. And it was Dick's own deal that did the damage. The only trouble was that a kid with only seven hundred dollars in the world was sitting in with a man who had four or five thousand in his pocket, and probably more in the bank."

Chanler nodded.

"It's all right to say that youth must pay for its own mistakes, but a lot of us would be in the river if we carried that through. I'm in for a dollar for my paper, and another dollar for the Maree Syndicate. Tod, damn you, if you can't afford to pay for the service you're going to get the service anyway."

"Oh, I'll pay the dollar," said Maree sulkily. "But it's charity, not business."

"Never mind that," said the callous Cullop, who knew Maree better than any of us. "Whatever it is it'll help save your soul on the judgment day. And you'll need it."

So we raised the pot without much difficulty. The only thing now was to find Dick, and they told me that this would be easy enough in Shelby. Everybody in town passed up and down Main Street ten times a day, this being the only place to pass. But we'd heard nothing from him when the party broke up, nothing when I had written a story about nothing in particular and put it on the wire by way of punching the time clock, nothing when Mullane and I finished dinner and walked down to the press headquarters in the basement of the one-story city hall to find a wire from Corliss at Great Falls:

> No money in sight yet, but the works are not off till Monday night, so there is yet hope. If Cleve Wells is in Shelby better send him down here. I have been lied to so much that I can't keep my face straight now when I am interviewing prominent citizens. Being fresh to the story maybe he can control his emotions.

"Sure I'll go," I said. "See that the rest of them don't fall down on their promise if this boy turns up, will you?"

"I'll look after it. But you can't get down to Great Falls till morning, now. Better come to the show with us."

On opposite sides of Main Street the barkers were shouting at each other through their megaphones the rival merits of the two tent shows that had come to town expecting to reap a fortune, and had found

their money flowing away without return as the town grew grouchy in the rain and the fight fans who didn't know whether there was going to be a fight or not stayed at home. But louder than either tent-show barker, perhaps because he had a longer megaphone, was the wiry dark man who was proclaiming the merits of Prince Kaiole's Hawaiian Hula-Hula Belles, to-night at the Shelby National American Theater.

"They did their darnedest to give it a big-league name," said Mullane. "It needs all that, and more. When you see it you'll know why. Hello, Cullop. Headed for the temple of art? What do you hear? Any hundred thousand?"

"Not yet. They're paging every nickel in Montana, trying to make it up; but the old buffalo hunts the wallow and hides out in the mud."

"I hear they're after old Nick Gailey of San Francisco," said Mullane. "He's up at Glacier Park with his family and they've been burning up the wires. He made all his money in Montana copper so they think he ought to stand by and help the State out."

"A bird of a chance," Cullop jeered. "I know old Gailey—I used to work on the Coast. Why, he had the face to ask them for three ringside seats free—free, mind you—for himself and his wife and his daughter, on the strength of his long association with Montana interests. And the saps let him have them. I bet he charges his railroad fare from Glacier Park to Shelby against the copper company's expense account."

"He's coming down in his private car, I heard," said Mullane. "Never mind, Cleve; I buy the tickets."

He laid down three half dollars and we passed into the long, unpainted one-story building, perhaps a third full of citizens of Shelby, where the Hawaiian Hula-Hula Belles held forth. In and up to the front bench—and there they were, all the great men, dramatic critics and literary experts, the trained seals of the New York and Chicago and California press who had come out to write feature stories of the fight and were marking time till we knew whether there would be a fight by writing feature stories about the Hula-Hula Belles.

"Here's the last recruit," said Chanler. "Now that the veteran first nighters are in their seats the show can start. Tell Kaiole Murphy to lay down the megaphone and put on the make-up. Where's the music?"

"The orchestra's suffered a shake-up," said somebody down the line. "The little girl that plays the piano found Shelby mud too hard on her feet. Murphy gave her carfare back to Spokane and he was looking all over town this afternoon for another pianist."

"Just as well," said Chanler. "I've no doubt she was admirable on classic music but she was a trifle weak on the jazz. Ah, here comes the rest of the orchestra, anyway. I guess Murphy found a pinch hitter."

Three boys edged their way in the narrow space in front of us and sat down beside the cornet, trombone and drums. A fourth followed them, sat down at the piano, and began rattling lightly a piece of jazz music with all the finish that the most exacting hula-hula belle could desire. Dick Cort.

I dropped a hand on his shoulder.

"What's this, son?"

He grinned up at me.

"Back in the working class again. Prince Kaiole hired me this afternoon as soon as he learned that I could read and fake. Dollar a day, board at the lunch counter and a cot in the room back stage where the unmarried gentlemen of the cast camp out. Not so bad, eh? Not so bad."

CHAPTER VIII.

Well, the boy earned his dollar a day. He was a good pianist, better than that show deserved, and he doubled in strings; in the final act of the Hawaiian part of the show, just before the extra numbers of high-class Irish comedy bits that they gave as an afterpiece for all who cared to stay and pay a quarter extra, he went up on the stage, hung wreaths of white and yellow paper flowers over his shoulder, and strummed a ukulele, humming an obbligato in a clear tenor while Princess Aloha did her final solo dance.

She danced well, this little girl; I could see why Kaiole Murphy had married her to hold on to her. She was the show, with her shapely little figure and flying black hair and educated feet. The grass-skirt epidemic had pretty well died out in New York but this girl with her sense of rhythm could probably learn any style of dancing without much work. She had promise.

Unfortunately she knew it. She and her husband, Kaiole Murphy, knew enough to appreciate what had gone right over the heads of the local residents—that here in the front row was critical talent, aggregating in value about ten million dollars on the hoof, which could make or break the artistic standing of any show or any actress in the country. They couldn't make or break the box office, but that was another matter. The point was that these Olympians of art, these distant thundering Joves, were acting as Irma Aloha Fishbein's claque, plugging for every number and forcing her back before the curtain for a half dozen extra bends. Their sincerity might not be unimpeachable; they might be kidding the show. But that was over the head of Irma Aloha Fishbein. What young actress would believe that a critic was kidding her if he told her that she was a better dancer than anybody Ziegfeld had ever hired? Irma drank it in with gusto and Prince Kaiole Murphy looked more than a little worried. His wife-star was hearing the siren call of the bright lights and the big money; and there was nothing in the expert uninspired competence of Kaiole Murphy that could carry him with her. And I think he knew it. He was a realist, that man. One becomes realistic after a few years in charge of a troupe of strolling players that makes the county seats in fair week.

"Clever little girl," I said to Chanler as we passed out on our way to the big dance at the King Tut Pavilion.

"Yes," he agreed. "Not so good as she thinks she is, of course; but I've never known an actor or actress who was. Whereas last week she didn't think she was as good as she really is; and that's bad."

"You people will put ideas into her head," I warned him. "I gather she not only thinks that you can put her over on Broadway, but that you will."

"Hah!" said Chanler. "If I could put anybody over I'd put myself over farther than I am over now. But she might deliver —you never can tell. Only she'd have to shake Kaiole Murphy first. He's good in his class, which is Class D in the minors. At that, she was better to-night than ever. That's our friend Dick's doing. He's improved that orchestra about five hundred per cent. Good musician, that boy. We must warn him not to stick with the Pagliacci. It has a lure, till you're used to it: and he's good enough to get two dollars a day out of Kaiole Murphy."

"His mother——" I began, then choked myself. Dick's past was a secret and it was not for me to tell Chanler that his mother had been the best pianist in Adamsville.

We mounted the steps to the King Tut Pavilion, a barnlike room hung with red and green paper streamers, where the younger residents of Shelby, boys off the ranches, oil drillers from the field north of town and a sprinkling of visiting newspaper men had assembled. The fight fans were lounging about in hotel rooms talking over the prospects, but the correspondents, who had been talking prospects all day, needed a rest. Here it was. One of the tent shows was giving the dance, its orchestra blaring away and its feminine talent dancing with the natives and getting back a nickel out of the dime paid for each dance; but the hosts and hostesses were overshadowed when Kaiole Murphy presently arrived with his Hawaiian Hula-Hula Belles. The feature writers had spread the renown of Princess Aloha; everybody wanted to dance with her. But she gave the visiting newspaper men the first call, no matter how many black scowls they drew from the assembled Shelbyites. She had risen above Shelby; she was a New Yorker in the making.

The orchestra, it appeared, welcomed relief workers who would take the place of a perspiring musician who wanted to get a glass of lemonade in the Bamboo Café downstairs, so before long Dick Cort was at the piano, and the dance improved by the minute. I thought that once they found how good he was they'd keep him at it all evening, but they didn't; presently he was dancing with the Princess Aloha and it seemed to me thereafter that he had about every third dance with her. I had danced with her once, by way of verifying my credentials as a newspaper man, and then withdrawn to the bench along the wall; for I am not a dancing man. And here, as I sat watching the dancers in boredom, I heard a little squeaky voice behind me.

"Here's the quarter, Clevie. Thanks."

Gus Piedelheimer was grinning at me.

"I know what you think," he said with a good-humored grimace, settling down in the vacant space beside me. "You think this afternoon you never see this quarter again, because you heard in Adamsville that I was broke. And you heard right—only I ain't

all broke." He hauled out a roll of bills and flipped them through his fingers; there must have been five or six hundred there.

"No, that ain't all, either," he added as he put them back in his pocket. "I ain't rich, but I got a little."

"You shouldn't flash that wad of money around here, Gus. Somebody will roll you for it."

"Not in Shelby," he observed as he lit a cigar. "Not in Shelby. This is a tame town, Clevie. I give you my word there was more doin' in Adamsville on Saturday night already than there is here. Yes. It wasn't such a bad place, now, was it? If I had it to do again I would not do them that mean turn about the motor boulevard. But I was still sore, then. They had not done me right."

"They certainly hadn't," I agreed. "What are you doing now, Gus?"

"Oh, this an' that. This an' that. I promote a fight now and then, and I got a little money in a semipro ball club that ain't so bad. I've seen every heavyweight championship fight since Jeffries-Johnson, and a lot in the other classes, too. I guess I'm just one of them eggs."

"You're out of the pictures, then?"

Elbows on knees, Gus looked meditatively at the floor.

"Huh? Oh, yes, I was just thinking. Yes, they trimmed me in the pictures. Or rather I trimmed myself. I had some big ideas in them days, back in 1910. If I had hired Griffith to put them over for me, when I could have hired Griffith, I would be worth twenty million now. But you don't see them things till afterward. I didn't hire Griffith and my ideas went blah. *O Wek, O Wek*—as we used to say up Dutch Hollow in Adamsville.

"But, Clevie—you will excuse me if I call you Clevie, for though you have your gray hairs I must still think of you the way you used to look runnin' around Adamsville in short pants—but, Clevie, I do not care so much for the money any more. I know every goof will say that when he has not got it, so I do not expect you to believe me; but still I tell you. You are in a game, and suppose you don't make any money; well, then, you ain't got any money and that is that. Or suppose you do make money; you will lose it pretty soon, trying something else; or else some one will roll you for it.

"Yes. There was a certain actress whose name I don't speak any more, not because I am sore on her but because it would hurt her, see. I thought I would make her the brightest star of them all and I guessed wrong about what people would want to see and I was broke. And then she couldn't see me any more; which showed she was a wise girl, because I could do her no more good and I am not so handsome as Valentino that anybody should love me for my face when she could love somebody else for a block of bonds and a palace in Beverly Hills. And that also I do not mind any more, for I hear she is getting very hard to live with now that she has gone over big. That is another thing that I do not expect you to believe; but it is so.

"No, Clevie, maybe you have found out already, and if not you will find out before you are my age, that it is not the money. Of course if you have not got any money at all, that is bad. But you can always get a little. I have seen young boys who did not know that and they took it hard. But you can always get a little if you are wise and have been around and don't mind working. And as for the rest of it, the money is just like good weather, something that is so much good luck when you have got it, and when you have not got it you must try to get along without it. That is what I have learned. What you get is the fun in the game, and it don't make so much difference what game it is, at that. We are all looking out for ourselves, ain't we? And some of us do not play the game right; but if their conscience don't hurt them I got nothing to say against them. Only my conscience would hurt me if I done that, so I got to play the game straight the way I see it. And that is where I get my fun.

"Young boys like that one dancing out on the floor with the Princess Aloha do not know these things, but it is so."

"As it happens," I said, "that particular kid does know it. Or, rather, he's been taught to believe it. And there is where your philosophy is weak, Gus. He's young, and he needs the money, or thinks he does; and he's just been trimmed to his last cent and come down to playing the piano for the Hula-Hula Belles. And he'll begin to think pretty soon that they've told him wrong, because he thinks he needs a lot of money."

"Some girl," said Gus. "Sure—it always is. This one?"

It was not for me to publish Dick's private sorrows.

"I think not."

"I think so, maybe," said Gus. "They dance pretty, but that ain't all. See the way he looks at her."

"What do you think of the fight?" I asked to change the subject.

"Is there goin' to be one? Well, if there is, I think there's only one thing to think. It is a good big man against a good little man." He broke into a slow grin. "Just like me and Big Jim Cort. *O Weh, O Weh.* He run me out of town."

"But, Gus, it was a godsend to you to leave Adamsville. You've had a fuller life than——"

"Yes, but that is not everything yet. He was not so bad a feller, Big Jim. I was sorry when I heard he was dead. And he died right. He could have jumped but he stopped to pitch out the littlest boy, and the train hit him."

"Gus," I said, overcome by my instinct for the dramatic, "that's the boy. The one out there on the dancing floor."

"Big Jim's boy? Clevie, you ain't kiddin' me?"

"That's Big Jim's boy. But he doesn't know it. He was raised by an aunt, off somewhere, who didn't tell him anything about Adamsville. He's the last of the tribe."

Gus was staring at Dick with keen-eyed quizzical interest, and once started I had to tell him all I knew. All but the girl, that is; that part of it was between her and Dick.

"But, Clevie," he protested, laying a hand on my knee, "what was this stud game? You tell me that over again. It was all straight, you think?"

I went over that last hand, card by card.

"Yes," he agreed. "it sounds all right—unless they was readers. You know. Them cards that have little curlicues here and there in the corners, that look just like any other curlicues in the corners of cards unless you have been educated. You mean to tell me Big Jim's boy can't read the backs of cards?"

"But, Gus, he was raised by his aunt. I don't suppose he ever played cards except in college. He's a good clean kid."

"Yes," said Gus. "Too clean. He will get himself all muddied up yet if he ain't careful. If I had a boy there are some things I would teach him. Not to bet on the stock market at all, because those things are probably fixed and you never can be sure they are not; never to pack a gat unless he thinks he will have to use it, and then to keep his hand in his pocket and on it all the time so nobody will beat him to the draw; and to read the backs of cards. Because nobody will run in a deck of readers in an honest game, so the knowledge does you no harm; and if it is a game where they run in a deck of readers on you, why, that is the same as saying that they are playing under different rules, like the difference between Marquis of Queensberry and London Prize Ring rules, see; and if it is all right for them other fellers to read the backs—why, it is all right for you to read 'em, too.

"Big Jim would have taught him all that. And he would not have misused it either, for Big Jim was straight. He took a dime out of every pot for the house in that backroom game of his, but when he set in himself he took his chances. I tell you the thing I am most ashamed of in my life, that I would not let Big Jim referee that fight between Iron Man Hess and my boob Pfalzgraf boy. Because though he was backing Iron Man Hess he would have not given him any more the edge than most any referee will give the man he likes better. But I was young then. And now Big Jim's boy can't read the backs of cards and they take his roll away from him. *So geht's.*"

He left me presently to go downstairs and buy some more cigars, and I watched the dancers. The orchestra was playing a languid waltz led by a softly wailing cornet muted with a hat hung over its mouth. Dick was slowly whirling about with the Princess Aloha, whose rapt eyes gazed into his.

I didn't like it. I had seen young men caught on the rebound before. I liked it still less when Chanler told me that by way of keeping up the general inflation of expectations around the Hula-Hula Belles, who were all seeing themselves on the big time now that the Princess Aloha was being so powerfully boosted, his gang of art arbiters had dropped dark hints that Dick was the son of a theatrical millionaire who had picked up a job with Kaiole Murphy to learn all ends of the show business. It was a merry joke, I suppose; but my business is politics, where we have less sense of humor.

Somebody else had the girl for the next dance. Dick came up to me, flushed and eager; with that same high-hearted, dangerous recklessness still on him. The boy was likely to get into all sorts of trouble—and I had to take the morning train for Great Falls.

"Nice little girl, isn't she?" I suggested.

"Yes, she is. I believe Mr. Chanler is right—she is good enough for Broadway." Mr. Chanler, the highest-paid dramatic critic in New York, would have been pleased to know that his judgment had received the indorsement of a college boy. "I've been talking to her quite a good deal. She's a sensible girl and an awfully good sport."

"So she seems." He was silent for a moment. Then:

"I tell you, Mr. Wells, these girls who have had to work for their own living, and rub up against hard facts to make their way—they—they've learned a lot. They know a lot about realities that a girl never hears of when everything is done for her. And it doesn't hurt them, either."

"She and her husband have had to rub up against hard facts in this stand," I suggested. "Their gate wasn't fifty dollars tonight. Oh, yes. Prince Kaiole Murphy's her husband. Didn't you know?"

I had made a double blunder, for he evidently did know, and he saw what I was trying to do.

"Yes, she told me. Poor little kid!"

"Don't knock him in public," I said brutally. "He's your boss."

A few minutes later he was dancing with her again. Gus Piedelheimer was standing by my side once more, peering at them shrewdly.

"Clevie, he likes that girl. And that girl likes him. He is younger and better looking than Kaiole Murphy, and he has good manners. And besides, she knows all about Kaiole Murphy already, being married to him. While this boy she does not know about. And she would like to learn, if she has time after these crazy eggs from New York make her a star in the 'Follies.' And then what becomes of Kaiole Murphy and his Hawaiian Hula-Hula Belles? For she is the show."

"Gus," I said savagely, "you think you see a lot, don't you? How do you get to be so wise?"

He looked at me slantwise with his shrewd little puckered grin.

"I got owl's eyes, Clevie. They see in the dark."

CHAPTER IX.

That night I went down to Great Falls, where the fight promoters were occupied with trying to raise the last hundred thousand for the champion, and with wondering what they could do, and what Jack Kearns, the champion's manager, would do, when they had to appear in default. The excitements and agitations connected with that enterprise of high finance, and its failure, surged up and down the brisk little city for the next two days. As first one leading citizen and then another tried his hand and gave up in despair, as the fatal hour drew nearer and nearer and Kearns still refused to say whether his champion would fight for less than the full sum stipulated in the contract, those excitements and agitations filled the hotel lobbies and corridors and locked rooms where little groups of men sat on beds and argued over their cigars about the possibility of finding another five thousand here and there; while marching Elks assembled in state convention paraded up and down the streets in bright colors and their bands kept the citizens awake till dawn.

I was deep in it, as a reporter; over that week-end I worked twenty-two hours a day. But those excitements and agitations and false rumors have nothing to do with this story. What is relevant to this tale of the fortunes of certain former residents of Adamsville, Indiana, occurred in the lobby of the Rainbow Hotel in Great Falls, one afternoon, just after another Montana hope had gone crashing into ruin. Mr. Gailey of San Francisco had been induced to bring his private car and his family down to Great Falls, where some old business associates had argued with him about the chance to make his name immortal in the history of American sport by feeding Mr. Kearns that last hundred thousand. Mr. Gailey couldn't see it. They offered to make his last hundred thousand a first charge on the gate receipts, so that he would be sure to get it back; but Mr. Gailey remarked coldly that there would not be any hundred thousand in the gate, and that there were enough first charges on it already to tie it up in litigation for the next ten years unless all the creditors became more charitable than good business men had a right to be. They

dug up two thirds of the moving-picture rights to the fight and offered them to Mr. Gailey as a bonus; but Mr. Gailey said that it was very doubtful whether the promoters of the pictures could get around the law in enough States to count, that anyhow nobody would go to see a moving picture of a knock-out in the first round, and that, in effect, two thirds of nothing was still nothing.

All this happened upstairs but soon the news spread through corridors and lobbies that great-hearted Nick Gailey had turned up his nose at the fight like all the other great hearts, and that the last hope lay in the magnanimity of Jack Kearns. Before long the tramp-tramp melody of "John Brown's Body" was resounding through the lobbies, carrying the words of a new song written by reporters and sung by Elks:

"They tried to nick Nick Gailey for the final hundred grand,
They tried to nick Nick Gailey for the final hundred grand,
They tried to nick Nick Gailey for the final hundred grand,
But they couldn't nick old Nick.

"Nick, he's got that hundred thousand,
Nick, he's got that hundred thousand,
Nick could pay that hundred thousand—
But they couldn't nick old Nick."

I stepped back into the palm room and out of reach of the parading singers and there I saw a girl standing alone and looking at the milling mob very much as a glacier-capped peak might look at the crawling human beings on the plains below. Rose Gailey, cool and dainty in a pale-green sports suit and a lace-collared waist. I crossed the room and came up to her.

"Miss Gailey, I believe I met you at Glacier Park the other night. You've probably forgotten my name—Cleveland Wells, of the New York *Record*."

A breeze from the ice fields swept me.

"You're mistaken. I saw you but I didn't meet you."

"All right. You've met me now and I hope you'll be obliging enough to stay here and listen to me for a minute or so. If you haven't sense enough to know that I'm not trying to flirt with you, you aren't worth my wasting time on you; but though my time is more valuable than yours, I'll take a chance."

She said nothing, but stood still staring at me frigidly.

"You are a friend of Dick Cort," I said.

"Again you're mistaken."

"Young woman, you're the kind that makes me regret the passing of the old-fashioned father. But let that pass. If you and Dick, severally and individually, want to make yourselves miserable, that's your business. But at least you might find out what is happening before you do it."

"What happens to him doesn't concern me."

"Not even that he's lost every cent of the little money he had and is playing the piano in a cheap show for a dollar a day and his keep?"

She was only about nineteen, that girl, and she couldn't suppress a little shiver at that.

"It doesn't concern me at all," she objected. "I told him I'd never speak to him again."

"And he probably said that he didn't care if you didn't."

"How did you know?" she blazed. "Did he tell you?"

"Why, you little fool, don't you know him any better than that? Of course he didn't tell me—didn't tell me anything. But I have been trained to use my eyes and such judgment as the Lord gave me. As to how I knew what he said to you—I was twenty-one myself, once."

"Well, that's just what he said, anyway," she protested, evidently unconvinced.

"And though he didn't mean it at the time," I pursued, "he means it now. Which is why I am interfering to the extent of letting you know. For while he thinks that this girl he's interested in now would be better for him than you, I'm inclined to believe he's mistaken——"

"A girl in the show?" she broke in with sobbing eagerness. "Oh, the beast!" She was trembling and almost tearful; for they'd given her an easy life and a real crisis was a novelty she wasn't trained to meet.

"He isn't a beast at all. Merely a natural young damn' fool, like you. That's why I, speaking as an older man, think you'd be a good match. You'd make your breaks and learn your lessons together and each of you would have so much on the other that neither could afford to be upstage."

"Well, if he wants to trail off after a girl like that——"

"But she isn't a girl like that," I explained. "I have every reason to suppose

that she is a young woman of good character, some beauty and even a moderate amount of talent. In some ways she'd make him a good wife. Unfortunately, however, she has a husband already."

Her face turned white.

"I can't believe that Dick would do that."

"He isn't trying to carry her off from her lawful spouse's side. The affair hasn't gone that far yet, though it's on its way. Besides, her husband, as a husband, is at present rather in the background. He's also the manager of the show. His wife is his star and she has to be attractive to make money for them both. It's her habit to attract and his habit to let her attract—even if she's attracting nobody but their dollar-a-day piano player. But things are moving; and when they start they'll move fast."

She made a last desperate effort to recover her composure.

"I don't see how all this concerns me, or you."

"Miss Gailey, I make my living by guessing what people mean—and guessing right—when they're telling me something else. So you might drop this pleasing fiction that it doesn't concern you. I've seen you look at him. As for me—if a couple of kids below the age of discretion, like you and Dick, try to jump in the river and drown yourselves, it becomes the duty of any passing adult to haul you out and give you a lecture. I have a boy and a couple of little girls. No doubt they'll grow up to be fools, for that is the common lot of humanity; but if my training amounts to anything they'll never have that particularly gratuitous brand of foolishness that comes from stubborn pride. That's all."

I started away but she caught up with me.

"How did Dick lose his money? Was the oil company worthless?"

"The oil company blew up, but luckily before Dick arrived. He lost his money in a card game on the train—a game he went into because he had to do something to take his mind off his troubles, a game he plunged in because he needed money, perhaps, a lot of money—and perhaps, too, because it was in his blood. His father was——"

She was instantly distrustful.

"Are you making this up? Dick told me his father died when he was a little child. He doesn't remember him at all."

"I remember him. We came from the same town. Dick doesn't know that, but I knew all his people. That's one reason I'd like to help him out of the cañon and up on the hilltops again. Another reason, and a bigger one, is that I like Dick. He has qualities that will carry him pretty far, with a sensible girl to steer him; or that will take him right down to the bottom of the bottomless pit if a stubborn young fool drives him there. Of course, I'm only trying to save him a little trouble. If he gets through this jam without her husband killing him—if he gets off with merely losing his job—he'll find some sensible girl in two or three years who will set him going right. But I hate to see him lose time."

"You're very solicitous."

"Why, Miss Gailey, I'm middle-aged but I can remember how things used to hurt. Dick has all these beautiful ideas that we all start with—that if you play straight and live cleanly and keep your courage up you're bound to win. He even thinks Gibbons has a chance against Dempsey, just because he's courageous and clean. He'll learn, sooner or later, that playing straight and living cleanly and being brave will only make you an easy mark for somebody with a sense of reality——"

That got her, as I expected.

"If that's your rotten philosophy," she said in a low tense tone, "I only hope you'll have the decency to keep away from Dick. Because playing straight and keeping clean does count."

"Oh, do you believe that, too?" I asked in surprise. "It's a pity you didn't let Dick see it. He'll need somebody to vote with him on that before very long. I had the idea, somehow, that you were more realistic."

With that I started away again, but again she was beside me.

"Mr. Wells, does he need money?"

"Of course he needs money. Who doesn't? I need it; undoubtedly you need it. If you asked your father, he'd probably say he needs money, for all the twenty-five or fifty million he has already. In the sense of being in distress, Dick doesn't need money. He's comfortable; he sleeps back stage, his board is paid and you can't spend a dollar a day in Shelby."

"I don't need money," she said contemptuously. "I have a perfectly absurd allowance; I've saved a good deal out of it.

Just to show you how much you don't know about my affairs, Mr. Wells—father and mother don't want me to marry Dick, of course. And he wanted me to marry him on his seven hundred dollars and live in Shelby—that was when he thought he'd go into the oil company. And I thought that was foolish but I told him I'd saved eight thousand and we could live on that—and then he got stubborn and we quarreled."

"Why, you didn't really suppose he'd live on your money—money that you'd saved from your personal allowance, money you got from your father?"

"I don't see why he shouldn't," she protested. "My money or his money, what difference does it make so long as we had enough to give us a start? You think it's so fine to be realistic—now isn't that realism?"

"Certainly. But Dick is young. If my wife had eight thousand and wanted to divide with me, I'd let her. Dick might take your money if you'd got it some other way—if you'd won it in a crap game, which I believe is the sport most favored by the modern young woman, or on the wheel at Monte Carlo. But to let you use as Mrs. Cort money you'd saved out of the allowance your father gave you for being Miss Gailey—Dick would think that was obtaining money under false pretenses. Evidently there are a lot of things about that young man that you don't know. Why, I don't even believe you know him as well as the Princess Aloha Fishbein, the honest young working woman with whom he's probably swapping tales of privation on the ragged edge at this moment."

I did get away that time, but when I glanced back, safe in the lobby crowd, I saw that she was still looking after me, fargazing and absorbed.

CHAPTER X.

That jumbled, excited night, when all of us sat up till daylight rushing from the hotel to the telegraph office to beat each other on the latest news, rushing back to the hotel to learn that our great exclusive story was now all wrong that somebody else was rushing off to beat us with still later and semi-final truth—that night was the climax. At eleven-thirty the fight was on; at eleven-forty-five it was off; at twelve-fifteen it hung in the balance; at twelve-thirty it was off, permanently and definitely; at twelve-forty-five somebody else was dug out of bed to resume the argument, and at two-thirty it was finally and permanently on again. After all the backing and filling we knew at last, by daybreak on Tuesday morning, that Dempsey and Gibbons were going to fight at Shelby on Wednesday afternoon.

But we couldn't sleep on that news, not in Great Falls. Jack Kearns was taking the early-morning train back to Shelby to take over what little cash was in the drawer and prepare to take his chances on the gate receipts, and we all had to go too.

It was nearly sunrise when I got on the Pullman reserved for newspaper men to find every berth occupied, and slumped wearily into the smoking compartment to sleep sitting down. But I couldn't sleep—not for long. It was hot and stuffy and dusty; and after enduring it for perhaps half the journey I was driven out to the back platform for some air.

I had supposed we were the last car, but we weren't. Hooked on behind us was a private car, and on its front platform, fresh and breezy and smiling, stood Rose Gailey.

"Hello, Mr. Wells," she called with a good humor I'd never expected, from her. "Are you in the newspaper car, too?"

"In a sense," I said. "I'm on it though not in it."

"Well, that's a shame. We're going to have breakfast here in five minutes and I want you to come over. No, don't be foolish. You must be hungry."

Of course I was hungry, and if I refused she'd probably be angry not only at me but at Dick. What her father and mother would say was another matter, but I'd have to risk that.

As a matter of fact they made a good pretense of cordiality. When Rose told them that I was Mr. Wells of the New York *Record* old Gailey loosened up to the extent of telling me that the *Record* was more widely circulated in California than any other New York paper; that he subscribed to it himself, had it on his desk every morning and sometimes read it. He knew my political correspondence very well, was impressed by its sagacity——

"We have another newspaper guest on this trip," he went on. "You know Mr. Maree, of course? Old friend of mine. We're dropping him—and you, I suppose—at Shelby; going on to Glacier Park. But we'll

come back to Shelby to-morrow for the fight. Breakfast ready, Kato? We'll find Maree inside."

Tod Maree had no gracious welcome for me. It was right and fitting in his eyes that sixty thousand a year should be invited in to share the luxury of two million a year; but that eight thousand a year should be bidden to sit beside sixty thousand was downright bolshevism. However, he swallowed his resentment and breakfast made us all a shade more human.

"What do you think of the fight prospects?" Gailey asked over the last cup of coffee. "Who'll win?"

"Ask Mr. Maree," I said. "If you asked me to choose between Ford and Harding I could give you a guess; but when it's Dempsey and Gibbons I yield to the fight expert."

"Dempsey will kill him," said Maree. "And I hope he does it quick."

"Don't you think Gibbons has a chance?" Rose inquired.

"Fifteen pounds lighter—six years older—no punch!"

"But people say so much about his being a clean liver and in such good training that he doesn't feel his extra years. Maybe he can stand Dempsey off."

"Miss Gailey, you're an optimist. Maybe he can stand Dempsey off for three rounds, or four, or even six. But I don't believe it. As for lasting to the finish——"

"There was a man in the Park Hotel last night offering to bet that Gibbons would be on his feet at the end of the fight," said Gailey, "but he wanted ten to one, and nobody took him."

"I'd take all I could get on that at ten to one," said Maree sourly, "and think I was lucky."

"Oh, would you?" came Rose's smooth voice—smooth like the paw of the tiger. "Because I have a little money and I'm for Gibbons. And I'll just bet you a thousand against ten thousand, Mr. Maree——"

Tod's sour face grew sourer still.

"I'm not a betting man, Miss Gailey ——" He paused, for that chill from the ice fields was in the air. The Gaileys hadn't tried to stop their daughter; old Nick was laughing indulgently at the childish prank, Mrs. Gailey was trying to look horrified at her daughter's wickedness but succeeding as usual only in looking proud and ineffectual. But when Tod said that he wasn't a betting man they had both stiffened, just a shade; they had both chilled, just a shade. And they were getting stiffer and chillier. The Gaileys might be elderly and penurious but they came from San Francisco, where the high-hearted days of old are not so distant that a man can safely talk big money and crawl when his bluff is called.

Tod swallowed two or three times, turned a pale olive green and said thickly:

"I'm not a betting man, but I'll take that. Only, Mr. Gailey, I don't think you ought to let your daughter throw her money away."

Gailey laughed.

"It'll do her good. I tell her she's been too economical these last two years. You'd think she was practicing to be a poor man's wife. Do her good to throw a thousand away and see how it feels."

Rose already had her check book open and her fountain pen in hand; Maree wrote his check as gleefully as he might have written his own death warrant. Of course he believed what he said. I believed what he said. It was only common sense that Gibbons didn't have a one-to-ten chance of lasting fifteen rounds. Everybody said so. But putting his own money back of his prediction came hard for the man whose predictions were the basis for a million other people's bets. There was only one thing harder—to crawl away disgraced in the sight of a man worth twenty-five million dollars.

"There!" said Rose cheerfully. "Mr. Wells, will you hold the stakes?"

"I'd drop dead of anxiety with eleven thousand dollars of other people's money in my pocket," I said. "Let your father do it."

So old Gailey agreed to do it, and that seemed settled. But it wasn't. Maree talked to him after breakfast while I tried to make conversation for Mrs. Gailey and Rose; and after a while, as we were drawing near Shelby and I found myself alone on the rear platform with the old gentleman, he remarked:

"I guess I'd better tear up those checks and forget about it. It was only a whim of Rose's."

"But a bet has been made, in the presence of witnesses," I reminded him. "Illegal, of course, but why call it off without the consent of the bettors?"

"No use letting the girl throw her money away, you know. I've talked to Maree. He won't hold her to it."

"But perhaps she'll hold him to it."

"Oh, you think perhaps she has some chance, then?"

"Mighty little. Not one chance against ten, certainly. But the bet has been made. She thinks enough of her chance to put a thousand on it. As I understand, it's her money; and she has a right to a run for it."

He laughed, rather deprecatorily.

"Oh, no. It wouldn't do. I'll tear up the checks."

"Mr. Gailey, you've told me—what I knew already—that my paper is read a good deal through California. If you tear up those checks I will certainly put it in the New York *Record* that Nick Gailey, having agreed to hold stakes on a bet, destroyed the checks so as to save his daughter's money. If it's all right for you to do it, it's all right for me to let California know about it."

His face grew purple.

"Why, you miserable—you wretched—I always knew newspaper men had no sense of honor."

"Not a damn' bit," I agreed. "Not a damn' bit. We're so lost to the most elementary considerations of decency that when a respectable citizen tries to do something raw, from motives that won't stand inspection, we're just as likely as not to tell the world about it. But don't let that stand in your way, Mr. Gailey. Tear up the checks if you feel like it."

"Get off my car," he commanded. But that was easy; I had only to step back on to the back platform of the newspaper men's car just ahead. And there, on a folding stool borrowed from the porter, I sat and smoked and fixed him with my glittering eye till we were in Shelby and his car was uncoupled, to be attached to the train for Glacier Park.

So I was back once more in the town of dust and mud, my conscience easier because I had been able to do something for Dick and my nerves relaxed by the prospect that in two days more the fight would be over and I could start back on that vacation. I needed it.

But in the interval it was undeniably reassuring to have found the girl still interested. We might get Dick's affairs straightened out yet.

CHAPTER XI.

Down the street came Mullane.

"What news?" I demanded.

"The Princess Aloha has blown her job."

"What?"

"You heard me. She stays to the end of the week; then, when the fight is over and the alleged crowd is gone and the Hawaiian Hula-Hula Belles are due to move on to Lethbridge, she quits."

"Now what the devil does she do that for?"

"Ah! That's what a lot of people are wondering—including her boss and husband, Kaiole Murphy. I hear she was very upstage with Kaiole—deigned no explanations and all that sort of thing. They haven't been speaking, except on the stage, for a week. Naturally she didn't make conversation after passing him the sad news. All this we learn from the jealous chorus girl, little Kitty, who hopes to be promoted to lead."

"What does Dick say?" I asked.

"Dick, being interviewed by assembled representatives of the press, announced that he had nothing to say except that anybody could see that the Princess Aloha was good enough for Broadway."

"The young fool," I groaned. "The young fool."

"He isn't the only one, then. We don't know why she's quitting but we guess. These wild men have killed time by telling her she's better than Marillyn Miller. Does she believe it? Of course she does. And that, Cleve, is where sport is more honest than art. You know where you're at. If I say a ball player is a hopeless busher, why, maybe the next day he socks one into the stands, and it goes into the box score, and then everybody can make up their minds whether I am right or not. If I say he's the flash of the season, and the next day he boots a couple, that goes into the box score too, so he doesn't get too elated. But there's no box score in dramatic criticism. A box-office score, yes; but that is something else again. How does this kid know she isn't great? All the pontiffs say she is."

"But is Dick still playing the piano?"

"To date, Dick is unfired. I don't know how long it will last. Anyway I've got in my pocket the first day's pool for his services as messenger, if the worst comes to the worst."

That wasn't the possible worst, unfortu-

nately. I thought I'd better look for Dick as soon as I could leave my bags at the hotel; but as I stumbled over the plank sidewalk toward the front door I saw him, down the side street. Strolling—strolling with the Princess Aloha up the bare hill below town. Those hills were nothing to look at from below; and when you got on top of them there was still nothing to look at but more hills of the same sort. Nobody would walk on those hills to see the view.

However, there they were; and there was nothing more I could do that afternoon except work for my keep. So I covered such news as there was that day in Shelby, wrote my story and put it on the wire and came back to the lunch counter for dinner. There on a stool was Kaiole Murphy. He was alone, perhaps because he wanted to be alone; just as plausibly because his black scowl scared everybody else away. But I thought it might be well to talk to Kaiole Murphy, so I sat down on the next stool and inquired cheerfully:

"How's business, prince?"

"Rotten," he snarled. "A gross of eight hundred last week, when our traveling expenses from the last stop, Cœur d'Alene, were twelve."

"Too bad," I said with genuine sympathy, for unsophisticated person that I was I couldn't take the misfortunes of our strolling players with the lightness commanded by the great men in the front row.

"Too bad, and worse to come," he remarked glumly. "See here, Mr. Wells. You tell me something, if you don't mind. There are jokes maybe that have gone far enough, if they are jokes, and a damn' sight too far if they are not. You brought this fellow Dick Cort to town, didn't you?"

"I came in on the same train with him, if that constitutes bringing."

"Now I ask you to tell me straight as man to man, is he or is he not the son of a millionaire?"

"If anybody's been telling you that the joke has gone far enough. He's an orphan, without a cent in the world except what he draws from you."

He breathed heavily—with relief, I thought.

"Now tell me something else. You come from New York, Mr. Wells, and I do not mind telling you straight as man to man that I have never been there, though I have picked up enough of the patter to cover it up. Can these fellows—Chanler and McAvoy and the rest—can they put the Princess Aloha in a lead on Broadway? And if they do, can she hold it?"

"I can't answer either of those questions. I don't know. I know less about the theater than I do about the fight game. Politics is my line. She's a clever little girl——"

"Hell, yes, she's clever. Why not? I've taught her all I know. She was a kid of eighteen working in a candy store at Spokane when she married me. We put her in the chorus because we couldn't afford to carry anybody with the company who didn't work. I had to teach her because she wouldn't stand for it that the manager's wife should be in the chorus while somebody else played lead. Day after day for three years I've coached her; and believe me, Mr. Wells, while I know I'm no Forbes-Robertson, I have picked up a lot of the tricks that come hard in the learning. She's been spoon-fed with 'em all. Now she walks out on us. She leaves me flat and she leaves the company flat, and that's her business if she knows where she is going. But, by gum, if she is only going out to leave herself flat, somebody is going to hear from this."

He exhibited a monstrous clasp knife, then thrust it into his pocket, and stalked out. Yes, perhaps it was the stalk of the ham actor used to the representation of high-flown emotion; but high-flown emotions assumed in character sometimes strike in. Let him who has always met his crises by pure intuition, without borrowing what seems the appropriate gesture from some greater character, cast the first stone at the actor who struts and frets off stage.

It looked ominous. It looked worse when I slipped into the Shelby National American Theater that night to take my modest seat on the outer end of the front row, finding all the great men in their places; all the orchestra in place except the pianist; all the cast, according to grapevine telegraph from Kitty the jealous chorus girl, ready to go on—except the Princess Aloha. Fifteen minutes after the show should have started Dick stumbled hastily in and began thumping the piano with nervous eagerness. Simultaneously, Irma Aloha Fishbein was seen slipping in at the stage door. I was on pins and needles for five minutes; but the house was full to-night, with standees massed in the rear—the first full house of the stand. Kaiole Murphy put aside the

wrath of the jealous husband; he was first of all a manager anxious to please his first paying crowd.

That night they were putting on a two-act Hawaiian drama, "Princess of Fire." Two potted palms recreated the tropical landscape of the Pacific isles; in the wings, at ten-minute intervals, a flare of red fire represented the crater of Kilauea into which the Princess Aloha must leap at the end of the play. Except for overture and intermezzo the orchestra had nothing to do, but Dick and his ukulele were busy. He and one of the chorus girls, likewise gifted with a talent for the strings, had to provide the music for the dances by the Princess Aloha —the dances that won the heart of the young American sugar baron—played by the juvenile lead in white flannels not too badly splattered with Shelby mud; and that roused the saturnine jealousy of the prince of the ancient line, played by Kaiole Murphy.

They all played beyond themselves that night. The sight of money in the house guaranteed that; it drew the last ounce from the actors, just as the sight of the staggering moose draws the last ounce of energy from the pursuing wolves. For the first time in a disastrous three weeks' stand the Hawaiian Hula-Hula Belles had a chance to go after the meat.

It affected them all, but most of all it affected Irma Aloha Fishbein. She danced with an electric abandon that persuaded me, for the first time, that she had real possibilities. What effect it had on the critics farther down the row I can't say, for they were living up to their chosen part and playing the dutiful claque. It was a great sight. Ethel Barrymore or Mrs. Fiske would have wept with delight when they gave them a smile, and trembled with fear at their frown; yet they were mere cheer leaders for Irma Fishbein.

She was good; Dick Cort, strumming his ukulele and singing Hawaiian songs—with considerable improvisation---was good; they were all good. Yet to my uneducated and nonprofessional notion the real hero of that evening was Kaiole Murphy. The man had no inspiration whatever; all he had was a bag of tricks, and he used every one of them with unfailing judgment at just the right moment, with just the right emphasis to draw the utmost possible reaction. Perhaps he was a ham, but he knew his business and did it up to the utmost limit of his capacity. A man may have a worse epitaph than that.

So "Princess of Fire" went over big, as our front row expressed it, and when the Princess Aloha poised for a moment, arms upraised, and then jumped off a soap box at the back of the stage into the glow of red fire, the house was weeping so hard it almost forgot to applaud. It took our hard-boiled front row to remember that formality, and bring the whole cast back for five curtain calls, the Princess Aloha alone for five more.

While the front row was howling "Speech! Speech!" I heard a still small voice over my shoulder.

"This is what they live on, them actor fellers," whispered Gus Piedelheimer. "And Dick, for the first time he is on the other side of the footlights and he takes the hands with the rest of them. That goes to the head already."

"He'll get over it."

"Maybe. But it is well that he should get over it soon. Did you ever hear, Clevie, why Big Jim quit Cincinnati and come down to Adamsville? No. I think not. That was before your time. Big Jim, he was a pretty good fighter. And 'Kid' McCoy, who had been in Fitzsimmons' camp at New Orleans, he come to Cincinnati. Yes, he was also a pretty good fighter; but nobody knew that. So he was matched with Big Jim, for four rounds. It was a good fight but Big Jim had the edge. So then of course they was matched for another, and Big Jim, he was the favorite. There was a big side bet, big for them days anyway; Big Jim had put all his money on himself to beat McCoy. So all that was all set; and Kid McCoy, he walked into him with the gong and hit him once and Big Jim woke up in the ambulance. It was his last fight. He could not face the gang any more. His wife had saved up a little money, so he come down to Adamsville, away from the mob, and opened up the Klondike Palace. But Dick—he got no wife to save up money for him. This show business is not for him. Let us not have any one carry him along for a return match, Clevie. We must look after the boy."

"Shh!" I said. "Prince Kaiole Murphy is coming out to give us a speech."

"Only to tell us about their after show, I think," said Gus. But there was a so-

briefly about Kaiole Murphy's face that stilled Gus, stilled the audience. This was something more than the regular nightly bid for an extra quarter.

"Ladies and gentlemen, I can't tell you how glad we all are that we've pleased you to-night. That's what we're here for, and those of you who have been here before will testify that we've done our best even when we didn't play to more than half a dozen rows. So now that all of Shelby and a few people from the suburbs—Cutbank and Chicago and New York"—laughter—"are here to-night, we're glad you liked the show.

"But I'm not here to make a speech, friends." The tremolo of the stock-company heavy was creeping into his voice. "I just want to say a word of thanks to our steadiest and most appreciative customers, the gentlemen in the front row." Loud applause, with the front row leading. "Their support has helped us over more than one rough spot. And as perhaps a good many of you know"—he paused—"as perhaps a good many of you know, it is due to them that our bright particular star, the Princess Aloha, is leaving the show at the end of the week, to take her flight to the fairer fields of Broadway."

There was an excited rustling murmur at this. As Kaiole Murphy well knew, this was news to most of the crowd.

"We ought to have a speech to-night, friends, in honor of that. But it's not for me to make it. I'll be sorry to lose this little girl; sorry, because she's a fine actress; sorry because she's a good sport and a gay companion in the ups and downs of the show business; sorry, too, because she's my wife."

If anybody had dropped a pin then it would have jangled like a poker and tongs. For a man who wasn't on speaking terms with his wife Kaiole Murphy was getting his emotions over pretty well.

"So, for the speech we ought to hear, about the future triumphs of the Princess Aloha, I'm going to call on our friends in the front row, to whose support and appreciation she owes her great chance. I'm going to ask Mr. Chanler of New York, or Mr. McAvoy of Chicago, to tell you how they're going to put Princess Aloha over on Broadway."

Why, the man was a Machiavelli! He had them either way. If they promised, before this crowd, that Irma could make and keep a Broadway lead they'd have to pull every wire within reach to deliver. If they didn't promise Irma would wake up with a crash and be resigned to matrimony and the county-fair circuit. Crafty Kaiole Murphy! While he was speaking somebody had rolled up the curtain—undoubtedly by command. The whole company was clustered on the stage, waiting for the speech—Princess Aloha in the foreground, her eyes shining; Dick Cort off in the wings, staring at her with unguarded eagerness. Mr. Chanler of New York gulped and turned red, and waved his hand at Mr. McAvoy of Chicago; Mr. McAvoy of Chicago shrugged his shoulders and delivered a gesture of abnegation in the general direction of Mr. Chanler of New York.

Of course either of them might have squirmed out by promising anything to-night and trusting to luck that Irma would be killed in a wreck on her way East. But that would have been dishonorable; also hazardous; for wrecks can't be made to order.

"Come, come, gentlemen," said Prince Kaiole suavely. "The audience is waiting. They're interested in this little girl, too."

Foot by foot and yard by yard the gigantic frame of Mr. McAvoy of Chicago, in khaki shirt and yellow silk scarf and fringed trousers, reared itself from the front bench while the audience cheered. He strode to the stage, a grotesquely impressive personality, the best toastmaster in Chicago, the wittiest after-dinner speaker in the Middle West; and he began to talk. The history of American eloquence has suffered because no stenographer was there to take that impromptu speech and preserve it for posterity. Howard Herbert McAvoy's wit and humor were put aside that night; he talked seriously, eloquently, almost somberly, about the life of the artist—the long and weary preparation that cultivates the ground in which the seed is planted, the agonizing wait on the threshold of Fame, the factor of chance which not the best, nor the worst artist can avoid. The high rewards of endeavor. The fugitive joy of triumph. The fickleness of the crowd that drives the prudent to the sage determination that after all the reward must be found in the joy of the working, the playing of the game.

It was a masterpiece of oratory, a distin-

guished contribution to the philosophy of art, a picture of the life of the artist more vivid than I've ever heard. It held the audience tense and silent, it drove the chorus girls to tears. But it didn't answer Kaiole Murphy's question; it told nothing at all about the Broadway prospects of Irma Aloha Fishbein.

CHAPTER XII.

The audience, naturally, missed that. So did the chorus and such members of the cast as were not personally interested; they merely swelled from moment to moment with the new dignity which McAvoy's eloquence had given to their business. But Kaiole Murphy, listening intently for the answer, knew that the answer wasn't there. And Irma Aloha Fishbein, dazzled though she was, began to look puzzled and confused, groping vainly for the key to her start on Broadway. When the audience rocked the roof with cheering as Howard Herbert McAvoy jumped down off the stage; when Kaiole Murphy vainly tried to say a final word against the applause, and gave it up; when cast and audience broke ranks and began to troop off to the dance at the King Tut Pavilion, the Princess Aloha still stood in the center of the stage, bewildered, uncertain, beginning to be frightened.

I got my feet hastily out of the way as the front-row luminaries passed out.

"Coming to the dance, Cleve?" Cullop asked.

"No," I said. "I'm pretty tired and tomorrow's the big day. I think I'll go back to the hotel and get some sleep."

"Wait," said Gus' little voice from the end seat on the second row, just behind me. "Wait until this mob is out and we walk home together."

So I waited till the pine-planked auditorium was empty but for a few couples crowded round the door and the stage was empty but for the Princess Aloha still standing and trying to think it out. Kaiole Murphy, in street clothes, came up to her and said something, but she jerked a bare shoulder draped with paper flowers and brushed him aside angrily. Behind us the lights went out and from back stage the electrician called:

"Hurry up, Irma. Don't you change that grass skirt for the dance?"

She started, turned toward the wings, and just then Dick Cort came out and strode up to her. They talked for a moment, low and eagerly; then she gestured toward the empty front bench. They both saw me—they couldn't help it, for I was standing up, alone in the half-lit auditorium. Probably they didn't see Gus Piedelheimer, seated behind me. At any rate, I heard Dick saying:

"Ask Mr. Wells. He'll tell you."

In grass-skirted, beflowered splendor she leaped down over the footlights, with Dick behind her. And from the wings, dark and brooding, came Kaiole Murphy.

"Mr. Wells!" she exploded, fingers twisting nervously. "You heard what Mr. McAvoy said. But he didn't tell me how I was going to get started. They—they told me anybody on Broadway would jump at me; that Ziegfeld would sign me up as soon as he saw me. But he didn't say anything about that in his speech. What did he mean—or what didn't he mean? You're a newspaper man; you know these people and what they're like. Was he throwing me down or not?"

"You'd better ask him," I advised. "Him or Chanler. They've all gone over to the dance."

Kaiole Murphy's voice fell on us like the tolling of a bell.

"They have not. They've all gone back to the Pullmans on the side track, where they sleep."

Irma tried to ignore him, for of course she wasn't speaking to him. But if she wouldn't speak she couldn't help hearing.

"Dick thinks I'd go big in New York, don't you, Dick?"

"I certainly do," said the boy valiantly. "Only—I've just gone there on visits. I haven't any—any influence. Chanler and McAvoy and that crowd have."

"Yes," Kaiole Murphy tolled again. "They've got it—because they don't give it away."

"What do you think, Mr. Wells?" Dick appealed.

"I think," I said, hating myself for having to say it but realizing that it must be said, "that if you came to New York any of your front-bench friends would give you one or two notes to managers—enough to get you a hearing. And if Ziegfeld, or anybody else, happened to be captivated on first sight and offered you a contract—why,

they'd give three cheers. But if you had to wait around and wear out the bench in front offices and keep on getting turned down—why, they would be through. Those fellows all have themselves to look out for; and like most other people they look out for themselves first."

"Do you think I'd have any trouble getting a job?" Irma demanded.

"I don't know. Ninety-nine out of a hundred do. You may be the other."

"I'll say you are," said Dick gallantly. "Don't you take these newspaper men too seriously, Irma. You trust yourself and you'll get over."

"Yes?" said Kaiole Murphy sardonically. "But how will she get to New York? Will the front row pay her carfare? If I got the meaning of Mr. McAvoy's speech the front row will be pleased and happy if she stays in Shelby."

For the first time in a week Irma spoke to her husband.

"Oh, I'll get to New York all right, don't you worry."

"Yes? How?" He stood at the end of the front bench, arms folded, face ironic and impassive, facing us as we clustered six feet in front of him. Then, with a sudden flaming of dark fiery feeling he demanded:

"Will you go on that fellow's money? Will you now? Answer up, Dick Cort. Will she go on your money?"

Gus Piedelheimer, unregarded in the shadows on the end of the second bench, leaned forward and made a quick gesture as of one brushing away a fly. Then he got up quietly and tiptoed toward the door.

"If I had any money," said Dick bravely but with a voice that quivered in the realization that the boast was cheap. "I'd certainly let her have it."

"But you haven't got any money," said Kaiole Murphy with aggressive energy. "You're not the son of a millionaire——"

"I never said I was."

"True for you, you didn't—not to me at any rate. I don't know what you've been after telling Irma. But your friends on the front row said it for you. You were the son of a millionaire that wanted to learn the show business from the bottom up, and our show was the bottom. Well, you ain't and it ain't. You'll hit bottom in a minute. You're nothing but a piano player that I hired for a dollar a day and keep and you're fired—you hear me?—fired."

Dick shrugged his shoulders with praiseworthy indifference.

"Certainly, Mr. Murphy. All I regret is that I haven't the money to send Irma to New York or the influence to help her to a quick start."

Irma had managed the conventional gesture of hauteur toward her husband but she was looking at Dick with a new expression. The bloom was off the rose.

"How will she get to New York?" jeered Kaiole Murphy. "Not with my money. Not on her savings. Huh! Boy, she don't save. Speakin' as her husband, I can tell you that. Not on her cut in the profits of this show, for there's been no profit since we left Cœur d'Alene. Will she walk? Huh! You don't know her. She's too lazy to walk, unless there's a slick-haired young cake eater without a dollar in his pocket to take her out across the hills."

Dick began a furious gesture, then turned his back on Kaiole Murphy.

"Never mind him, Irma. I haven't any money now. But I've got a bet on this fight to-morrow, and I'm going to win it; and then——"

"And then?" howled Kaiole Murphy, his hand shooting back like lightning to his hip pocket. "And then——"

His voice died away; his hand repeated a mechanical gesture, a clutch at emptiness. He shot a quick furious glance behind him; there was no one there. Recovering with practiced quickness, he slipped his hand into his side pocket and brought it out with a sheet of paper.

"And then," he said, "you will begin to see bills like this one. Oh, yes, she wears good clothes, this little girl, when she isn't playin' in Shelby. Don't I know it? Haven't I paid for them every time without a whimper, whether business was good or not? And, Irma, wouldn't I tell you to go to New York and wish you luck if I thought you could stick? Didn't I try to put these hot-air kings on record, to pin them down to a promise that they wouldn't let you flop? And you heard what McAvoy said. The artist's life is hard. The reward is in the joy of the working. Best and worst must count on the element of chance. That's all he offers—the element of chance. I'm going home, Irma. Better come with me."

"Let me take you," Dick begged. But Irma, holding her poise quite admirably

considering the number of air castles that had tumbled on her in the last few minutes, shook her head.

"I'm going to change," she said, "and then I'm going home alone. Oh, don't worry, Mike—I'm safe enough. This is a tame town."

She vanished back stage and after a moment's hesitation Kaiole Murphy walked out at the front door. He may have gone around back stage afterward but I didn't give Dick time to speculate on that.

"Son, you've lost not only a job but a lodging. Come up to the hotel with me. There's an extra cot in my room."

"You're awfully good, Mr. Wells, but there's something I've got to do first. I'm going down to the Pullmans and find out exactly what Chanler and McAvoy and that crowd mean to do for her, after all their promises."

"They won't do anything," I said, "if they can get out of it. And they certainly won't do anything to-night, for they've gone to sleep so as to be ready for hard work to-morrow. You come along with me."

"It's rotten," he burst out, "the way they've treated that girl. And she's such a good sport about it, too. Well, if I win that bet——"

"You'll spend it on Irma?" I asked. "How about the other girl?"

He swung around with lightning quickness.

"What other girl?"

"The girl in Glacier Park."

"Why, how did you know about her?"

I couldn't help laughing. "Why, Dick, the Rocky Mountain goats on every peak knew about it. The way you two looked at each other lit up the horizon for miles around. That girl had a prior claim on you, if eyes and faces mean anything. Yes, maybe she threw it away. Maybe. She's coming to see the fight to-morrow——"

"How do you know?"

"Every newspaper man knows that Nick Gailey and his family are going to be at the ringside, with a few other social lights. Now, you're not tied up with the Princess Aloha. It isn't your fault, but you're not. And before you try it—before you undertake to pay her carfare to a town two thousand miles from home, and help her find a job in a business you know nothing about, and assume the moral responsibility for seeing that she has enough to eat while she's waiting—before you do all this, and before you have a show-down with her husband, better wait and look them both over to-morrow. See which one you'd rather spend your last dollar on. Then, if it's still Irma—why, go to it, if you still have a last dollar."

"She's been awfully good to me."

"But even you, Dick, could see that she cooled a little when she found that this millionaire story was only part of the bunk. That other girl looks as if she could be awfully good to somebody, too, if she felt like it. Maybe she doesn't feel like it now, but give her a little rope. People change their minds sometimes, even at the age of nineteen."

He was stubborn still, but gradually yielding.

"But, Mr. Wells, I promised Irma I'd see her through. I won't go back on a promise."

"Yes," I sighed, "your father——" As I stopped, cursing my carelessness, he broke in:

"What about my father? I hardly remember my father. I don't even know anything about him, except his name and that he lived somewhere in the West. I suppose my father has had about as little to do with forming my character and disposition as any man's father ever had."

This was not the time to correct that.

"I don't doubt it," I lied. "But your father undoubtedly had considerable hopes and ambitions for you. He expected you to do all the things he hadn't done. I have some kids myself. I know. And while your father would expect you to stand by the woman you want, he'd expect you to use a little common sense and be sure you want her first—especially when she gives you the ice, to use our sporting friends' phrase, as the Princess Aloha did when she found you weren't a millionaire."

He thought it over and presently gave in with a sigh that was almost a sob

"Oh, all right. I'll wait and see how things look to-morrow."

"Good boy. Now where's your bag?"

"Right back of the stage." I waited till he got it, for I wasn't sure but that the vindictive husband might be lurking about; but he wasn't, and when Dick reappeared I gave him my key.

"Room 39 at the Rainbow. Go right in. I'll be along in twenty minutes or so; I want

to walk down the street and see if there's a telegram for me."

"It's awfully good of you."

"If you think that, make me a promise. Promise you'll go straight to the hotel, without prowling around to see if maybe this girl isn't out on some hilltop looking at the moon. She isn't—I can tell you that. Go to the hotel, go to bed, and go to sleep."

He promised and I went on down crowded Main Street—as crowded as the county fairgrounds after the Chautauqua lecture is over, and as quiet, as moral, and as dull. There was no telegram and I came back. In front of the King Tut Dance Pavilion I met Gus Piedelheimer.

"Goin' to the big large dance, Clevie?"

"No. I'm going back to the hotel to get some sleep."

"All right. I walk up there with you. And yet, Clevie, you should go upstairs and look at this dance once. It is a sight to see. The Princess Aloha is dancing with her husband. I do not know what happened after I left the theater but I see where it all come out at."

"Thank Heaven," I sighed. "For it came mighty near not coming out at all. I thought once Kaiole Murphy was going to kill him."

"Kill him?" Gus repeated. "How's that?"

"He was getting madder and madder, and when Dick said that if he had any money he'd be glad to pay Irma's expenses to New York——"

"Yes," Gus agreed, "I am not married myself but I see the way he would feel about it. The boy is a fool. But he will learn."

"He's learning now," I said, "and fast. When Murphy was blowing off he reached back to his hip pocket and I thought he was reaching for his gun and Dick would never have a chance to learn. But it turned out Murphy was only reaching for some bills he had in his pocket, to show the kid that Irma was expensive. That was a relief. For he was mad enough to do murder."

"Yes," Gus sighed, "they got bad tempers already, the black Irish."

We were passing one of the vacant lots that rest the eye on Shelby's Main Street—an expanse of rutted mud dotted with broken bottles and heaps of rubbish. Gus drew out of his pocket something that glittered in the moonlight and flung it far over into the vacant lot; we heard a clank as it fell on the hard dried mud.

"Gus," I said, "was that a gun?"

"Bad tempers, the black Irish," he repeated. "So I thought I better frisk him before he got reachin' back to start something; and he was listening so hard to his own talk he never noticed. And that is another thing I would teach my boy, Clevie, if I had one—not to carry anything on the hip, whether it is a gun or liquor, because if anybody is lookin' for them things he can see it easy, on the hip. If you must pack a gat, keep it in your side coat pocket."

"I don't see how you could see his gun," I protested. "There wasn't a light in the house except the one on the stage; and that was on the other side of Murphy."

Gus grinned.

"Well, maybe I didn't see it; I might have just kind of suspicioned it. And maybe I did see it. I got good eyes. They see in the dark."

CHAPTER XIII.

When I came back to the hotel Dick was asleep, I thought. Later, as I lay awake in the stuffy July heat and heard him tossing and squirming I suspected he had been playing possum. But eventually we both slept, despite the clank of bottles and the tinkle of ice, and the shrill laughter of women that resounded through the hotel that night, when ranchmen and oil men and business men from all over that end of Montana, and their wives, were holding a sort of class reunion.

We slept, and when the sunlight pouring in on my face woke me at seven on the morning of the Fourth I found Dick sitting up on his cot and rolling a cigarette with a grin. More than a grin; there was a hard, confident solidity about his face. He had aged a few more years last night.

"You look cheerful," I said morosely, for somebody would have to tell him that Irma had made up with her husband.

"Why not?" he inquired. "It's a good day, and the day of the big fight; and I stand to win some money if Gibbons stays the limit. If he doesn't, why, we'll see a fight anyway. I haven't got a ticket, but what use is a college education if I can't figure out a way to crash the gate?"

"You won't need to crash the gate," I told him. "Mullane has four ringside seats;

one for himself, one for Corliss, one for me, and an extra for emergencies. I believe when the office ordered those seats, two months ago, they expected a crowd that would fill the arena. We got this extra with the idea that President Harding, or some other prominent citizen, might decide to come at the last moment after all the seats were gone, and we could acquire merit by entertaining him as guest of the New York *Record*. But if any distinguished citizen arrives at the last moment, as things are now, he'll have his choice of about thirty-five thousand vacant seats. You might as well take our other ticket; we can't do anything else with it. If you like I'll make you earn it by doing the leg work for us."

"Mr. Wells, I thank you. And if you do find somebody else that needs it more than I do, why, let him have it, and I'll borrow ten dollars from you and buy a ringside seat from one of the local citizens that's trying to unload his block for what he can get. You wonder how I'd pay back ten dollars? Well, I have a bet on this fight and I have a hunch that this is my lucky day. Also, I like to crowd my luck."

Big Jim's manner stuck out all over him; Big Jim's temperament was in the ascendant at last, overriding all the teachings of that widowed aunt. Light-hearted and reckless —yet he had more balance than he had had last week and an easy self-control. He was learning fast. Unfortunately, there was one thing he still must learn.

"I don't like to spoil your appetite on your lucky day," I said, "but before you start looking up old and new acquaintances you ought to know that the Princess Aloha was dancing with her husband at the King Tut Pavilion last night."

He grinned.

"No news in that. I promised you last night, Mr. Wells, that I'd come right up here and go to bed. But I didn't promise you I'd stick cotton in my ears if anybody talked to me. Cullop looked in just before you came back and told me the news. Well —why shouldn't she go back to her husband? He knows the show business and he has a little money. I don't know anything and I have a dollar and a half. Yes, I know I looked like an ass last night, making all this big talk with nothing to back it. But I thought things over while you were asleep. I won't do that again. No more big talk till I can deliver. Is that right?"

"That's right. The fear of poverty is the beginning of wisdom."

"Good. Mr. Wells, if a dollar and a half will do it, I'd like to buy you a breakfast. Maybe it will be my last chance to entertain you—maybe not. I think this is my lucky day and I'm going to crowd it."

Mullane gave him our extra ticket after breakfast and I lost sight of him when I began to rove about the town looking over the incoming crowds. Eventually my way took me down to the tracks; and here from a private car immobilized on a switch a clear young voice called to me:

"Oh, Mr. Wells! Come here a moment, please."

Rose Gailey was leaning over the railing of the observation platform beckoning eagerly.

"I want to ask your advice," she said when I came up below. "I've been betting some more."

"Betting some more—on Gibbons?"

She flushed.

"No, I bet three thousand to a thousand that Dempsey would knock him out in the first six rounds. Is that a good bet?"

"I think it's an excellent bet, by itself. But if that happens you win a thousand and lose a thousand, so where is your percentage? While if Gibbons is knocked out in the seventh you're four thousand to the bad."

"Well, that was what I wanted to ask you about. I have four thousand dollars left, and don't you think I'd better see if I can't bet that just flat, on Dempsey to win? I suppose I'd have to give awfully heavy odds, of course."

"My dear young lady, are you crazy? I've seen cautious persons, at Monte Carlo, betting on the red and black both; but this dizzy financiering with trick odds is likely to leave you flat with losses all around. What is the idea?"

She looked cautiously over her shoulder, then swung a knickerbockered leg over the railing and jumped down on the cinder platform beside me.

"Don't you see?" she asked impatiently. "You said Dick might be willing to take money that I'd won gambling. So I thought I'd bet on everything that might happen, and then if I lost a few I wouldn't tell him about that but just tell him what I won. Isn't that all right?"

"Highly creditable to your heart," I

agreed, "but not so much to your head. Why don't you wait till you see how the fight comes out and then merely tell him you won thus and so much on it?"

She straightened up with grave youthful dignity.

"Why, Mr. Wells, that would be lying. And I'm never going to lie to my husband, not even before we're married. Not telling him about those other bets wouldn't be lying, would it?"

"Ask a professor of casuistry," I advised her. "You're a good little sport, Miss Gailey; and you'll be good for Dick. But for Heaven's sake don't bet any more. If you happen to lose both of these, let me lie to him. And one thing more—let him make the first move to settle up your quarrel. You'll see him in the arena but don't say more than how-d'ye-do unless he hunts you up. For he has other things on his mind to-day."

"That woman?" she demanded fiercely.

"No, that woman's off his hands. She dumped him; which was a piece of luck for both of you, because Dick wanted to dump her and didn't know just how he could, in decency. But when she found he was down to a dollar and a half it didn't take her long to make up her mind."

"Why, the little——" Miss Gailey came within a hair's breadth of saying something very unladylike but she caught herself in time.

"What is on his mind to-day," I explained, "is money. He has a bet on Gibbons."

"I know," she said proudly. "At two to one. I got ten to one on the same thing. Doesn't that prove I'm a better business man than Dick?"

"Certainly," I agreed. "though as you'll both lose it makes no particular difference. But let him alone. Dick's very touchy just now. He thinks he has no right to make big talk without big money to back it. He expects to have six hundred dollars if Gibbons stays the limit. After Gibbons is knocked out you and I can put our heads together and decide what to do next; but if you know Dick you know he'll want some money before he talks to you again."

"All right. Meanwhile I'll be getting father and mother ready for the bad news. A girl's her own boss at eighteen, in California, so they might as well try to like it. For they won't stop it again."

CHAPTER XIV.

She was a good girl. She would be good for Dick. But the blank void of poverty was still between them and would be between them unless Tom Gibbons upset the dope and stayed to the finish. I saw no great chance of that and I knew I'd have to be the one to work out the plausible arguments that would reconcile Dick to going back to the girl without a dollar in his pocket. But I had no time to do that today; I had to work. Out to the bake-oven arena, where newspaper men and telegraph operators, ushers and deputy sheriffs, were roasting in the Fourth of July sun, while the cash customers trickled in slowly, and Jack Kearns in despair slashed prices at the gate; while the preliminary fighters failed to appear because there was no money to pay them and no water for them to drink, and we newspaper men marked time by writing crowd stories when there was no crowd.

Yet, gradually, it came in—faster after the prices were cut; the ringside seats were filling up; thin lines of spectators, uniformed in green eye shades against the glare, slowly formed in the upper banks of the arena. Presently a party came down the aisle on our right and took their seats half a dozen rows behind the press benches where Dick sat beside me. Nick Gailey, in cream silk and a Panama; Mrs. Gailey, pink and perspiring; Rose, miraculously fresh and cool in her soft brown wool. Dick turned around as I nudged him and Rose waved her hand and called a gay "Hello!"

Their eyes met again, with another electric flash. Yet I had diagnosed the boy right. He nodded a greeting but he didn't get up and go to her. After one long look he turned back to the ring, where the preliminaries were under way at last. He wouldn't got to her till he had some money.

And just then a merry laugh that rattled the arena and echoed back from the hills a mile away roared up from the ringside to our left. Dick and I both swung around to see the battered mahogany face of Mr. Henry Turl of Fargo towering over the crowd, his double ledge of gold teeth flashing in the sun. Dick grunted through closed lips.

"Sit still," I cautioned him. "You haven't any money to lose now."

"Not now," said Dick fiercely. "Not now."

I was worried once more and presently I made an excuse to leave my seat and stroll about. I had no particular purpose except to walk off my nervousness, but on the other side of the ring Gus Piedelheimer reached out from a bench and caught my coat tails.

"*Wie gehts,* Clevie?"

"Not so well," I admitted. "Dick's girl is here, all ready to make it up; but he hasn't any money except what he's bet on Gibbons and he won't have that by supper time. Even if he did have it, he's just caught sight of the man who trimmed him in the stud game."

"Which one?" Gus demanded.

I pointed him out. Indeed, you couldn't miss the immense Mr. Turl; his size, his red face, his gold teeth, or his yellow shirt —any of those items would have marked him out. Gus scrutinized him carefully, then shook his head.

"No, I don't know him. I never see him before. And yet, Clevie, I do not think he is what he says. A wealthy grain operator of Fargo, huh? That is not what he looks like to me. Operator, yes. Wealthy, maybe. But grain, no. We see about this after the fight, huh?"

"We do," I promised, and just then the crowd stood up with a cheer, for the champion was coming into the ring.

I don't need to tell you much about that fight. Gibbons was shorter, lighter, older; as they came up with the first gong it looked like murder. And yet those terrible wallops of Dempsey's didn't land, unless they landed on elbows or a craftily fencing glove. Three minutes that seemed like thirty seconds, and then the inadequate little gong tinkled and the first round was over, and a voice behind me growled: "Well, there goes five hundred of mine. I don't care how long it lasts now."

"What did I tell you?" Dick whispered eagerly. "Clean living and good condition, fair fighting and judgment—he'll stick to the finish, Mr. Wells. See if he doesn't."

"We'll see," I mumbled, casting a glance down the bench to Tod Maree, tapping his portable typewriter with no signs of worry. One round was far short of fifteen.

Yet the challenger hung on. He took blows on the dark-green trunks that brought furious howls of "Foul!" from the crowd. against the champion almost to a man; he clinched and held that pounding left arm that had smashed Willard and Carpentier into jelly; he landed blows in return that were mere demonstrations of boxing skill, since there was no force behind them.

"He couldn't knock Jack down with a ball bat," Mullane grunted. "But didn't I tell you he was clever? He might hang on for eight or nine rounds."

Before we knew it he had hung on four rounds, outlasting Willard, outlasting Carpentier. Clinches and more clinches; Dempsey's right hand was hammering the back of Gibbons' neck; yet he couldn't knock him down, and the fifth round was Gibbons' best. He couldn't hold the advantage, of course; but he held on through the sixth, the seventh; and with every bell the crowd was on its feet again, howling with delighted surprise that their favorite should turn out as good as they had hoped, and far better than they had expected. And over the shouts came a clear soprano call:

"Come on, you Tommy!"

Dick and I swung round as if we were on the same pivot. Rose was on her feet, waving her hands eagerly; you'd never have thought she'd just lost three thousand dollars.

Of course she was going to lose some more before long; but you couldn't have told her that now. And as I settled back in my seat I heard Mullane grunting beside me:

"He might go the limit, at that. The champ can't land on him. Look at Tod Maree, the prophet of the one-round finish."

I looked at him. Despite the broiling sun, despite the exposure to Shelby heat and Shelby wind and Shelby dust that had long since bronzed us all, he was white—white, with a tinge of green. Nick Gailey hadn't torn up those checks.

After that it was a race against time, and the crowd knew it. Sooner or later the big man who was leaning heavily on his lighter rival in the clinches and punching fiercely as they broke away would wear him out. But would he do it within fifteen rounds? Gibbons held him even in the ninth, got the worst of the tenth, and had him shaded in the eleventh. Of course Dempsey would get the decision; the referee would give the champion the edge, and he had the edge anyway. But Dick's money wasn't on that; Rose Gailey's money wasn't on that; the hope and pride of the crowd and of the

whole Northwest were not on that. If Gibbons could escape a knock-out he'd have won a moral victory, and more; he would have achieved that rarest of felicities, a moral victory that can be turned into cash.

The champion was swinging now, swinging fiercely but wildly. If one of those long drives had landed it would have been all over, but they didn't land. There was more damage in the rabbit punches that fell on the back of Gibbons' neck in the clinches as fast and steadily as the blows of a steam hammer; yet he hung on. Tod Maree was greener and greener; he thought no more of ten thousand dollars than he did of his wife and children.

So it went on, punctuated at amazingly brief intervals by the foolish little gong that was the signal for another roar of surprised approval from the crowd. A race against time. At the end of the thirteenth Mullane muttered: "Tommy caught a bad one in the chest that time. I'm not sure yet that he can stick it."

Yet he did stick it through the next round, though obviously tiring. Still on his feet—the only man who had gone fourteen rounds against Dempsey. And then with the last bell the champion rushed in with a new access of fury. He wasn't tired; the prophets who said he was trained only for a short fight were as wrong as the other prophets. He fell on Gibbons, he battered his neck in the clinches; he let loose again with those furious drives that only grazed the quick-ducking head. He had Gibbons hanging on, exhausted; but as they clinched that driving left was still smothered, the hammering right could only glance off an elbow or waste itself vainly on the back of a deftly inclined skull. Then the bell and a roar of joy rose from the arena as the referee held up the champion's hand. Dempsey had the decision; Dempsey had won. Nobody cared for that. Gibbons had hung on to the finish; he had stayed on his feet. He had vindicated the boob judgment against the experts, he had won a moral victory for all the underdogs of history. With a surge the crowd swept toward the ring to shake his hand, and borne on its crest came a group of Indians in paint and beads and feathers, with a war bonnet to crown the gallant boxer whom they'd adopted into the tribe.

But my work was elsewhere. Like all the newspaper men I had to rush away and start writing my story. I got away from the ringside as soon as I could; but not before Rose Gailey had stumbled down to us, through the crowd.

"Oh, Dick, wasn't it wonderful!"

"I won four hundred dollars," he stammered. "I've got six hundred now."

"I won ten thousand," said Rose. "Oh, Dick!"

His face hardened. Ahead of us, not to be reached for the milling mob between, the towering form of Henry Turl of Fargo was moving toward the exit.

"Are you going back to the park to-night?" Dick demanded.

"Not till to-morrow. Father wants to see if he can buy the picture rights."

"Then I'll see you to-morrow," said Dick. "I've got something else to settle first."

With a momentary handclasp he was off in vain pursuit of Henry Turl. Rose looked after him, with quivering lips.

"What does he mean?" she asked me. "Not that girl?"

"Not that girl," I promised. "I'm not sure I know what he does mean, but I'll see if I can't have somebody look after him."

"Oh, please do. Because everything is all right now."

But as I left her there I knew it wasn't all right. Everything was all right except Dick's grudge against the man who had licked him, but Big Jim's boy would have to get that off his mind before he talked to his girl. And six hundred wasn't much of a start in a game against Henry Turl's roll.

My heart was heavy as I climbed the rows of seats toward the top of the arena. Nothing cheered me but a glimpse of Tod Maree's face. He, too, had played out of his class, and his desire to be game in front of Nick Gailey the millionaire had set him back ten thousand dollars.

Dick and Rose could use that—if Dick showed sense.

CHAPTER XV.

But I couldn't find him. I couldn't find Henry Turl. I couldn't even find Gus till I came into press headquarters in the city-hall basement and found him sitting on a table waiting for me.

"What you t'ink of de fight, Clevie?" he asked excitedly. "All of us wise eggs we don't know not'ing, huh? I give you my

word I ain't been so badly fooled since Iron Man Hess licked my bouncer."

"Leave the post-mortems till later," I advised. "Dick's hunting trouble."

"He win some money?"

"Yes."

"Then he goes after this Turl for a return match. We might know it, Clevie. Big Jim would have done that. But I tell you some good news."

"What?"

"He cannot find Turl. Turl went down to the first special train that leaves after the fight. It pulls out in an hour for Great Falls. Maybe Turl goes on it. Maybe not. But anyway we are safe for a while. I go up Main Street and look for Dick. When you get through you come up and help me. You can wait your supper to-night, I think."

Yet when I had put the last sheet of my story on the wire, nearly two hours later, I looked up from my typewriter to find Gus beside me.

"I could not find him," he said. "I look all up an' down Main Street, but he ain't there. I look around Gailey's car too, but he ain't there either."

"This Dick you're askin' about?" said Cullop, who had also finished his labors and was attacking a sandwich and a bottle of ginger ale. "I saw him down at the Western Union car when I went over to see if my stuff was going all right. He'd won some money—but it was in Chicago and he borrowed a dollar from me to wire the stakeholder and tell him to telegraph the money right back. He wants it quick."

"We're safe so far," I said.

"Yes," said Gus, "but Turl is still in town. I see him eating supper at the Bamboo Café. So we ain't so safe as we t'ink yet. Dis two-handed stud is not a good game, for the hand which has got least money. *O Weh, O Weh.* The Hawaiian Hula-Hula Belles are having no show to-night; they start for Lethbridge at eight o'clock. So that is good. I see Dick by the ringside with Nick Gailey's girl, and that is good too. If Nick Gailey's private car would go back to Glacier Park to-night I t'ink Dick would get on de next train an' go too. But Nick Gailey stays here."

"He's trying to buy the picture rights," I said.

"That is the bunk," Gus remarked. "These pictures may make money and maybe not. I have been in the picture business myself and I know. Nick Gailey stays here because these fight promoters are broke and must borrow fifteen grand to pay the internal revenue tax on the gate. Nobody else in Shelby has got any money but Jack Kearns. I think maybe Nick lends them that fifteen grand if they can put up collateral worth six times as much to cover him. He ain't no speculative investor, this Gailey."

"Then let's go find Dick," I said. "The young fool—he's had most of his nonsense knocked out of him but he's still a bad loser."

"That ain't so bad," Gus protested. "Did you stop to think, Clevie, that these fellers that take their loss and smile, they are very nice and fine sports and all that, but it never gets 'em nowhere. This here human race we belong to would still be hanging by its tails from the palm trees, Clevie, if it was not for the bad losers that say, what the hell, they trimmed me once but I go git my money back. Yes. Only this boy does not know enough in some ways to do that. I would like to watch him."

We passed out into the street, and here, stumbling down the plank sidewalk toward us, came Dick with the man mountain, Henry Turl.

"Oh, Mr. Wells," the boy called, "you remember Mr. Turl, don't you? We're going to have another little game of stud. He's given up his room and I wondered if we could come up to yours—since it's the only place I have just now."

"You'd better save your money," I advised him. "You know Mr. Piedelheimer, don't you? Mr. Turl, Mr. Piedelheimer. Gus and I were just going up to the room. I have reason to believe that a friend has left me a couple of bottles of Calgary beer in the washbowl, with the cold water running."

"Sounds good," Mr. Turl bellowed with his jovial laugh.

"Well, our game won't be in your way," said Dick firmly. "You and Mr. Piedelheimer can drink the beer and we'll play on my cot."

"I think maybe I like to play a little stud," said Gus, "to get my mind off the boner I pulled when I bet Gibbons don't last six rounds. You keep the beer cool, Clevie, if you don't want to play."

Glumly I gave in and we marched off up the street, Gus and Mr. Turl ahead. The

Main Street sidewalk was crowded, and as Dick and I dropped farther behind I said to him:

"Don't be a fool again. This fellow has more money than you and he knows more about the cards. Save that six hundred. You'll need it—you and your girl."

But he was inflexible.

"Six hundred isn't much of a start," he insisted. "Besides, I have a hunch. This is my lucky day—a mighty lucky day. Mr. Wells—and I want to crowd my luck. I'll promise you this much—if I win I'll never play stud again."

"Fine. But if you don't win?"

He grinned.

"I can still grow up with the country!"

"And with your girl," I added. He frowned.

"If I win."

I stopped and dropped a hand on his shoulder.

"Dick Cort, you wouldn't run off from her again? Not even if you didn't have a cent?"

"Do you think I'd live on her money, even if she did win ten thousand on the fight?"

"If you're worth the powder to blow you up, you would."

His face set.

"You and I have different ideas, Mr. Wells. If I can't come to her honestly, able to give her at least a little start——"

I cleared my throat.

"Dick," I said, "your father——"

"Oh, don't go preaching to me. What do you know about my father?"

"A lot," I said. "Gus Piedelheimer knows it, too. We all came from the same town."

He didn't believe me at first, but I must have looked angry enough to convince him.

"We all came from the same town," I repeated. "I know all about your father. He was a good fellow and a game sport. A lot like you. But, son, you think gameness is only a question of money, don't you—and of sport? This girl'd give her eyes for you but you're too proud to go to her without a cent and ask her to run off with you and let you live on her money till you get a job. That's fine, but it's mighty dumb. And your father wasn't dumb. It seems to me a good sport would run off with that girl anyway, no matter what luck he might have in this stud game."

He glared at me, still stubborn.

"Do you know how your father died?" I asked.

"They told me he was killed in an automobile accident, with my mother and the other children."

"That's true. But is that all they told you?"

"Yes. What else is there?"

"Big Jim could have jumped," I said, "before the train hit the car. He was driving and they didn't have fore doors in those days. But he didn't jump. The rest of you were all massed on the back seat, without a chance in the world, and your father took that last second that would have saved him to stand up and reach over and grab you—you were the nearest—and throw you out of the way of the train. That's why you're here in Shelby, getting ready to throw over your girl if you can't come to her with a roll of money. If you do that, I'll say you weren't worth wasting the life of Big Jim Cort."

He looked in my eyes, breathing deeply for a moment or so. Then he trembled, almost collapsed.

"I never knew that," he whispered. "He—he was great, wasn't he?"

"He was great," I agreed, "but he was a man of sense. He didn't save you to make an ass of yourself."

"I won't," he promised. "Win or lose I'll go back to my girl."

CHAPTER XVI.

Gus and Mr. Turl were waiting at the door of my room and as we all passed in we found the beer in the washbowl.

"Not very cool yet," said Mr. Turl, feeling the bottles. "But keep the water running. You want to play, Mr. Wells?"

"You're over my head," I said cheerlessly. "You can play three-handed, can't you?"

"Sure," said Mr. Turl with his merry laugh. "Who's got the cards?"

We all looked at each other. Nobody had a deck.

"Send downstairs for some," Mr. Turl suggested.

"They don't keep 'em," said Gus. "I tried 'em last night."

Mr. Turl reached into his pocket.

"I've got a deck," he said. "Carry 'em with me all the time—I play solitaire a

good deal. If you gentlemen don't mind using my cards——"

"Not at all," said Dick politely. I shook my head at Gus but he didn't see me.

"Good with me," he said.

They sat down at the table and it appeared that by some happy chance Mr. Turl had some chips too.

"Whites a nickel, reds a quarter, blues a dollar?" he asked. "Then if we feel like goin' higher we can use currency."

I didn't like this at all but Gus and Dick made no protest. I noticed, however, that Gus looked keenly at the backs of the cards as they were dealt. So did I. But I could see nothing unusual in their design; they looked like any other cards. And Gus, acquainted with readers, saw nothing wrong either; he let them play. Evidently we had wronged Mr. Turl. He carried an honest deck.

For a quarter of an hour the game was rather tame. No big hands, no bets of more than five dollars. Dick was doing better than the others; he might have been fifty or sixty dollars ahead. Then it was Dick's deal. Mr. Turl sat at his left; Dick flicked him the top card, and the second to Gus. I noticed that both of them snatched their cards quickly, peered at them eagerly, then held them under cover till the second card fell. Dick was more careless; he hadn't played stud as much as the older men.

Gus had an ace showing, Dick a nine, Mr. Turl a jack. Gus bet a dollar and Dick raised him five. He might as well have had his hole card face up too; even I knew he had nines back to back. Mr. Turl stayed along, Gus raised it twenty.

Suspicion began to creep over me. What did I know of Gus Piedelheimer? I hadn't seen him for fifteen years, before these last few days in Shelby. He was genial and apparently benevolent, but how far did that go? After all, he had had an old feud with Big Jim Cort—a feud in which Big Jim had got the upper hand. Big Jim had died before Gus could even it up. And wasn't it possible that the little fellow's vindictiveness, nursed along through years of ups and downs, was venting itself on Big Jim's boy? He had invited himself into this stud game, he was the first to run up the bets.

But Dick stayed and so did Mr. Turl. On the next deal Dick got a seven-spot, Mr. Turl a ten, Gus a five. Gus flung in another twenty, Dick stayed, and Mr. Turl raised it fifty.

"Got the makin's of a little straight here," he observed with that earthquake laugh. They both stayed and the next deal gave Mr. Turl another ten, Gus another five, and Dick a king.

"I think that bust your straight," said Gus.

"Well," Mr. Turl roared pleasantly, "I'm high, ain't I? Maybe my pair of tens wins this pot. Come up, gents; come up a hundred."

"I come up a hundred," said Gus, "and five hundred more." He pulled out a roll of bills that made Mr. Turl's eyes glitter. Dick looked at his hole card, sighed, and dropped. He had already put all his winnings into that pot, and some thirty dollars out of his six hundred. But he had only his pair of nines; Gus had fives and an ace showing, and apparently an ace in the hole; Mr. Turl had tens and a jack showing, with perhaps another jack in the hole. No place for a pair of nines.

But Mr. Turl saw the five hundred from a roll as big as Gus', and waited for the last card.

"Jack or ten," he chanted, "jack or ten."

Dick flicked him an eight-spot, and Gus a four. It was still fives and an ace showing against tens and a jack.

Mr. Turl looked thoughtful.

"I check it," he said.

"I bet you five hundred," said Gus promptly.

Mr. Turl flung a thousand-dollar bill on the table.

"I don't believe you got that ace in the hole," he declared. "Come up five hundred if you can beat two measly pair."

Gus saw him and Mr. Turl urbanely faced his hole card up—the third ten.

Gus shook his head.

"Aces back to back have ruined many a man," he muttered, and Dick nodded. As for me, I felt like the keeper of a gambling den. I wasn't used to seeing so much money cross my table. But it had gone too far to stop, till somebody went broke. And with the bets at this altitude there was no doubt that Dick would go broke first. I wanted to kill Gus Piedelheimer.

Mr. Turl's deal. The hole cards fell—Gus' to be caught up and peered at as usual and covered with his hand for the instant before there was another card to lay on it.

The cards showing were a six for Gus, a queen for Dick, a ten for Mr. Turl.

"Watch the deal closely, gentlemen," said the operator from Fargo. "I ain't got those tens up my sleeve, however it looks."

He laid his ten carefully over his hole card and waited for Dick, who opened gayly with five dollars.

"Start 'em low, son," Mr. Turl advised, "unless you want to scare us out. I'll stay with you, this once."

Gus stayed too. An eight to Gus, a four to Dick, an ace to Mr. Turl. The booming laugh shook the windows.

"Ace, ten showing; well, well. An ace is worth twenty, any time."

They stayed along, morosely. Another six to Gus, jack to Dick, six to Mr. Turl.

"Ain't I lucky," said the dealer, "to give myself your third six? What'll you offer me for it, huh? Still, you got a pair. Your bet."

"I t'ink," Gus sputtered excitedly, "I t'ink dis hand a pair is wort' five hundred, even if you did ketch de other."

Dick glared at him.

"Are you trying to run me out?"

Gus faced him coldly.

"I bet what I t'ink my hand is wort'. If you don't like it, watch me."

"Oh, I'll play," Dick muttered, "if you ever come down within reach. But I can't stay on these."

"Never mind, son," said Mr. Turl genially. "I'll see him—and raise him a thousand. These tens are lucky—I kind of feel I'll get another. And I come from the Red River, where we play 'em when we got 'em."

Gus looked depressed, and I was glad. It came hard, but by now I was rooting for Mr. Turl. I hated Gus. But he was game, anyway. He saw the raise. Gus now had two sixes and an eight, Mr. Turl an ace, ten, six showing. There was three thousand and seventy-five dollars in the pot.

The top card came to Gus. It was a ten and he sighed with deep relief. Mr. Turl dealt himself a trey.

"Still your bid," he said.

Gus rubbed his nose.

"Maybe you got another of them tens buried," he said, "but damn if I believe it. I bet you a thousand."

Mr. Turl laughed merrily as he dug into his roll and began counting out the hundreds.

"Comes higher than that, brother. Comes higher than that. A thousand more."

"You t'ink you run me out wid my pair of sixes," Gus spluttered. "I ain't afraid of your ace high. Whoop la! Up she goes. I raise you twenty-five hundred."

Mr. Turl's mahogany face faded to cherry and from that to birch. He had thirty-five hundred dollars in there already, and hardly more than twenty-five hundred left in his roll. Also, on the cards showing, Gus had him beat. He studied, and grunted, took out a cigar and began chewing it unlit.

"Well," said Gus, "hurry up yet. Clevie here wants to go to bed."

"I don't believe you got it," said Mr. Turl finally. "Here's your twenty-five hundred. And here's my hole card. I got a pair of aces. Beat it?"

"Oh, yes," said Gus mildly. "I got that other six in the hole."

And he had, too. Mr. Turl put his flattened roll away, trying to laugh.

"I guess I better save the rest of this," he said, "if I want to eat goin' back to Fargo. Gimme my cards."

"I like to play some more," said Gus, "and Clevie here got so excited he forgot the beer. Pass it around, Clevie. Smoke your cigar, Mr. Turl. Maybe Dick like to play some more."

"Sure I'd like to play," said Dick. "Only I've under six hundred. No thousand-dollar bets."

I tried to dissuade him but he wouldn't listen.

"We play a ten-dollar limit," Gus suggested. "That way we get a good run for our money."

So they played and Mr. Turl and I watched them. On the face of our friend from Fargo there gradually grew a great bewilderment; for at that ten-dollar limit Dick was winning four hands out of five. In half an hour he had fifteen or eighteen hundred dollars. Mr. Turl's face cleared, as if he was beginning to see a ray of sunlight through the clouds.

"I got to go," he announced. "Let me have the cards."

"Then we'd have to stop," said Gus, "before I get any of my money back. We buy the cards."

"I don't want to sell 'em."

Gus' eyes bored into him.

"Why you don't want to sell 'em, huh?

They ain't your lucky deck—anybody can see that. We take ten dollars out of the next pot for the cards. Then you're nine twenty-five ahead already."

Mr. Turl assented, took his ten out of the next pot—which Gus won—and stalked out.

"Good luck, gentlemen," he called from the door. "Keep it a friendly game."

And they stuck to the limit for a hand or two more. Then Dick dealt, carelessly dropping his own second card beside his hole card, fumbling with them as he looked at the buried one, and coming up with an impassive face. He had a king of clubs showing; Gus' was a nine of diamonds.

"Ten dollars on the king," he announced.

"Startin' high, hey?" said Gus.

"Sure. Let's have some action."

Gus stayed and caught a seven of diamonds on the next deal. Dick's was a four of spades.

"Make it twenty," Dick suggested.

"I might have a straight flush," said Gus, peering at his hole card. "Up a hundred."

"And a hundred more."

"Dis is carryin' a choke too far," said Gus. "I see you only."

Gus caught the queen of diamonds, Dick a ten of clubs.

"A hundred," said Dick grimly.

"And five hundred more," said Gus.

I leaned across the table.

"No more of that, Gus. Your war was over when Big Jim died."

Dick pushed me back with a powerful hand.

"Get out," he muttered between clenched teeth. "If he wants a war, let him have a war. Here's your five hundred."

Each of them had eight hundred and thirty dollars in the pot now. The last card fell—a four of diamonds to Gus, a king of hearts to Dick. The boy drew a long breath. He had a pair of kings showing. Gus had four diamonds. And a flush is a rare hand in stud.

"Five hundred on the king of hearts," he said.

Gus frowned at his four diamonds, looked at his hole card, and then laid three thousand-dollar bills on the table.

"Raise you twenty-five hundred," he snarled.

I leaned across the table and caught his collar.

"Gus, you miserable rat, you can't pull that trick. You know he hasn't more than five or six hundred. Pick up your busted flush and get out. Quick, now!"

Big Jim's boy laid his hand on my shoulder and flung me clear back across the couch.

"I'll see him," he said. "He won't run me out. I'll be a little bit shy, but I give you my word, if you have got that fifth diamond, I'll pay you to-morrow. Will that satisfy you?"

Gus grinned shrewdly.

"That's good enough. Big Jim's boy never would go back on his word. But stop and t'ink, son. You'll be a good bit shy. Take you a long time to pay it back, maybe—unless you figure on holdin' up Jack Kearns in a dark alley."

"Dick," I interrupted, "there's only one place where you can get two thousand dollars, to-morrow or any other time. You wouldn't do that."

"Go to hell," he said fiercely. "I'm playing this hand. There you are, Mr. Piedelheimer. I'm nineteen hundred and forty dollars shy; but I give you my word I'll pay you to-morrow if you've got that fifth diamond."

Gus shriveled by the moment as we looked at him. Suddenly he swept up his hand—unseen hole card and all—and thrust it into his pocket.

"I might have knowed I couldn't bluff Big Jim's boy," he muttered. "You got all Turl's money, but you don't get my money. Your dad done enough of dat. Good night, Clevie."

The door slammed behind him and left Dick Cort staring dazed at a table that held five thousand dollars—all his. He looked at it—and then he collapsad, sobbing, his head in his arms. I swept up the ashes and cigar stubs and threw them into the cuspidor; washed out the beer glasses; pottered around as much as I could, and then came back to lay a hand on his shoulder.

"Buck up, kid. Pull yourself together. It's all over."

He looked up at me, the tears running down his cheeks.

"You said it, Mr. Wells. I give you my word I'll never play stud again—and I'll give it to Rose to-morrow, to make it stick."

"Good," I said. "For you'd have felt pretty mean going to her for a couple of thousand, if he had happened to have that fifth diamond."

"I wouldn't," said Dick. "I'd have shot myself."

I shook my head.

"She'd a good deal rather have had you take her two thousand."

"I know it," he admitted, "but it wouldn't have been right. You've got to start right and fair and clean, when you get married. And you needn't tell me that sort of thing doesn't pay. because look at Tom Gibbons."

"Have it your own way," I conceded. "You aren't going to shoot yourself, and you've got the money; so let it go. Let's go to bed. I'm done out."

"Have another cigarette first," he suggested diffidently. "I want—I want you to tell me about my father."

CHAPTER XVII.

I had had little sleep that past week and the Fourth had been a hard day. When I woke next morning it was ten o'clock, and there was no sign of Dick or his baggage. I dressed hurriedly and started down Main Street; and outside fight headquarters, in the mob lounging around the door, I found Gus.

"You lookin' for Dick?" he asked. "I see him and the girl come out of the courthouse, 'bout a quarter of an hour ago. They had something with 'em."

"A marriage license?" I asked.

"A marriage certificate. Mullane tells me. They got him and Cullop to be witnesses."

"Where are they now?"

"O Weh, O Weh! They gone down to the private car to break the news."

I ran down to the station. A Glacier Park train was just pulling out and Nick Gailey's private car was coupled on the end.

The young people saw me as the train gathered headway and waved me good-by; they called something, but I couldn't hear it. I stood watching a moment, then swung about—and found little Gus behind me, chewing reflectively on a toothpick.

"It is a queer world, Clevie, ain't it? Old Nick Gailey takes Big Jim's boy into the family; Jack Kearns takes less money than he said he would take; Tod Maree bets ten thousand on his own prediction and is trimmed; and Tommy Gibbons stays fifteen rounds with Dempsey. You don't know what's what."

I waved at the vanishing train.

"You couldn't tell that to Dick and Rose. They know what's what—youth and love and courage and playing the game straight and living clean."

"Yes," said Gus slowly. "It is good that young people should believe those things. But it is also good that some of us old fellers that have learned to read the backs of the cards should be around to help 'em out already."

I stared at him blankly.

"Why, Gus, were those readers?"

"My God, Clevie, are you so dumb you don't know that?"

He grinned.

"You thought I was a mean low-life bum, huh? I knew what I was doin'. But at that ten-dollar limit it went very slow and I got sleepy and wanted to go to bed. So I hurried it up in one last hand; for I knew that Big Jim's boy would not lay down no matter how high she went."

"Gus," I said fiercely, "you picked up that last hand before we saw your hole card!"

He grinned sheepishly, thrust his hand into his pocket, and brought out five cards—a diamond flush, ace high.

I could say nothing.

"Well," said Gus irritably, "now what is wrong? Big Jim was a good feller and this is a good boy. All what I lost him was Turl's money and I got a couple thousand of Turl's money left to pay me for my evening. Also I learn something for my education, which is that there is such a thing as being too good already. That was the way with Turl's readers."

"I looked at the backs when you first started to play," I confessed, "but I couldn't see anything."

"Of course not. It was very well hid. A good design. Too good. For Turl, when I hide my hole card so quick, has only a split second to see the mark in; and he is not quick enough. Ordinary readers he could see, but these was too good. And so I trim him."

"But you could read them," I said.

"Sure. I have had practice, and it cost me a lot of money. So now I am educated. Owl's eyes, Clevie. They see in the dark."

The complete book-length novel in the next issue will be "The Rogue's Badge," by Charles Neville Buck.

Once Across the Border

By Henry Herbert Knibbs

Author of "When Carmen Sang in Sandoval," "Smoky Steps Out," Etc.

The papers called the affair on the Santa Cruz road a fight—but "Smoky" called it by a harsher name.

WE had nothing in common but the grub, and he ate most of that," declared "Smoky." "So while we stayed in the shack, drawing down wages for doing nothing, I got acquainted with a horned toad and did most of my talking to it, which is all I got to say about the guy I was supposed to camp with out there on the east line of the Patton ranch—which is down in Arizona close to the border."

"What did he look like?"

"The toad? Why, he was a regular guy," said Smoky. In the depths of Smoky's dark eyes a spark of humor glowed. "What I mean, I'd hate to tell you what the other fella looked like. You see, I wouldn't be doing him justice, because my eyes got kind of biased trying not to look at him, so when I did have to look at him he showed queer to me. Not a bad-looking hombre, for a cow-puncher, but when you just naturally hate a fella your judgment as to his looks ain't got the right focus. So one morning, early, I threw my saddle on old Aneroid and lit out across the flats for Nogales. Some of those flats was tilted up on edge, but——"

"Aneroid is the next stop, Smoky."

"Oh, him! What I mean, a government surveyor down in the Mokiones showed me how to work one of those aneroid barometers, once. When he told me it was an aneroid I figured at first that it was some kind of a disease, like tonsilitis, or the heaves, or something. What I mean, a surveyor catches most everything in a rough country: elevations, and depressions, and triangulation, and bench marks, and altitude, and such. When I found out that that aneroid was used to find out the altitude I knew right then what I ought to call the horse I was riding. So I called him Aneroid. His first name was Soapweed, because he was kind of hard to set on. I sold him to a Mexican, down in Nogales."

We were sitting on the crest of a hill overlooking a considerable portion of southern California. To the left was the dim blue line of the sea. Directly below us lay the valley floor, patched with green and gold—alfalfa and ripening grain. Round about us on the crest grew sage and greasewood. Behind us our horses moved about lazily, munching the occasional clumps of short, dry grass. A little lizard shot out from a crevice and perched, motionless, on the thin edge of an upturned slab of rock. "It ain't so different——" said Smoky musingly. Then he added, "up here."

Smoky had mentioned Nogales, one of the border gateways. When Smoky mentions Arizona it is a sign that the placid

monotony of life in southern California has become too burdensome to bear. Arizona to him means the zest of adventure, activity, and keen memories of camp and trail and hazard. And there he is at home, either in retrospect, or the saddle. Incidentally, Smoky is a cow-puncher, and while he has been railroad man, horseshoer—and a good one—rancher, and buck private in France, he is first, last and always a puncher. Then why doesn't he return to Arizona? Why didn't Ulysses return to his old fields of fortune and blind chance? Ask Penelope.

"What I mean," began Smoky suddenly, "the hardest thing a fella has to do is to get used to himself. Those guys that say they can tell what a man is and what he's like to do by the color of his eyes or the slant of his handwriting make me tired. Why, here I been living with myself for twenty-eight years and I'd hate to bet a nickel I could tell what I'm like to do next. When I sold Aneroid to that Mex in Nogales, do you suppose I had any idea I was going to get mixed up in the worst mess I ever put my foot into? I sold Aneroid because I was broke and he wasn't. I invested some of the change in tequila so as to get up my nerve enough to eat the stuff they call food down across the line. After one drink of tequila you can eat chiles raw, and honest, they taste cool. What I mean, after eating the frijoles and huevos con chile, and a couple of tamales for luck, I took some more tequila so I could forget what I ate. But I forgot more than that.

"Not that I was lighted up any. I was as sober as I am now and feeling a whole lot better. But I felt powerful strong, like that there bunch of muscles over the front door of the Los Angeles Athletic Club. I could have shook hands with a rhinoceros and made him blink. I felt kind of keen and brainy, too. The old town commenced to look good to me. I was feeling so interested in folks that I got acquainted with a sporty young white guy that was hanging around 'Red' Mulch's place. He might have been a tout or a cardman, by his clothes, but he wasn't just then. He was Red Mulch's son-in-law, which was evidence enough to hang him in a white man's court. But he hung out in Nogales. If I hadn't ate so much I wouldn't have fallen for him like I did. What I mean, I forgot to remember to forget the talk he gave me about being able to use a dark-complected young fella about my size and age who savvied Mexican talk. And I sure had been through enough to know better than to listen to him, over there across the line where they play every crooked game that was ever invented and spend the rest of the time inventing new ones. 'There's a hundred bucks in the job—and one night's work for a handy man,' he says.

"I told him I felt pretty handy, just then, and that I wasn't too polite to take a hundred dollars for a short run across the line. What I mean, when a guy over across the border which is a stranger to you meets up with you and talks about a job, you can figure that it means smuggling liquor, Chinamen, or killing somebody that is making trouble for the underground railway gang. Now when I smuggle liquor across the line a revenue officer would have to use an X-ray machine to find out where I carry it. And he'd sure have to perform a surgical operation to confiscate it. As for Chinamen, not so many of 'em get into this country that it does any harm—but smuggling humans into a country is worse than running stolen cattle across You see, you can kill and eat the cattle. And seeing there was plenty of Mexican talent around Juarez that would bump off a man for ten dollars I couldn't see that I was wanted for that kind of a job. What I mean, I forgot to remember that raising your eyebrows and raising the ante are both signs of curiosity and that doing both at once is bad poker. But that flashy young sport had got my tequila excited and curious. I knew it—but the tequila didn't care.

"I'm saying his name was Parsons, but it wasn't. What I mean, he said it was, but that wasn't what they put on the books at the coroner's inquest.

"Parsons was married to Red Mulch's girl and she had red hair and kind of green eyes—and I never did like tarantulas, nohow. Parsons had it pretty soft, with all the drinks he needed and some extra; and fresh laundry every day, and eats, and everything. But like most of them fellas that has it soft he wasn't satisfied with just living. He was out to make some dough on the side. Some fellas get the idea that because the international boundary is an invisible line it ain't there. But it is, and once or twice the Texas Rangers have made some of the renegades on both sides of it think it was a stone wall a mile high, and

no footholds to climb. But here I sit talking about Red Mulch and Parsons and Nogales just like it was in front of you, and you could see it all, like I can. What I mean, Red Mulch, with a face about the color of pigskin, and not a spear of hair on him above his collar—no eyebrows, or hair on his head—looked as near like a prize Duroc boar as anything that ever wore pants and a shirt. He ran the biggest saloon in Nogales and had a Mexican that he paid regular wages to watch every stranger that stayed in town longer than a day. He lived in rooms back of the saloon and his girl did the cooking and housework for the outfit, with a Mexican woman to help.

"Everything was going smooth that afternoon, with Parsons and me sitting at one of those little tables toward the back smoking and talking about horses—this here Parsons had been a tout for a while over at Tia Juana—when Parson's wife drifted in from the street, stopped at the bar and talked with her dad for a minute or two, and then she came over to our table and sat down, giving me a hard look out of those green eyes. Parsons introduced her to me and said I was looking for a job, and he had one that he thought would suit me. I said right quick that I was thinking about it and that if somebody would slip the blind up I would like to take a good look at the proposition before I jumped. The woman nudged Parsons, which meant slow steam ahead. I didn't aim to see anything, but he told her I was all right and that all I had to do was to take a message to a man across the border about eleven o'clock that night.

" 'Then you're going to do it?' said the woman, giving her husband a hard look like she gave me.

" 'Clean the slate,' he says. 'Then there won't be any comeback.'

" 'That's all right,' I said, 'but I'd like to get one good slant at the slate—before it gets too dark to see good.'

" 'Why, there's nothing to it,' says Parsons, giving his wife the eye. 'All you got to do is to take a message to a guy over the line and then come back here and get the hundred. I'm trusting you by letting you in on this, and you're trusting me, which is fair enough. I never double crossed a man in my life.'

"Now I wouldn't 'a' trusted that slick Mr. Parsons as far as I could kick a saddle blanket, and as for double crossing—I guess that was about all he did for a living. But it was up to me to let on I was green and to make him think I was willing to tackle most anything for money; only, I knew if I overplayed the 'show-me' stuff or acted too willing to bite I would stand about as much chance of getting out of Red Mulch's place on my feet as a chicken in the oven. What I mean, when you let yourself listen to a lead like Parsons gave me, you got to follow it to the finish or you're in bad from the start. And I figured he was desperate to get hold of somebody to take that message across—somebody that didn't know the ropes, and that section of the country—or he wouldn't talk to me at all. I wondered why some Mexican couldn't take the message instead of me. The woman was looking at me kind of curious, studying me, I guess. Anyhow I made like I was coming out of it and so I got up and said I guessed I'd take a walk and think it over. She and Parsons gave each other the quick eye. Then he laughed. 'All right,' he says, 'but don't get too much liquor in you, so you can't ride. And if you get out of cash, just drop in and I'll fix you up.'

" 'I told 'em I'd sure come back and thanked 'em for giving me the chance to make a little dough. 'But I sold my horse,' I said, 'and you talked like I would have to do some riding.'

" 'Don't worry about that,' says Parsons.

"So I drifted, knowing that somebody would keep an eye on me till I showed up again at Red Mulch's. I stopped in at two or three places around town and had two or three drinks and the more I thought about how Parsons had come at me so quick the more I figured that it was a case of double cross or he wouldn't risked letting a stranger in on it. And his telling me to come back for the hundred was where he made a mighty poor play. I figured he did it to see if I would fall for such a proposition and not because he wouldn't pay the dough. But he overlooked a bet—which was that I might figure he said to come back and collect to make me think I wasn't running the risk of not coming back. I framed up my talk with him as I sifted around town, with a Mexican following me and trying to make out he wasn't, and about six that evening I ambled into Red Mulch's and said I was hungry. Parsons wasn't there, but his wife was, and she seemed to have changed a whole lot since I had seen

her last. She acted friendly, which I took to be part of the game. She had the Mexican woman fetch in some supper to one of the tables in the back, and she said her husband was out on business but would be in about ten that evening.

She was sitting at the table with me but she didn't eat anything. Red Mulch was tending bar, up in front. I noticed that every once in a while he would slant a look at us back there, as if he would like to hear what we were talking about. Pretty soon she lit a cigarette and talked at me through the smoke. She started in easy, asking me about my folks, and one or two towns across the line. I answered her straight, and being a woman I guess she knew it. She did some good acting, at that. I guess she fooled her father. I know she fooled me, at first. 'I would have stood for running the chinks across,' she was saying, after telling me that it was smuggling Chinamen that her husband was up to, 'but I won't stand for having 'em butchered by revenues on the other side, which is just what Bert has framed.'

"'So that is the game?' I said. 'And I was to take the message to the revenue officer that would start the fireworks?'

"'You ain't so green as Bert thought you were,' she said. 'But I had you sized up right. You're taking it too cool, right now, for a guy that hasn't been there and back a couple of times. I'm putting you wise because if you do take that message across you won't live long enough to know what happened. I've stood for a hell of a lot since I married Parsons, but this deal is too raw for me. Do you get it? Bert and another guy are running ten chinks across to-night. Bert quits the outfit at the line. The chinks are dressed like Cholas. You were to give the revenues the tip that a bunch of Cholas are running a big shipment of booze across, just east of the railroad. Bert's pardner is to take the chinks to Downey's where they'll have two machines waiting. Bert is double crossing his own pardner in this deal—and this is where I quit.'

"I told her I didn't blame her for quitting, and I kept right on eating and drinking my coffee and acting like we was talking about the weather; and she sure played her part, handing me that talk without a thing on her face to show how she felt about it. I wanted to believe that she was handing it to me straight but I was suspicious. So I asked her what she would do if she was in my place. She said she would play the game right up to taking the note from her husband and then cross the border into the United States and keep on riding north.

"'You don't like it any too well down here, yourself,' I said, being entitled to a guess or two from what she had told me. She gave me a quick look and I think she would have smiled if she hadn't been out of practice. She lit another cigarette and had the Mexican woman fetch her a cup of coffee.

"'It wasn't so bad, before I married Parsons,' she told me. 'My old man had a hard name before we came here, but he used to listen to me once in a while. Parsons has got it on him and he has to do about what Bert tells him to. Bert would kill me if he knew I was telling you this. The only reason I can tell you, right here with my old man watching us, is that Bert told me that if you came back to jolly you along till he showed up. You see, kid, I'm giving you straight dope.'"

Smoky paused and sat gazing across the valley. The wide brim of his hat was pulled down, shading his face from the hot sun. I handed him a sack of tobacco and papers. He took them mechanically, and mechanically he made a cigarette and lighted it. He flicked the match at the little lizard perched on the rock. Neither of us saw the lizard move, yet he wasn't there.

"Just like that," said Smoky, smiling. To have prompted him would have made him conscious that he was telling a story—and I didn't want him to tell a story—I wanted him to talk. So I lay back on the warm earth and closed my eyes, endeavoring to picture Nogales, the adobes, the natives, and Red Mulch's place. Smoky nudged my arm. I opened my eyes. The lizard was back on the rock again.

"Funny thing about lizards and sidewinders and desert turtles. They can't stand much heat," observed Smoky. "They all take to the shade when it gets too hot."

"We seem to be making it all right," I said.

"It was cool in Red Mulch's. When he didn't have anybody to wait on, at the bar, he used to get an old sprinkling pot, like they use to water flowers with, and sprinkle the floor. Business was kind of slack along about then, so he got the sprinkling

pot and started at the front and worked back to where we was. He was swishing the sprinkler around when the girl spoke to him. 'This hombre,' she says, 'is willing to take that note over across, but he says he would first like to have a little cash in advance.'

" 'Bert'll fix that,' says Red Mulch, blinking at me with his little green eyes.

" 'All right,' I told him, carelesslike. 'No hurry.'

"The girl gave me a kind of a friendly look and got up and went back to the kitchen. Red Mulch kept on sprinkling, and honest, when he passed me on his way back to the bar a chill ran up and down my back. There was something about that there hairless old carcass that gave me the shivers. What I mean, I don't mind a tough hombre if he is a live one; but those dead ones, walking around like a morgue on wheels, are like putting your hand on a cold snake in the dark.

"The supper and the hot coffee had kind of got the tequila quieted down, so I could think without getting too enthusiastic about anything or anybody, including myself. Long about eight o'clock business was lively up in front—mostly the kind who figure they can see more sights after dark than in the daytime. Red Mulch was busy passing it out and taking it in. I was sitting at the little table where I had supper, thinking about the bunch of Chinamen Parsons was going to run across the border and figuring that he was getting something like two hundred dollars a head for the job, which would make it a couple of thousand; and how he had it framed to tip off the revenue officers on the other side about the machines that would be waiting at Downey's ranch, and how, most like, that pardner of Parsons' and the men driving the machine would put up a fight if they was cornered by the border patrol—when Parsons' wife slipped in from the rooms at the back and said there was a man outside that wanted to see me. I followed her out through the kitchen and there was the Mexican that had bought Aneroid. And he sure looked like Exhibit A in a damage suit against a railroad. If he had stepped off a ten-story building and lit on his face he couldn't looked much worse. I seen right away that he'd had some considerable trouble with Aneroid and that the altitude had been too much for him.

"He told me in what you might call broken Spanish that he wanted his money back, and that I could go to hell with the horse as soon as I liked. You see, his face was mostly peeled where he'd slid on it and what wasn't peeled was swelled up so that he couldn't see good unless he tilted his head back; and his jaw didn't work any too good, but I savvied what was on his mind. I was going to tell him that he wasn't the man I sold Aneroid to, and didn't want to buy a horse, anyway, when the woman stepped up and asked him in Mex how much he paid for the mistake. He tells her ten bucks and she reached down and came up with the cash.

"I didn't catch on at first but when she told the Mexican to put old Aneroid in the corral back of the adobe I got a hunch that her mind was working, all right. When I came back from seeing that the Mexican didn't steal the saddle and bridle I thanked her for taking care of the financial end of it. She kind of laughed and slipped a bill into my hand. 'Get me some overalls and a shirt and a hat and leave them here,' and she motioned back toward the corral. I went on around the end of the house and out to the front. I tried every store down the street but they were all closed. I thought that was queer, for you can most always get into one of those hand-me-down joints any time up to twelve at night. Later I found out that there was some kind of a fiesta or saint's day or something going on that evening. Not wanting to show myself down the line too much I cut to a back street and started for Red Mulch's place. I had been away mebby half an hour, trying to get into a store.

"All of a sudden I bumped into somebody that just about fell out of an alley into my arms. Not knowing what the game was I just pulled back and shot a straight one for where his chin ought to be. It was there. 'Overalls and a shirt,' says I to myself. And I dragged the sleeper back into the alley and took off his clothes so he could sleep more comfortable. Then I made a run for the back of Red Mulch's, dumped the bundle by the corral and came around to the front and went in and got the bill changed at the bar. I noticed that my knuckles was skinned some.

"I was standing at the bar listening to a couple of conversational drunks trying to tell each other something which neither of

'em understood when in walks a Mexican with nothing on him but the shadow from the lamps in Red Mulch's joint. I said he walked in but it was more like one of those glides that those barefoot girl dancers do before they fall down in a heap about the size of a handkerchief with a knot in it, which is a sign that you ought to give 'em a hand, the dance being over. What I mean, the Mexican got a hand, all right. Everybody clapped and somebody commenced to whistle a hula-hula. Then it come to me sudden that I had seen that hombre before, once, and that I had met him twice. His face was peeled and where it wasn't peeled it was swelled up and kind of twisted. He had sure played in hard luck that day; first Aneroid had pitched him on his face for a home run and then I had had to clean him, not knowing who he was. Then, mebby it all looked funny to those rounders at the bar, but it didn't look so darned funny to me. I stepped up to the Mexican and asked him what was the trouble. He said somebody shot him and stole his clothes. I swung round on the crowd and the noise let up. I figured that that Mexican had had about enough, without being razzed by a bunch of soaks.

" 'He says somebody beat him up and took his clothes and his money,' I says to them. 'The price of admission to this show is a dollar a seat and I'm taking five seats —one for myself and four for the short skates that will try to duck the ante.' And I took off my lid and dropped a five-dollar bill into it. Every man in the room came in for a dollar or better, except Red Mulch. When I passed the hat to him he reached out and took it and dumped the money on the bar.

" 'I'll take care of this till he sobers up,' says Red Mulch, without counting the dough. I sure felt like knocking his hoops off, just to see him fall to pieces, but I knew his man would get me if I started anything. So I raked the dough back.

" 'Old Chile-con-carne gets the dough, this journey,' I said to Red Mulch, and I was wondering how the Mexican was going to get home with the boodle and no clothes when a couple of Mexican wimmen with shawls on their heads comes ki-yi-in' into the cantina. One of 'em took a look at Old Chile and let out a scream, and I knew it was his wife. I sure felt mean, but I had to bluff it out.

" 'Your man has been robbed but he ain't hurt,' I told her in Spanish. 'We got everything back except his clothes. Here's the dinero. You better let him take your shawl so he won't catch cold going home.' She didn't savvy all that had happened, but she took the money and sacked it in her handkerchief. I tied her old black shawl around her husband and she took hold of him and started him down the street. The other woman had left, pronto.

"A beefy sport with one chin too many and a suit of clothes that would have stopped traffic in Los Angeles slaps me on the shoulder. 'You're all right, kid!' he says, like he was telling me something I didn't know. 'Have a drink.'

" 'With you?' I asks him.

" 'Sure!' he says, flashing a roll, which showed he was weak in the head.

"I told him I guessed I wouldn't, because I didn't want him to change his opinion of me; and he got sore, like I figured he would. Mebby it was because when he slapped me on the shoulder he hit the edge of the shoulder holster I was packing under my shirt. What I mean, he turned to one of his friends that was used to that kind of nickel-plated talk. I guess I was on edge from things coming so fast and plenty. And I knew that things would be coming faster before the clock in the steeple struck one.

"Long about ten o'clock, while I was sitting in the back end of the room expecting to see Parsons show up and getting cock-eyed from trying to watch the back door with one eye and the front door with the other, without turning my head, Parsons' wife slipped in. She stopped for a minute at my table. 'Take the Santa Cruz road after you leave here. Don't take the Nogales road.' And she sailed on and up to the end of the bar and spoke to her dad. You see, she figured I would stick, after she told me how Parsons had it framed to massacre those Chinamen and his pardner. I was willing to stick, all right, but I didn't aim to get stuck. While I was trying to figure out what I could do to block Parsons' game I chanced to look up. The door down beyond the end of the bar, toward the back, was open, for it was a warm night. The light from inside showed on the ground, a little ways out from the door—and I was willing to swear I saw Aneroid, with a slim kind of young fella on him, slip past the patch of light. I was willing to swear that

the young fella on Aneroid was Parsons' wife, because I caught a flash of the stirrup and it was a woman's foot in that stirrup and not a man's. It happened quick and kind of upset my figuring for a spell. If she was gone and Parsons came in and found she was gone I could see where things would begin to pop.

"I wondered what she was up to. She wouldn't be going over across to tip off the revenue folks, because that would mean an ambush at Downey's ranch, and killing. I remembered that she told me Parsons was to quit the outfit on the Mexican side and that his pardner was to take the chinks across. Which looked like Parsons would quit the outfit, swing over to Red Mulch's, hand me the message for the American officers, and then stay right where he was with nobody left alive to tell that he had a hand in the deal. I thought mebby his wife figured she could head off the chinks before they crossed the Santa Cruz road. Likewise, I figured she counted on me to make Parsons think I was going to carry the message to the revenue folks for him. That meant he wouldn't find out that she had blocked his game until the chinks were safe.

"First thing I knew a Mexican came through the side doorway and up to me and told me Parsons was outside and wanted to see me. I went on out and Parsons was there standing back from the light and holding a horse that was blowing pretty hard. He hands me an envelope. 'Take that to Jake Hall. He'll be in the office just across the line,' he tells me. 'Say that Garcia sent you.'

"I told him all right, but how about half of the cash going and the other half when I reported back? He stalled for a minute and then he stepped into the saloon. I figured that if he found out his wife had left I had sure spilled the beans. Pretty soon he came out in a hurry. 'Know where Nellie is?' he asks me.

"'You mean your wife?' I says. 'Why, she said something about going to the fiesta, when we were having supper together this evening.'

"'Fiesta, hell!' he says. 'Just hold on a minute,' for I was just about ready to step up on the horse. I didn't like the way he said it so I swung up quick. He grabbed for the bridle. I kicked him in the face and he went down. Out of the corner of my eye I saw the Mexican's elbow move, like he was going for his gun, so I lit out, and the minute that horse stretched himself I knew I was on a good one. The shot I expected didn't come, but I knew what would come—and that would be Parsons and his gunman, and cold turkey for mine if they got a crack at me. What I mean, they would claim I stole a horse—which I did.

"So I just naturally lit a shuck down the Santa Cruz road, wondering whether I would get it from in front or from behind. I knew I was like to ride into Parsons' pardner and the chinks, where I'd be unpopular before they found out who they shot. And Parsons might come boiling up from behind most any minute—only he'd have to ride some. The worst of it was I didn't know the country south of the line. Once across the border I was all right, but I wasn't across. Somehow I can think faster when I'm on a horse than when I'm afoot, mebby because a fella that has ever worked cattle or chased wild horses has got to think fast when he's riding if he ever expects to be called grandpa and raise whiskers and oranges in California.

"I was sitting pretty and letting the wind fan my face when that horse shied about a mile to the left. When I rode back to see what he shied at, for I thought I saw something like a man laying in the road just before the horse jumped, I knew he hadn't shied more than twenty feet and the man in the road was Parsons' wife. I found out that when I got down and lit a match. I carried her over behind some brush and commenced to look around for Aneroid. What I mean, Aneroid always figured he was through working when he pitched you off and he would stand around like he enjoyed seeing you try to get up and find out which way was north. Sure enough, old Aneroid was standing back of another clump of brush, just doing nothing but congratulate himself that he had done lost another one. I caught him up and came back to where the woman was. She was woozy from the fall but she didn't seem to be broke up any. I fanned her face with my hat and rubbed her hands and pretty soon she came to. I didn't wait for her to ask any questions. I told her quick where she was and who I was and how her husband felt about things. She had lots of nerve. She got up, me helping her, and said we had to keep on

and head off the chinks before they got to Downey's.

" 'And get plugged before they find out who we are,' I tells her.

" 'Ortega will know my voice,' she says. 'He's Bert's pardner.'

"I made her take the horse I had been riding and I stepped up on Aneroid, figuring that as he had had one pitching spell he wouldn't throw another whing ding that evening, his average being about one fit every twelve hours, not counting Mexicans. I asked her who would tip off the revenue officers now that I was out of the play. She said that her husband would send some one, being set on getting rid of Ortega who had been bothering him for cash due on another deal. Seems Parsons had been promising to pay up for some time, and Ortega was beginning to get nervous about letting Parsons live too long. 'I don't think Bert has got the nerve to ride out here after us,' the woman says to me as we rode along, watching ahead for signs of the chinks, which would be afoot, and only Ortega and his helper mounted.

"I didn't like my part in this here Hongkong round-up a whole lot, because I saw that the woman was desperate, and set against her husband. I didn't exactly blame her for that but sometimes a desperate woman will turn and try to get back from where she started quicker than a fast pony in a stake race. 'Course, it was her business if she changed her mind sudden but I didn't want to be in the way when she made the turn. We had been riding about an hour when she pointed north. 'Downey's ranch is over there,' she says, 'just across the line.'

" 'And a fool move, running chinks across when its going to be moonlight in about half an hour,' I says. She didn't seem to hear me, but sat her horse, looking toward the north like she was thinking pretty hard. After a while she came out of it and turned to me and said she was going to ride over to Downey's where the two machines would be waiting and put the drivers wise. Then, being a woman, she changed her mind.

" '*You* better ride across, kid,' she says, kind of slow, 'and keep on going after you see Jack Downey. He'll be on the lookout for Ortega. If any of his boys stop you just say you have a message for Jack from Bert Parsons. Then tell Jack Downey that the shipment won't come through tonight on account of trouble over on this side. Will you take a chance?' "

"Well, I told her that I would and I asked her what she was going to do. She said she would head off Ortega—that he would come through about where we were. Then she said 'So long, kid, if I don't see you again.' And she sure looked lonesome, sitting there on her horse, and all kinds of desert all around, and awful quiet.

"I jarred old Aneroid loose from his thinking and set out toward where she had pointed. But I didn't stick to the road. I swung east of it and kept over where there was more brush. What I mean, the moon was just edging up and commencing to pick out bunches of chapparal and rocks and folks on horseback a little too plain to suit me. I had traveled mebby half an hour when I come to a wide arroyo that I found out later was right close to the south line of Downey's ranch. I dropped down into the arroyo, crossed it and was coming up on the other side when somebody rose up out of nowhere. Old Aneroid snorted and hopped west a couple of jumps.

"I did my talking on the move. 'I got a message for Jack Downey,' I said right quick. The hombre with the rifle told me I didn't go any farther to deliver it. Then I told him what Parsons' wife had said, only I said the word was from her and not from Parsons, and that she was over there waiting to head off Ortega. He asked me how I come to get mixed up in the deal. I told him about my taking a little tequila for a starter and how Parsons had offered me the job of taking a message to the revenue officers, and what Parsons' wife had said. Just about then I heard a horse coming through the dark at a quick walk. Somebody whistled. Then another fella rode up. I guess he must have thought I was one of Jack Downey's men for he didn't ask questions but said right off the reel that two machines, traveling fast and not showing any headlights, had passed Deal's ranch about eleven o'clock, and had turned south.

" 'That means they're on the Santa Cruz road now,' said the first hombre, who I took to be Jack Downey. Then he stepped up close to me. 'If you're a friend of Nell Parsons,' he says short and quick, 'you'll quirt your horse every jump till you get back to her and tell her that the game is up and Ortega will have to take his chance. Tell her she can come over here to the ranch

and stay until this thing blows over. Mrs. Downey and the kids will be glad to see her.'

"'You mean those chinks are going to get theirs?' I asks him.

"He didn't say a word—just stood waiting for me to get going. I swung old Aneroid around and hit south on the jump. The moon had cleared the edge of the desert and was shining white and bright on the brush and the sand and the rocks. Aneroid was going strong but jumping sidewise once in a while, like he was getting excited. I guess he savvied that was how I felt. It seemed a whole lot shorter getting back to where I left Parsons' wife than when I rode the other way. I didn't know, right then, that she had come part way across the flats to meet me, being anxious to know what they had said at Downey's. But I told her and she took it all too quiet to suit me. She put her hand over her eyes for a minute. Then she asked me if I told Jack Downey that she sent word to him and not her husband. I said that was how I gave it to him. 'I wanted to square Bert, if anything happened,' she says, like she was talking to herself. And I knew right then that she was set on heading off Ortega and those Chinamen, even when she knew that the deputies were there somewhere on the trail waiting for the bunch to show up.

"What I mean, I figured she hated her husband and was stuck on him at the same time. You see, she couldn't think any worse of him than she did but she didn't want other folks to think that way. Funny how some wimmen will go to hell for a crook and throw a square man down so hard he looks round when he gets up again. Mebby it's because a square man has got corners that she can't get round like she could if they was curves.

"'You're a fool—to come back,' she told me. 'You better head for Downey's. There's nothing you can do—now.'

"I asked her what she was going to do. She said she was going to ride south and get word to Ortega before it was too late.

"'No need,' I told her. 'See that bunch of shadows moving this way—just beyond that rise?'

"'Ortega!' she whispered. 'He hasn't crossed the Santa Cruz road yet.'

"'You mean where we turned to come this way?' I asks her.

"She said yes, and that she was going back and for me to leave her alone. I told her I had better ride ahead a piece and see how things looked. I guess she was glad enough to have company. What I mean, she had nerve but I guess she had a hunch about what was going to happen. It almost seems like she counted on me as the last friend she had in the world. She knew Parsons was through with her and she knew her old man wouldn't take her side against him.

"We had just started to ride south when I heard something way off that sounded mighty like a machine, and by the sound it was ripping off the miles like tearing an old cotton shirt up for bandages. The woman heard it about the same time I did. We laid over the horses and stretched 'em out on the run. I could see that the moving shadow that had been coming toward us had changed its shape and was bunched, instead of being strung out. The machine was coming at right angles to our trail and it looked like we'd hit the same spot on the Santa Cruz road about the same time. I hollered to the woman to swing to the right, thinking that mebby the machine would get past before we hit the road, and we could cross behind and swing in toward Ortega before the deputies got into action—for they would all be afoot. But the horse she was riding was going too strong for her to rein him off the crossroad. What I mean, we was flying, and so was that carload of deputies. We beat 'em to it, at that. Just as we hit the Santa Cruz road the car flashed the headlights and then turned 'em off, quick. We busted right into that squealing mess of Chinamen just the other side of the road, in a little draw.

"Two fellas on horses took a crack at us as we showed up, and then they lit out across the country. About then the sound of the machine stopped and the headlights jumped out across the brush in a long white streak, swung our way and then flicked out. They had spotted us. I knew what was coming. I tried to grab the woman's arm and jerk her out of the saddle but she was calling to the deputies not to shoot. Then eight sawed-off shotguns turned loose all together—and that was the answer. What I mean, there was eight deputies in that car and every one of them had jumped out and started to pump buckshot a second after the driver switched off the lights. They had fired low, on account of the chinks being on foot, and I guess that's how they come to

miss me. A shot, flying wide, stung old Aneroid and he humped and pitched me so quick I didn't know it till I lit on my back right in that screaming, wriggling mess of humans. Parsons' wife wasn't hit, for she started to ride toward the deputies—and the white edge of the moon was just rounding up over the edge of the desert.

"What I mean, she was dressed like a man, and she *was* a man so far as them deputies was concerned. But she was all woman, at that, having the idea that she could stop the killing and straighten things out, and most like, forgetting how she looked there in the moonlight, riding right out of that massacre. I raised up and hollered to the deputies not to shoot—that it was Mrs. Parsons. All around me the chinks was moaning and wiggling but the screaming had stopped. When I hollered it was Mrs. Parsons I heard somebody laugh over where the deputies were, and honest, that laugh sounded worse to me than the noise those dying Chinamen was making. Right on top of that laugh somebody raised up from behind a bush and fired at the woman. I saw her lean forward and then drop from the saddle. But the fella that raised up from behind the bush kept on shooting. About the third or fourth shot something happened to him. What I mean, when you fire at the flash of a gun in the dark you want to figure to shoot a little below the flash if you expect to do business.

"I dropped flat. About a half of a bushel of buckshot whistled over me and I was mighty glad old Aneroid had run true to form, leaving me the minute he pitched me—and that night he left sudden. I rolled over and crawled and wiggled along, expecting every second to get sawed in two by a charge of buckshot. But nothing came except the sound of some poor chink trying to breathe and not having much left to breathe with. What I mean, it was like everybody that was living was scared dumb at what had happened and didn't want to talk or go poking around in the dark to see what kind of a job they had done. I kept on crawling and praying that they wouldn't flash a spotlight on me, but I paid more attention to the crawling. I would stop for a second to listen but that was worse than keeping on. It seemed like the world had gone dead.

"Mebby I had made two hundred yards when I saw something move ahead of me. I stopped. The shadow kept on moving away, slow. I set to and crawled some more. What I mean, old Aneroid was out there drifting along in the dark and not liking the idea of something crawling toward him any more than I liked the idea of doing it. So I took the one chance left and got up and started to walk toward him. I didn't know then that the deputies was busy listening to a man with a hole in his chest trying to tell 'em the straight of the whole rotten deal before he crossed over. Anyhow, when I started to walk toward old Aneroid, he stopped. I didn't take long to get on him and start for somewhere. Before daylight I was across the line and headed toward the Tecolote country—and when you know that country you can lose yourself in it so far that you can forget your name and your nationality before you find your way out again.

"What I mean, I saw a plenty over in France, but the shooting of those helpless Chinamen and the woman sets cold with me as long as I live."

"So Parsons went across the line himself and told the authorities about the Chinamen, and where they would cross to the American side?" I asked.

"Seems like he figured to put the deputies wise and then hop back across the line—but they wouldn't trust him. They took him along and told him what he might expect if he tried to run 'em into an ambush. You see, if Ortega hadn't cut loose when Mrs. Parsons and I rode up, most like there wouldn't have been so much killing. When Ortega and his man fired, one of the shots that missed us got a deputy just climbing out of the machine. That started the clean-up. Those deputies couldn't believe Parsons, so they didn't know just what kind of a game they were up against. Some of it got into the papers, but where I found out was over in the Mokiones, where I ran up against a hombre that had been in the fight—if you want to call it that. *He* did. He got to going about it one night. We was together in the bunk house. He was shaving by the light of a lantern hung close to the glass on the wall. He cut himself. I noticed his hand was kind of shaky—not when he was roping or working outside, but when he quit and was sitting around. He had only been there about a week and was going to move on. He had torn a piece off an old newspaper and had

stuck the piece of paper on a nail to wipe his razor on. I guess he must have seen the headline, or part of it, telling about the killing of those Chinamen, and it got his nerve.

"He turned around with the blood dripping from his chin and says to me, 'I was in that fight. Deputy under——' And he waved his razor toward the piece of paper on the nail.

"'Was it a fight?' I asked him. 'I read that paper.'

"Then he turned loose and told me. I guess he had to get it off his chest. He said that Parsons had killed his own wife that night, and knew it was her when he did it. He told me that somebody from the other side got Parsons through the lungs—and that whoever did it did a good job. I kind of figured that way myself. But he kept on saying that it was a fight, and that the chinks all had guns on them and put up a scrap. You see, the fella was trying to square himself with himself. And he sure was through with man hunting except that he was riding the trail of one hombre that he would chase all the rest of his life, and that hombre was himself. Before he left he told me that Ortega walked into Red Mulch's place that same night and emptied his forty-five into Red Mulch, and then walked out, got on his horse, and rode out of town without a soul lifting a finger to stop him. What I mean, Parsons had told his wife, that evening when we were sitting together in Red Mulch's, that he was going to clean the slate. He cleaned it—only somebody jarred his elbow when he tried to skip his own name."

Smoky tossed a pebble at the little lizard on the rock. The lizard vanished.

"Just like that," said Smoky.

Look for more of Mr. Knibbs' work in future issues.

THE SECRET OF THE SPLEEN

A FRENCH physician says he has discovered the true function of the mysterious organ known as the spleen. In experiments carried out on dogs he has demonstrated that the spleen in some manner assists the body to store up a surplus of nourishment against the possibility of famine.

In a paper read before the French Academy of Medicine this savant declared that he had selected thirty healthy canines for the purpose of proving his theory. From fifteen of these animals he removed the spleens. He then proceeded to starve the entire thirty. The spleenless dogs all died within a month. The dogs with spleens survived the ordeal of famine without exception.

Probably the spleen-probing scientist counts himself a benefactor of humanity but to the vulgar mind of the layman it is hard to see what possible benefit can accrue from this latest addition to abstract medical knowledge. It would seem sufficient, for practical purposes, to know that the spleen is an organic superfluity. The well-nourished man can dispense with it entirely and often does so. Operations on human beings for the removal of the spleen are of frequent occurrence and it is not recorded that any permanent harm necessarily follows such an operation. The spleenless patient, once recovered from the effects of the knife, is apparently as good and complete a physical man as his unexcavated brother. Perhaps he is a better man, for there remains to him no further excuse for blaming an ill temper on "the spleen." This being so, the unmedical mind is prone to take the attitude that the spleen, being of no consequence one way or another, might very well have been let alone. The torturing by starvation of thirty helpless animals for the purpose of demonstrating a sterile abstraction can find little justification in the eyes of the layman.

Vivisection is no doubt a necessity, if an unpleasant one. But the merest humanity demands that it be employed as sparingly as may be, and then only to useful ends. As a means to the gratification of idle scientific curiosity it becomes not vivisection but sheer inhuman cruelty.

The Unusual Adventures of the Texan Wasp

By James Francis Dwyer

Author of "The Gold Traffickers of Montmartre," "At the Castle of the Black Rocks," Etc.

II. THE CUP OF THE MAGYARS.

The trails of Mr. Robert Henry Blane, late of Houston, Texas, and No. 37, the man hunter, cross again in the thick of a London fog. And again the debonair adventurer from the Lone Star State takes occasion to dent the pride of Europe's greatest detective.

A THICK, stealthy fog occupied London. A fat and rather terrifying fog. Trafalgar Square was a receiving station for the white vapor squadrons that came rolling up from Tilbury, and the Fog King stuffed these wet masses into the Strand and Fleet Street, into the Haymarket and Piccadilly. The headlights of motor busses and taxicabs were changed into balls of illuminated floss; electric signs were blotted out; traffic noises were deadened. Pedestrians, groping their way homeward, thought of life insurance, unpaid debts, children, and other little subjects that come to the minds of persons doubtful as to their lease of life.

Robert Henry Blane, known as The Texan Wasp, sat at a corner table of a quiet restaurant in the Strand. A small but rather unusual restaurant that had a strange clientele. It was patronized by persons who knew food and who had the money to pay for it. There was no swank, no chandeliers with a thousand lights, no overbearing head waiter, no fancy frills, but there was food. Splendid and wonderful food.

Mr. Blane, while the fog squadrons were rolling down the Strand, had attacked and mentally approved of a dish of stewed lampreys, that strange fish that attained fame through bringing about the death of an English king who ate of them not wisely but too well. The Wasp had followed the fish with a larded pheasant whose stuffing was the unfathomed secret of the huge chef, and he was on the point of making the acquaintance of a marvelous cheese soufflé when his attention was distracted. A perished, fog-drenched human slipped furtively through the door opening on the Strand,

took in the room with round, weak eyes, then shambled hurriedly toward the corner occupied by Robert Henry Blane.

A waiter, converging on the same quarter with an assortment of liquids that Mr. Blane wished personally to blend, attempted to head off the outcast, but the fellow was too swift. He rushed forward, bringing the salty tang of the fog to wrestle with the delicious aroma of the soufflé.

"Pawden, guvnor!" he gasped, addressing the big American. "Might Hi harsk yer nime?"

The Texan Wasp looked at the wet, white face of the Whitechapel rat and answered with a smile. "Why certainly," he said. "My name is Harun-al-Rashid and I'm visiting London to inquire into the possible sale of Jordan almonds at Covent Garden market. I'm sorry I haven't got a card."

The interrogator was perplexed by the answer, and while he stood undecided the beverage-burdened waiter tried to skillfully butt him toward the door. But the fellow was persistent.

"Doan't kid me, guvnor!" he whined, breaking away from the waiter and rushing back to the table. "Corf up yer rile nime an' I'll tip yer summun."

"The caliph has spoken," said The Wasp.

"Is yer nime Bline?" cried the outcast. "Might yer nime be Mister Bline?"

"It might be," answered Robert Henry Blane. "And then again it might not."

The messenger wriggled from the grip of the waiter and stumbled back to the table. "I knew yer wus!" he cried. "The gent who give me this letter to 'and to yer says yer wus an American who looked like a dook an' that yer fed 'ere."

He burrowed under the headband of his greasy cap, pulled out an envelope and handed it to The Texan Wasp.

The big American took it, turned it over, then laid it beside his plate and turned to the soufflé. The rat stood on one leg and then on the other. He twisted his cap and ventured a remark. "An' yer does look like a dook!" he cried. "Blimey yer does! I've seen dooks an' I knows."

The Texan Wasp took a two-shilling piece from his pocket and handed it over. "I don't like dukes," he said quietly. "Good night."

Like Napoleon, Mr. Robert Henry Blane had a rule regarding letters. Good news could always wait; bad news need not be read at all. He finished the soufflé without glancing at the unopened letter. He ordered a Marnier *rouge* and lighted one of his own favorite cigars of Algerian tobacco, then amused himself by guessing at the name of his correspondent. He, Blane, had arrived in London the previous evening by the Dover-Ostend route from the Continent, and, unlike theatrical folk, out-of-town buyers, and small persons on their first trip, he had made no effort to have his presence in Fogland recorded in any way.

"Who is the mysterious person seeking Mister Bline?" he murmured, mimicking the accent of the messenger. "Who calls out of the fog?"

He drained the silver liqueur goblet, picked up the envelope and opened it.

The message it contained was written on the torn leaf of a betting book, and it ran:

> DEAR BOB: I heard that you were in town. I suppose you thought me dead, but I'm still alive. Can you come and see me? Ring four times, count seven slowly, then ring once. If you get this to-night come over immediately. I want your help. *Don't talk!* DARREN.
> 21½ Aynhoe Road, Hammersmith.

Robert Henry Blane read the note a second time, then he took it word by word, repeating each word softly to himself. Surprised and startled he stared at the big, awkward signature. It was certainly genuine. No one could have so successfully imitated the queer, clumsy penmanship of Ferdinand Darren, "Count of Pierrefond," the most famous—or rather infamous—gambler that the big resorts had ever seen.

Still gripping the note The Texan Wasp hurriedly marshaled all the little scraps of news that concerned the disappearance of the great card wizard. For the moment he regretted that he had no authority to discuss with others the startling news that had come to him. He wished that he could call across to the next table where a very worldly gentleman sat wrestling with a woodcock and a bottle of Burgundy, and say: "Excuse me, but would you believe that 'Count' Ferdinand Darren is still alive? I thought that would surprise you! Well, he is! He's alive and well!" Although ordinarily as close mouthed as a clam, at this particular moment he had a desire to share his wonderment. A wonderment that was a little awesome; a little terrifying.

Again he stared at the note. Ferdinand Darren was alive! The "Count of Pierrefond" was living in Hammersmith! *In Hammersmith!*

The word "Hammersmith" held the eye of Robert Henry Blane. Count Ferdinand Darren, who was known in the old days as the biggest plunger at Homburg and Biarritz, at Monte Carlo, Vevey and Aix-les-Bains, as the greatest punter at Longchamps, Kempton Park and Ascot, was hiding in Hammersmith, the haunt of the boarding-house keeper! Mr. Blane hummed a little verse as he considered the information:

"The pasteboards and horses are all very fine,
They go with fine ladies and beautiful wine;
But watch for the morning when Fortune will frown
And big-footed coppers will chase you round town."

The Wasp hurriedly marshaled all the little scraps of news that he had gathered up concerning the disappearance of the great gambler. Count Ferdinand Darren was one of the old breed of card wizards. In those golden days before the Great Squabble when the rouble, the mark and the Austrian crown sat up with the élite of currency, Count Ferdinand Darren made remarkable killings. He was one of the old-time picturesque wooers of Chance who made splendid copy for writers of sensational gambling stories. At Homburg he emptied the pockets of the Grand Duke Michael; at Aix-les-Bains, alone and single-handed, he outgeneraled to the tune of one hundred thousand francs a bunch of small crooks that lacked his nerve; and at Biarritz he took the word of a Spanish nobleman concerning the value of his family plate, staked half a million pesetas against the stuff and won the game. The don brought around the engraved junk on the following morning and handed it over. Darren examined it, assured the Spaniard that he had undervalued it, then with the remark: "It is a novelty for me to meet an honest person," he handed the plate back to the astonished grandee.

Then came the startling disappearance of Ferdinand Darren, "Count of Pierrefond." A Magyar lord, a wild devil from Czegléd, had a bout with the card wizard. Darren took everything but the Magyar's shoes, and then the wild man from Czegléd bragged of a drinking cup that his family owned since the days when Sobieski taught his followers to stab and thrust when chasing the Turks out of Hungary.

The story of the drinking cup interested Darren. He made an appointment to meet the Magyar in a pine grove near Cap-Martin, that sun-kissed spot between Monte Carlo and Mentone to which jaded gamblers drive to rest their nerves. They met at the appointed hour, went alone into the grove and played, their table the stump of a pine tree. Down on the white road there waited the carriage of the Magyar; Darren had come by train to the little station of Cap-Martin-Roquebrune.

The meeting was unlucky for the Magyar lord. Hours afterward he was found dead, the long blade of a hunting knife driven deep into his ribs. His body was strewn with playing cards and his clenched hands grasped quantities of the scented pine needles that perfume the air of the heaven-blessed resort. The carriage was still in the sunny road but the driver and Count Ferdinand Darren had both disappeared.

The police of Europe sought for Ferdinand Darren but they sought in vain. The tables knew him no more. All sorts of theories were put forward. Crime specialists reasoned that Darren had lured the driver down to the sea after killing his master and had pushed the fellow into the Mediterranean. Now and then came whispers from far-off race tracks, from Flemington, Lexington, from Randwick, Marianao and Rio, that told how Ferdinand Darren "Count of Pierrefond," had been seen, but these rumors were never believed. The police and Darren's old associates believed that the gambler had taken his own life after the affair at Cap-Martin.

The Texan Wasp placed the note in his pocket and called for his bill. He paid it, counted out an exact ten-per-cent tip for the waiter, then questioned the fellow as to his family.

"I have one child, a little girl of eight," answered the waiter.

The Wasp took from a handful of continental currency a fat Dutch gulden with the head of Wilhelmina, and the inscription *"Koningin der Nederlanden,"* and added it to the tip. "That might make her a brooch," he said. "It was a very good meal. Good night."

The fog had thickened. It had become a cold, soupy thing that dribbled down the

faces of pedestrians. It made the city strange and mysterious.

Robert Henry Blane found a taxicab at the corner of Bedford Street and spoke to the chauffeur. "I want to get to the Olympia," he said. "Take it easy."

"I'll have to, guvnor," said the man. "It's thicker 'n gruel."

The taxi clung to the stern of a motor omnibus that bored a path for itself up the Haymarket to Piccadilly, then crept slowly westward along Knightsbridge and Kensington Road. The Texan Wasp was thinking of Ferdinand Darren. For nearly eight years nothing had been heard of the card wizard. Blane, like a thousand others, had thought him dead. Now out of the fog that enveloped London had come a message saying that he was alive. A curious message. Blane thought over the instructions concerning the ringing of the bell. "Ring four times, count seven slowly, then ring once," ran the instructions.

"He's particular about visitors," murmured The Wasp. "Well, no one wants a hempen collar even if they can get one for nothing."

The taxi stopped and the occupant inquired the reason. "Lorst, guvnor," answered the chauffeur. "I'm lookin' for a cop. If yer want a cop there's not one nearer 'n Great Marlborough Street Station, 'n if yer don't want one o' the blighters they're more plentiful than 'op leaves in Kent."

A tall, wet, and despondent-looking policeman was found at last. "The Holympia?" he repeated. "Two to the right. You're at the corner of 'Olland Road."

The taxi moved on, followed instructions and drew up before the big building. "There's no show on here to-night," said the chauffeur.

"No," answered The Wasp, as he paid, "that's why I came out. I thought the building would be lonely."

With great caution Mr. Blane found his way into Blythe Road and from there into Aynhoe Road. The locality was familiar to him.

He struck a match and examined the numbers. They started from Blythe Road and ran westward. The fog was now so thick that the big American had to feel his way along the walls and railings. Twice he collided with pedestrians who were steering by the same method.

The Wasp reached No. 21½. It was one of those straight-fronted London houses wedged so hard between others of its kind that the sensitive observer, viewing the open windows as so many mouths gasping for air, is filled with the belief that the house is being squashed to death. It gained a scant privacy through possessing a railed-off space the size of a burial allotment between its front wall and the sidewalk.

Obeying the instructions in the note Robert Henry Blane pressed the bell button four times, slowly counted seven, then pressed it again.

The door opened almost immediately but there was no one visible in the dimly lighted hall. The Texan stepped forward, the street door closed behind him, and as it banged shut the soft light in the hall was supplemented by one of startling radiance that flashed from the head of the stairs. It came from a shaded light of high power and it flooded the lower hall while leaving the landing above in complete darkness.

A voice from the landing asked The Texan Wasp to step forward, and as Blane looked up in an effort to locate the speaker there came a queer, gurgling laugh from above. It was a laugh that told of a momentary victory over fear, a great fear that waited always to throw the ash of terror into the face of its victim.

"It's you, all right!" came a voice from the landing. "By George, Blane, you haven't altered a bit since I last—last saw you. Just as handsome. Got—got younger, if anything."

The Texan Wasp smiled. "I can't see you so I cannot make any flattering return," he said.

"Come up," said the man on the landing. "It's—it's curious, but I never go downstairs. I live like one of those natives in New Guinea or somewhere. They roost in the trees like confounded crows and haul their ladders up at night. Jolly good idea. I can't haul the stairs up, but—but it would be dangerous for any one to climb them when I am asleep. I've got a few of the steps wired."

The Wasp halted in his ascent. "Is the connection turned off now?" he asked. "I'm rather particular about the fashion in which I leave the world. I'd like to go intact, so to speak."

Again came the hysterical laugh. "Oh, it's all serene now. Come straight up. I

never connect it up till I'm going to bed. Got to, old man. Parlous times these. World all upside down and all that sort of thing."

The Texan Wasp climbed gingerly. He was a little doubtful about the mentality of Ferdinand Darren. His words and the queer laugh suggested that he was suffering from a mild form of lunacy.

Blane reached the landing and came face to face with the card wizard that the world thought dead. A queer figure was Ferdinand Darren. He was a tall man, over six feet in height, and this height was accentuated by a silk dressing gown that hung from his lean shoulders. He wore a pointed beard and mustache; his nose was big and predatory, his eyes, deep-sheltered under an abattis of brow, were keen and piercing, yet Robert Henry Blane knew as he encountered the other's glance that fear was enthroned within those eyes. A great consuming fear that was projected into the atmosphere itself. The Wasp felt it! It had a chilling effect upon him. He was inclined to glance behind him to see if something unnatural and terrible had followed him up the stairs.

Darren spoke. "I'm glad you got my note, Bob," he said in his queer, halting way. "Awfully glad. Thought I might miss you. Knew you—knew you would eat at the old place so I described you. Wanted to see you bad. Sort of gave up yesterday. Had a notion to step into the other world without help, then I heard you were in London. 'Robert Henry Blane is the chap I want,' I told myself. 'He's got nerve.' By George, Blane you *have* got nerve! Wish I had it. You know—you know you're about the only man I ever saw that never got scared. Come in here, I want to tell you something."

Chattering in this strange disconnected way Darren led The Texan Wasp into an elaborately furnished sitting room and pushed him into a seat. "Make yourself comfortable," he said. "Brandy and soda there at your elbow. Cigars too. Say it's great to see you! You're the world to me! You see I haven't been outside this house for seven years. Seven years! Think of it! I've forgotten what the world is like. Oh, Lord! Do they still play at Harry Grosnevor's and is the Lounge running?"

"Harry Grosnevor is dead and the Lounge has reformed," answered The Texan Wasp. "They have *thé dansants* now in the baccarat parlors."

"Great Scott!" cried the other. "Do you know I dream of places like Grosnevor's every night! I see myself facing piles of chips bigger than the Pyramid of Cheops and the cards breaking my way as if the devil had specially stacked them. Then—then I wake up and curse. Think of it! I haven't been out of this house for seven years! For seven years!"

There was a long pause after the card wizard spoke. He poured himself a glass of cognac and drank it raw. The Texan Wasp, regarding him keenly, knew that the gambler's nerve had gone completely. The whining note in his voice reminded Mr. Blane of the thin, squeaky tones of Pierre Chabannier, the little chemist that No. 37 had sent to the nickel mines of New Caledonia. He thought also of the voice of the old gold trafficker, Ponsonnard. The Wasp had studied voices and he thought that the seat of courage was in the larynx and not in the heart.

Darren drew his chair closer to the one in which Robert Henry Blane was sitting. His sharp fear-ridden eyes were on the face of the American. Three times he moistened his lips preparatory to making a statement, three times Fear leg-roped the words and they fell back with a gurgle. At last with a desperate effort he managed to control himself and speak.

"Blane, I'm in trouble," he began. "I'm being hounded. I can't stand it. That's—that's why I sent for you. You—you know everything about the Cap-Martin affair?"

"Just what every one else knows," admitted The Wasp.

Darren wiped his face with his right hand. "If I tell you something try and believe it, Blane!" he cried. "Try and believe it! Listen! I'm not certain that I killed that brute!"

"You're not certain?" questioned The Wasp.

"No!" shouted the gambler. "I'm not certain! I—I won the drinking cup and—and he sprang at me. We rolled over and over and—and——"

Darren paused. A slight shuffling noise came from the street, the sound made by a pedestrian not altogether sure of his route. The long neck of the card wizard was thrust out as he listened, thrust out in a manner that made the cool and undisturbed Blane

think that the noise in the street had become an invisible lariat that pulled at the head of Darren as the pedestrian shuffled by. He wondered as to the reason.

The shuffling sounds died away. The long neck relaxed. Darren moistened his lips and went on with his story.

"We fought in—in any old fashion," he whispered. "I don't know, but I thought we had no weapons. You see—you see he sprang at me the moment I flung down the winning card. He was crazy at losing the cup. It—it was an heirloom. One of those lucky cups. He told me a lot of stuff about it. It's—it's like that cup that somebody sang about. You know, 'If this goblet should break or fall, farewell to the Luck of Eden Hall!'

"We thumped and mauled each other then—then suddenly he rolled over and lay quiet! Just lay without moving. I thought it was a trick and I got up on my hands and knees and looked at him. He was dead! He had a knife driven into his ribs, but—but I didn't do it! I didn't, Blane! I never saw that knife before! *Never!*"

Robert Henry Blane studied the face of the card wizard. It was a weak face, furrowed with lines of fear and anxiety. "Do you think that some local inhabitant seeing a peaceful gambler attacked by a wild Hungarian came to your assistance and killed the fellow?" he inquired coldly.

The gambler poured himself another glass of cognac, drank it and stared for a few moments at The Texan Wasp before replying. "You read the account of the case?" he said. "I was supposed to have killed the Magyar and then pushed the driver into the Mediterranean. Well, I never saw the driver! Never! Do you hear me? I never saw the fellow!"

"But the cup?" questioned The Wasp. "Who got the cup?"

"I did," answered Darren. "I'll show it to you. It's—it's yours, Blane, if—if you'll do something for me."

The gambler rose, moved a little water color that concealed a wall safe, unlocked the steel door and brought forth a chamois bag. He untied the running string and took from the bag a short, bulky goblet which he handed to Robert Henry Blane.

The Wasp whistled softly as he sprang to his feet and clutched the vessel. Its barbaric beauty startled him. Its strong, savage lines appealed to him. It had come down from an age of strong men—wild men, hairy men who fought at close quarters with short stabbing swords, and, curiously, it carried a vision of its brutal human contemporaries with it. As Robert Henry Blane gripped it he had a quick fleeting dream picture of the men that Sobieski led, the long-haired, squat, wild-eyed stabbing mob that chased the Turk to the gates of Constantinople! The goblet thrilled him! It brought to his mind disjointed scraps of Romany drinking songs, mad chants of victory, queer haunting melodies that were a little weird, a little frightening, a little horrifying.

The vessel itself was of beaten gold raised on a support made of three claws. Unreal claws, clumsily carved, but carrying a vigor that was extraordinary. The back spur of each was thrust upward and inward, and these three spurs clutched tightly a ruby of amazing size! A tremendous ruby whose blazing heart gathered up the light and flung it in a red shower on the hands of Robert Henry Blane.

The Wasp, breathing softly, turned the goblet round and round. It was a wonderful vessel. It was a magic thing that swung him back into a primitive past. It brought dreams of blood and conquest, dreams of loot, of screaming women, of blazing villages and blood-soaked forests.

"Tilt it up!" cried the gambler. "Hold it up as if you were drinking out of it!"

Robert Henry Blane did so. He lifted the goblet in his right hand and looked up into the shining yellow interior. For an instant he looked, then he jerked it downward sharply with a little exclamation of wonder. The yellow interior had reflected his face but it was not the face he knew. His handsome features had been curiously distorted, strangely twisted so that they spoke of violence, of greed, of evil things.

The gambler, watching closely, laughed in his foolish, hysterical manner. "That's—that's the wonder of the cup," he gurgled. "It shows us what we—what we really look like. It was that about it that made me play for it. Wish you could see the face it makes at me. Makes me mad at times. It does!"

Blane handed back the goblet, and in silence the gambler put it back into its chamois covering and put it away. He returned to his seat and looked fixedly at The Texan Wasp.

"I'll get on with my tale," he mumbled. "Lot of it is old stuff to you. Inquest, verdict of murder against me, police hunt, rumors I had killed myself—you know all that. I—I had slipped up to London because London is one of the best cities in the world to hide in. The British are so infernally strange themselves that they take no notice of the oddities of others. I rented this house and I decided not to move out of the door. Do you—do you know why, Blane?"

The Texan Wasp shook his head. The gambler leaned forward and spoke in a frightened whisper.

"Because they put a devil on my trail!" he murmured. "His people did. The Magyar's folk, I mean. They put a fellow onto my heels who has never been known to miss. Sooner or later he gets the man he is hunting. He's the bloodhound that never bays. You may have heard of him. He's called by a number just like a jailbird. He's known as No. 37."

"I have heard of him," said Robert Henry Blane quietly. "They tell me he is very successful."

"He's leagues ahead of any gumshoe man Europe has seen," cried the gambler. "I know! He—he spoke to me at Homburg a few months before the Cap-Martin affair and—and the brute surprised me with what he knew about me. He had me written up with past performances as if I was the first favorite for the Derby. Knew the name of my nurse, godfather, size of my glove, favorite pastime, particular club, golf record, and all that sort of stuff that you see about public characters in the society papers."

The Wasp grinned. "And has he located you?" he asked.

"I don't know," stammered Darren. "I don't know whether it's he or some one else. That's—that's why I've sent for you. Listen, Blane! That cup—that Magyar cup is yours if you'll help me! Is it a bet?"

"Tell me," said The Wasp. "No, don't drink any more brandy. You've had enough."

The gambler laid down the glass, reached over and pulled out a small drawer of a mahogany desk. From it he took a packet of letters which he handed to Robert Henry Blane. The envelopes were similar—small, yellow envelopes of the poorest quality—and they carried neither stamps nor postmarks. Each was addressed "Count Ferdinand Darren;" the writing evidently that of an uneducated person.

"You might remember," said the gambler, "that when the Magyar lord was found dead his fingers were clutching little bunches of pine needles that he picked up in his death struggles? Now look at those letters. Every evening for the last fifteen days one has been stuck into the letter box on my door! One every evening! Look at them! Look at what is inside!"

The Texan Wasp took from the top envelope a sheet of folded paper. He spread it out and looked with a little surprise at what he saw. Fixed to the sheet of paper was a single pine needle—a brown, twisted pine needle that had been carefully glued to the sheet by a slight trail of gum and dried thoroughly before the paper was folded!

He opened the second and the third. Each contained the carefully affixed pine needle. Not a written word. Not a mark. Simply the single needle glued to the sheet!

For a moment The Wasp thought that the little reminders of the pine grove of Cap-Martin might have been twisted into the semblance of letters, and he hurriedly ran through the rest of the bundle. But it was not so. There was no attempt made to twist the pine needles into any likeness of a letter. They were simply gummed to the sheet, the care with which they were affixed proving that the sender had a high opinion of the hidden meaning they carried.

There were fifteen envelopes and The Wasp, after examining each in turn, looked at the gambler. Darren had again assumed the extraordinary listening attitude that he had taken once before during the telling of the happening at Cap-Martin. Only on this occasion the attitude was more strained. The long neck of the card wizard seemed as if it was being pulled out to a grotesque length as he listened to the sound of footsteps that came from the sidewalk in front of the house!

In the uncanny silence that was produced by the white shroud that covered the big city Robert Henry Blane also listened to the shuffling outside. The unseen pedestrian was evidently guiding himself by the iron railings that fenced the shallow strips of garden in front of the houses. There was a feeling of groping uncertainty carried by the footsteps, and The Texan Wasp, who

had made a very intense study of sounds, visualized the person, building up every movement of the unknown in his mind's eye.

The shuffling noise ceased. Blane thought that the man outside was looking for a number. To The Wasp there came a picture of him thrusting a peering face close to a door to read the figures hidden by the fog.

The big Texan glanced at the card wizard. Darren was trying to speak, trying to express some thought that had come to him but which the dreadful fear would not allow him to mint into words.

"What is it?" cried The Wasp. "What is wrong?"

"It's him!" gurgled Darren. ***"It's him!"***

"Who?"

"The—the fellow who brings the pine needles! He brings one every—every night at this hour!"

The Texan Wasp sprang to his feet. He ran to the landing, and as he reached the head of the stairs he heard the metallic click of the lid of the letter box that was fastened to the door of the house!

The Wasp took the stairs by means of the banister. He was hatless and coatless but he didn't care. Suddenly into his mind there had sprung a desire to possess the barbaric goblet of the Magyar lord and this desire was backed up by a consuming curiosity to find out what sort of person called every evening at the house in Aynhoe Road and dropped into the letter box an envelope containing a single pine needle carefully glued to a sheet of white paper.

Blane tore at the heavy fastenings of the door, swung it open and dashed into the street. The fog blanket was appalling. The mysterious messenger was already hidden in the white depths.

The Wasp dropped upon his knees and placed his ear to the pavement. He thought he detected the patter of feet from the direction of Brook Green and he started in pursuit. He ran blindly, now on the sidewalk, now in the roadway. Luckily the street was deserted so the risk of colliding with a vehicle in the heavy fog was not great.

Blane reached Brook Green and paused for a second to listen. Back to him through the choking fog came the sound of running feet and the Texan followed like a hound.

The pursued fled across the Green into Rowan Road. The Wasp followed. The unknown turned southward in the direction of Hammersmith Road. The fellow was fleet and the fog hampered the big American, but thoughts of the cup of the Magyar lord spurred him on. A strange cup. He wondered by what necromancy it had reflected his face so that he started back from it in fear. There flashed through his brain the idea that he had first thought of months before, the idea of the incipient crime wrinkle which a very clever person could detect in the face of all young persons disposed to evil ways. The cup, by some peculiar fault in its construction, twisted the reflection of the person who looked into it so that he or she could see themselves as they would appear in the years to come!

The Wasp felt that he was gaining on the man in front. He knew that he was, then, suddenly, as he assured himself that this was so, his keen ears brought to him a piece of startling information. Some one else was pursuing the man in front!

The American paused for an instant to check this astonishing discovery. It was as his ears had told him. To the right, hidden by the fog, was another runner, a fleet-footed person who was running abreast of The Wasp and evidently pursuing the same person!

The Wasp, again in his stride, tried to answer the questions that sprang into his brain. Was the person to the right a confederate of the man in front? Were the two attempting to terrorize Ferdinand Darren? What did they desire from the old-time gambler? As if in answer to the questions there came up before the eyes of the running Texan a picture of the cup. These mysterious runners knew of the cup! It was a goblet that many might have heard of.

The pursued neared Hammersmith Road. The dull beat of the heavy traffic on the big thoroughfare rose through the fog. And out of this thick white wall there came a sudden yell, the gruff question of a much-annoyed person, a frightened protest, then the shrill call of a police whistle.

Swiftly Robert Henry Blane diagnosed what had happened to the pursued person. He had collided with a policeman near the corner of King Street and Rowan Road, the officer had made an effort to interrogate the runner, the fellow had broken away and the policeman had whistled as he started in pursuit.

Blane halted with remarkable suddenness. Not so the runner to the right. As the American stopped the other pursuer veered inward. The Wasp heard his quick breathing as he rushed by, then to the ears of the Texan came a shouted order which the unknown pursuer gave to the policeman hidden in the fog! It was a sharp swift command and it was given in a voice that Robert Henry Blane recognized!

"Use your whistle!" roared the mysterious runner. "Hang to him, officer! Whistle! Confound you! Whistle!"

The Texan Wasp thrust himself against a wall. The voice had startled him. It was the voice of an old enemy. The order to the policeman was given by the king of man hunters! It was given by No. 37!

Into the fog-choked stretch of Hammersmith Road went the noise of the chase. The Texan Wasp, a little stupefied and amazed, stood still and listened. The fugitive had turned eastward toward the heart of the city and from out of the fog came yells and cries, the curses of chauffeurs, the mad hooting of motor busses, the protesting, whining cries of harried pedestrians who were bumped in every direction by the ragtag and bobtail that came streaming from all directions to join in the man hunt.

The smothering fog fell upon the noises as The Wasp stood listening. The most violent sounds—the shrill calls of the police whistle, the shrieks of women—came back to him, then the lumbering grind of the slow-moving traffic took the lessening clamor into its woof and the noises were unrecognizable. The chase had swung out of the main artery and was heading toward Earls Court.

Robert Henry Blane, surprised and stunned, stood for a few minutes at the corner of Rowan Road and Hammersmith Road. He was wrestling with a problem. Who was the person who had clanged the letter box on the door of Darren's house? Why was No. 37 pursuing him? It was an amazing tangle.

He turned and slowly groped his way back along Rowan Road and across Brook Green to the house in Aynhoe Road. He rang the bell in the manner that the gambler had ordered and he was admitted with the same caution that had been exercised previously.

"Will you get the letter out of the box, Blane?" asked the gambler. "You didn't —didn't catch him, eh? I—I had hopes that you would have grabbed the beggar and broken his neck."

The Texan Wasp took from the letter box an envelope similar to the ones he had seen earlier in the night. It bore the name "Count Ferdinand Darren," written in the same illiterate hand. He carried it up the stairs and as he went up he decided not to tell Darren that he had recognized the voice of No. 37 in the mad chase. Darren was a wreck without being told that the man hunter was close to him.

The gambler looked at The Wasp with eyes in which the imps of terror danced a rigadoon. He tried to put a question and failed with much spasmodic swallowing.

"I chased some one into Hammersmith Road but he got away from me," explained The Wasp. "I'm not sure that he was the fellow that put the letter in your box, but he ran in a manner that suggested he had been up to something that was not quite regular."

There was silence for a few minutes, then the terrified gambler backed to the little wall safe that held the wonderful goblet. Again he took the precious cup from its hiding place and held it out to Robert Henry Blane. "It's yours if—if you stop that brute from baiting me!" he cried. "Take it now, Blane! Take it now!"

The Wasp thrust back the temptation to take the cup. Curiously there had grown within him a fierce desire to again look at his face in the shining yellow interior of the goblet. The vessel had startled him. He wanted to check up that glimpse of himself as the years would see him.

"Not now, Darren," he said. "But I'll take a hand in the hunt for your little tormentor. Don't worry. We'll land him if we're careful."

The gambler dropped into a chair and held his face in his hands. "I'm all in," he murmured. "I'm tired, Bob. Come—come again to-morrow night, will you? I'm going —going to bed."

The Texan Wasp found an advertising bureau in Oxford Street and he hurriedly scribbled an ad for the "Throb and Threat" column of the *Morning Post*.

It ran:

PINE NEEDLES AT CAP-MARTIN. Why be whimsical? Meet me Hyde Park first bench to left from Stanhope Gate, eight o'clock. Will arrange matters satisfactorily for all.

FULL HAND.

Having paid for this The Texan Wasp found his way through the fog to his little hotel in Norfolk Street, where, in a masterful manner, he induced a fat chef who was on his way to his couch to return to the sanded kitchen and prepare a tasty rarebit for Mr. Blane's supper. Robert Henry Blane had a way of handling men. The chef, grumpy at first, became so interested in The Wasp's appetite that he served the rarebit personally in one of those old-fashioned cubicles that our bashful grandfathers thought necessary to the privacy of a man's appetite.

As The Wasp ate he thought over the unusual happenings of the evening. He reviewed the checkered career of Ferdinand Darren, "Count of Pierrefond," pondered over the wordless messages sent by the unknown that he, Blane, had pursued through the fog. He thought of No. 37, the tireless hunter of wrongdoers, but most of all he thought of the golden goblet of the Magyar lord.

The goblet had annoyed him. The fear-stricken Darren had stated that it was a flaw in the make of the cup that enabled it to throw a distorted reflection of the face of the person looking into it, but the explanation did not please The Wasp. He was angry that it had shown his face—a face which the world admitted was a handsome one—in a most unpleasing way.

"I'd like to melt it down and sell it to a fence for old gold!" he growled. "It made me mighty mad."

He wondered how the goblet would reflect the faces of those who were innately good and into his mind came thoughts of Betty Allerton. How would the mysterious cup reflect the face of the Boston girl who liked him in the long ago? He sat staring at the dying embers in the grate of the eating room and between him and the fire there rose a mist out of which shone the dream face of the girl that he loved.

"Why—why, it would show her as she is and always will be," he muttered. "How could it show her different? I'm a fool."

He rose, a little depressed, and went to bed. He hated the golden goblet. He wished to possess it so that he might stamp it into a shapeless mass.

All through the night The Wasp dreamed of the curious cup of the Magyar lord. In his dreams he thought that he had again looked into its shining interior and again he had been shocked by the reflection of his own face. Then, into the dream, came Betty Allerton of Boston! The girl had placed her face close to that of Robert Henry Blane and she had induced him to look again into the goblet.

The nearness of the girl's face worked a miracle. The hateful reflection of himself that had startled The Wasp was blotted out, and in the shining yellow depths of the goblet he saw himself as the girl had once described him, "a handsome Galahad from Texas who would do great deeds."

A stiff wind had whipped the fog-curtain from London and tossed it out into the North Sea. It was cold but clear, and Robert Henry Blane walking up Piccadilly after an early dinner wondered about the advertisement he had placed in the *Morning Post*. He knew that the "Personal Columns" of the London dailies have a great attraction for persons with ill-assorted wits, and he reasoned that the man who was annoying Darren by dropping the anonymous letters into the gambler's mail box was of those queer nervous criminals who would be especially attracted by the little cryptograms published by those very respectable organs who for a few shillings a line act as go-betweens for persons who lack a postal address.

Mr. Blane walked down Park Lane, entered the park through Stanhope Gate and turned to his left. He glanced at his watch as he entered. It was exactly eight. A church clock—The Wasp thought it that of St. James'—checked his timepiece in a slow, approving manner.

The Wasp glanced ahead at the first bench from the gate. It was occupied. The poor light made it impossible for him to immediately inform himself of the character of the occupant, then as he approached he discovered that it was a woman. A very young woman sitting alone on one end of the green bench.

The tall American walked slowly by. He glanced at the young woman and the light of a park lamp now enabled him to see her features clearly. She was young and handsome, her dress was plainly that of a person of means and refinement. Furthermore she returned the glance of The Wasp in a manner that showed neither fear nor forwardness.

Robert Henry Blane walked as far as the

Achilles Statue, turned suddenly and walked back. A strange belief had gripped him—a rather insane belief he told himself. He felt certain that the young woman on the seat was there in response to the advertisement he had inserted in the *Morning Post*. It seemed a ridiculous idea but there was something in the manner in which she had returned his look of inquiry that brought him quickly back to the bench.

The Wasp touched his hat, murmured an apology and sat down on the end farthest from the occupant. His near view told him that the woman was younger than he had thought after the first glance. She was hardly twenty and in the soft misty light her beauty took on a strange quality. Robert Henry Blane felt certain that she was not English; there was about her the untamed beauty that goes with those born in hotter climes than England. There was something of the warmth of the Orient, something of a Romany feel. There came into his mind as he took a place on the bench the recollection of a girl that he had once seen in a little village in Normandy, a flashing sun-born gypsy girl who traveled alone with a tame bear, giving performances at little towns.

The roar of hard-driven motor busses came from Piccadilly and Knightsbridge. A few pedestrians passed; a park policeman sauntered slowly by. The distant church clock chimed the quarter.

Then Robert Henry Blane, looking straight ahead, spoke. "I placed an advertisement in the *Morning Post*," he said softly, "and I thought it might be seen by the person for whom it was intended. I asked him—I thought it was a man—to meet me on this bench at eight o'clock."

There were a few seconds of silence. The Wasp, still looking straight ahead, heard the soft breathing of the girl. His words appeared to have startled her.

"It—it was about pine needles and Cap-Martin?" she breathed.

"Just so," admitted The Wasp. "It was of pine needles and Cap-Martin."

A little choked cry came from the girl. "I read it," she stammered. "It was so strange and—and it seemed a message to me! Yes, yes! It brought me here!"

Robert Henry Blane, a little mystified, turned and looked at the speaker. He saw her plainly for the first time. Her big flashing eyes were fixed upon the American, her red lips were parted slightly, her bosom heaved under an excitement that was plainly evident. The Wasp was puzzled. He wondered if the girl had seen in the advertisement the possible opening of a romantic adventure.

The girl saw the shadow of doubt and annoyance in his face and she spoke hurriedly. "I—I had to come!" she cried. "I don't know what your advertisement really means, but—but my father was killed at Cap-Martin and—and when they found his body his hands were grasping little bunches of pine needles! And your *nom de plume* had to do with cards—with playing cards. My father was killed by a gambler! So you see why I came here!"

Robert Henry Blane held his surprise in check. His cool eyes were upon the face of the girl but they did not show the astonishment that her statement had brought. A well-controlled person was Mr. Blane and although the girl's explanation of her presence was extraordinary and startling he did not let her see that it was.

"Who was your father and when did all this take place?" he asked.

"My father was a lord from Czegléd named Antoine Vorömartry," she replied. "I am his daughter, Thérèse. It is over seven years since his murder."

The Texan Wasp whistled softly. Into the woof of the Darren matter had come an antonishing thread of flashing color. The little advertisement put out as a hopeful bait to catch the attention of the person who was hounding the gambler had brought into the affair the daughter of the murdered man! Robert Henry Blane was for the moment nonplused. He saw no way in which she could be useful to Darren and himself. He told himself to walk warily and tell little.

"I did not expect to meet you," he said quietly. "I am seeking another person and I thought——"

"But tell me what you know?" she interrupted, her face betraying the excitement and curiosity that clutched her. "Please! Please tell me!"

Again The Wasp considered the face of the girl. His estimate as to her age was correct. She was not more than twenty. He thought to spar for time by questioning her. "Where were you when your father met his death?" he asked. "What do you know of the affair? Tell me everything

that you know about it then I might be inclined to talk about matters."

The girl was close to The Wasp now. She had moved along the bench to his side. He was aware of a faint perfume from her clothes, of her quick-drawn breath, of the shapely white hands, the fingers of which writhed around each other as she waited for information.

"My mother and I were at Mentone when my daddy was killed," she cried, the words toppling over each other in her hurry to impress the man as to the genuine interest she had in any information he possessed. "My daddy drove to Cap-Martin with our coachman to meet a gambler. They played for something that—that—was ours."

"What was it?" questioned The Wasp.

"Ah, it was something wonderful!" gasped the girl. "I cannot tell you all about it because you would not understand. You could not! It was a cup—a cup of gold that has been in our family for hundreds of years! It is the luck of our family! Without it we——"

The girl choked. Words failed her. With hands clasped together and her face thrust forward she sat looking at Robert Henry Blane.

After a long pause The Wasp prompted her to go on. "Yes?" he murmured.

"We are lost without it," sobbed the girl. "My mother has been ill for many years. Oh, if I could show her the cup that was stolen from my father I know that she would get well! You do not understand my people! We are Magyars and we believe in many things that you would laugh at. All the beliefs and hopes of my race were in that cup of gold. All! It was their angel! They had made it real! They had made it a live thing! And--and it is so beautiful that I know it is not destroyed! I know! It was so wonderful that no one could destroy it. When I read your advertisement I thought you might know something of the cup. I have a belief that it is not destroyed. It was so beautiful that no one could destroy it! And I want it now! I want it because my mother is ill. Speak to me! Tell me!"

In her excitement she reached over and clutched the arm of The Texan Wasp. The plaintive note in her voice rang in his ears. It was the soft, primitive note that is found in the voices of people who belong to old races from which a stern civilization has not yet extracted the little nuances of pure emotion. It carried the feel that one finds sometimes in the voices of the keening Irish, in the lament of the Highlanders, in the soft wailing of desert tribes. Her excitement had thrown her back to base; made her again one with the untamed folk of the great Alföld plain!

Robert Henry Blane, with thoughts of the Cup of the Magyars still rioting in his brain, was thrilled by her voice. The soft magic of it swept through his soul like a perfumed zephyr. Her pleading tones possessed a quality that brushed away the cold unromantic surroundings of rented chairs and stiff policemen. It carried him off to the scented wastes of the Near East. It brought to him the odor of crushed marigolds, the smell of musk, the soft singing of the casuarina trees, "the padded silence of the jungle." For a moment he, like the Caliph Al Mustasim, was riding the night winds in search of wonders!

But it was only for an instant. The practical, cool-headed Blane immediately took charge of the situation.

"Who do you think killed your father?" he questioned.

"The gambler, Darren!" answered the girl.

"He says he did not, and I think he is telling the truth."

"'He says he did not?'" murmured the girl, repeating the words uttered by the American. "Then—then you know him?"

"I know him," said The Wasp.

"And you believe what he says?"

"I'm inclined to."

The girl was silent for a minute, then she put a question in a strained whisper. "Who killed him?" she asked.

"I don't know."

"And the cup?" breathed the girl, her voice hardly audible. "Do you know of the cup?"

The Texan Wasp considered the question for a second; then he spoke. "Darren has the cup," he said softly. "I have seen it."

"When? When?" she gasped.

Robert Henry Blane told himself that he was rashly communicative but the girl's voice had a charm that was irresistible. "Last evening," he admitted. "I saw it for the first time. It is a wonderful goblet."

Again the soft hush fell upon them. The big black eyes of the girl were fixed upon the handsome face of Robert Henry Blane.

The Texan Wasp broke the silence. "Now I am going to do some questioning," he said. "Tell me about the driver of your father's carriage?"

"He was of our race," answered the girl. "He was a Magyar."

"And nothing has been seen of him since?"

"Nothing."

"His people? His friends? Have they heard nothing?"

"Nothing."

"How do you know?"

"Because his wife is living here in London," answered the girl. "She came to my mother about five months ago and begged for food. She was starving. My mother fed her because she is from our country. And she told us that she had not heard from her husband since that day."

Robert Henry Blane was alert now. The girl's statement regarding the wife of the Magyar coachman startled him. It was unexpected, unlooked for. It brought him a thrill that he could not altogether explain.

"Do you know her address?" he asked.

"Yes, she lives in a basement in Wellesley Road, Kentish Town."

"Listen," said The Wasp. "Last night I was promised something if I could solve a mystery. I've got a notion that it might be solved. Do you trust me?"

He was on his feet now, looking down at the girl. A splendid athletic figure, a face that possessed that curious air of daredeviltry that made women glance shyly at him as he went by.

For a moment Mademoiselle Thérèse looked up at him, then she answered impulsively. "Why, yes!" she cried. "Of course I trust you! You—you are a gentleman."

"I'm not," said Mr. Blane with surprising promptness. "Yet I have good moments. Did you ever hear of a detective who is known as No. 37?"

"Yes. He was hunting for the murderer of my father."

"Well, I'd like to show him a point. Will you go with me to this place in Kentish Town? We can take a taxi."

"Certainly," answered the girl.

"Come!" cried The Wasp. "Let's go!"

The basement in Wellesley Road, Kentish Town, was not an ideal residence. The Texan Wasp and the girl descended a flight of wet steps, walked through a long passage and knocked at a door in the rear. After a short wait the door was unbolted and a sullen face—unwashed, greasy and surrounded with tangled masses of black hair—was thrust into the passage.

An ill-tempered inquiry as to the reason for the visit was cut short by the sight of the girl and next moment The Wasp and the daughter of the murdered Magyar were in the filthy living room. The wife of the long-lost coachman who had driven the carriage of the Czegléd lord on the day that he kept the appointment with Ferdinand Darren on the road to Cap-Martin, looked from the girl to The Texan Wasp, her cunning, close-set eyes seeking information. Mr. Blane told himself that she was not of the highest type of human development.

The girl introduced Robert Henry Blane as a friend and The Wasp was made immediately aware of the fact that his presence was not pleasing. The tousle-headed lady was nervous and irritable; the lines around her mouth tightened as if an invisible draw string had been suddenly pulled to prevent any ambitious scrap of information from transforming itself into words.

Mr. Blane noted the change. He put a simple question in English but the woman pretended that she did not understand. She asked the girl to translate it into the Magyar dialect, and the draw strings of secrecy around the hard mouth tightened as she listened.

Her negatives were flung out like verbal uppercuts. She had heard nothing of her husband since the day of the murder. Not a word! No, her friends had heard nothing! The devil who had killed the good master had killed her man!

Robert Henry Blane was silent for a moment. He felt certain that the woman understood English perfectly and that the translation only allowed her time to stiffen her denials. He determined on strategy. Once he had lived for a little while near Budapest and now he marshaled in his mind words that he had not used for many years. Suddenly he hurled a torrent of questions at her in her own tongue.

"Don't you know that your husband is here in London now?" he cried. "Haven't you seen him this week? Tell me? When did you hear from him?"

For the fraction of a second the little black eyes of the woman swung from the face of the American and glanced at the

wall immediately behind him. It was but for a fleeting instant, then they were back again, the mouth a thin line of defiance to the attack. She folded her arms and her head rocked mandarinlike as she repeated her denials.

The Texan Wasp was puzzled. His cool gray eyes had noted the quick glance the woman had swung on the wall behind him. He wondered why. He tried to maneuver so that he could look at the place upon which the little beady eyes had fastened for a fleeting instant, but the task was difficult. The woman kept him under close observation.

The Wasp turned to the girl. "I'm sorry," he said. "I think I am wrong. Let me recompense this poor lady for my attack on her honesty. I'm sure that she knows nothing."

He took from his wallet a five-pound note and handed it to the girl. "Please give it to her so that I cannot see you," he whispered. "I hate to see myself as a donor of charity. Do you understand? Call her over to the window."

The girl obeyed. She beckoned the woman to the window and The Wasp, apparently intent only on increasing the distance between himself and the two so that he would not be a witness of the presentation, wheeled carelessly and glanced at the wall.

A broken mirror clung tenaciously to a twisted nail, and thrust in behind the mirror, the end alone protruding, was a yellow envelope! A yellow envelope of poor quality!

The envelope stirred the memory of Robert Henry Blane. It flung up before him a picture of the sitting room in Aynhoe Road where the terrified gambler had shown him the bundle of envelopes each one of which contained a pine needle. It was a brother to those envelopes! It was of the same sickly yellow tint! One of the "penny-half-penny a packet" type sold at cheap stationers!

Robert Henry Blane moved slowly toward the mirror. He stroked his hair with his hand and watched the reflection of the woman and the girl. He watched them intently. The sight of the five-pound note so astonished the muddle-headed one that for a moment she forgot the presence of the big Texan. And in the second that she was gasping her thanks to the girl Mr. Blane acted. With lightninglike swiftness he transferred the letter from the mirror to the inside of his soft hat, tucking it swiftly under the band before bidding the coachman's wife good night.

The Texan Wasp caught the hand of the girl immediately after they ascended from the basement and hurried her swiftly along Wellesley Road into Queen's Crescent. "Quick!" he cried. "Run!"

"Why?" gasped the girl. "What is wrong?"

"She'll be after us!" answered The Wasp. "I stole a letter that I'll wager came from her precious hubby. Hurry! The money has stunned her for a minute but she'll recover in a few minutes."

The running couple turned the corner; The Wasp halted and pulled the envelope from his hat. Beneath a lamp he tore the scrap of paper from the inside and he and the startled girl read the penciled note. It was brief but it carried a vast amount of information to Robert Henry Blane. In the same illiterate hand that had written the words "Count Ferdinand Darren" on the envelopes dropped into the gambler's letter box, was penciled the following in the Magyar tongue:

> Got new room at 59 Sulgrave Road, Shepherds Bush. Going after the mug to-night. He's got it sure. I know. NICHOLAS.

"Was that his name?" questioned The Wasp. "Nicholas?"

"Yes, yes!" cried the girl. "What does the note mean?"

"He's going to try and get the goblet from Darren!" answered the Texan. "When was this posted? To-day! He's trying to-night for it! To-night!"

An empty taxicab came rolling cityward down Malden Road from the direction of Hampstead and The Wasp helped the girl into it. His thoughts were of the house in Aynhoe Road, of the elaborate precautions that the gambler had taken to prevent attack. He wondered about the wired stairs and what would happen to the coachman if he attempted to climb up them in search of the wonderful goblet.

"The Olympia!" he cried. "Hit it up!"

The chauffeur glanced down Queen's Crescent. A wild scream had come from the direction of Wellesley Road. A street lamp showed the running figure of a slatternly woman screaming as she ran.

"Some one wants yer, guvnor," said the grinning chauffeur. "A lady is comin' full steam——"

"Drive on!" cried The Wasp. "She has nothing to do with me."

The chauffeur found the cold eye of the big American upon him and the grin slipped from his face. The taxi sprang forward and the running woman was left to howl her curses to the night.

Down Hampstead Road into Euston and Marylebone Roads rattled the taxicab. Robert Henry Blane fumed and fretted at each holdup in the traffic. Half of London —stupid, sprawling, disconnected London— lay between him and the house of Ferdinand Darren. He wondered what would be the upshot of the coachman's attempt to get the great goblet of the Magyar lord. The taxi rocked through Bayswater, along Holland Park Avenue, swung southward and stopped.

Robert Henry Blane jumped out. "I want you to stay here till I come back," he said. "Just sit in the cab and wait patiently. I will be as quick as I can but if I am hours away don't be worried."

The girl took the hand of The Texan Wasp and her big black eyes were alight with gratitude. "I—I know that you will find for me the cup of my fathers," she said softly. "I know! I must have it because the sight of it will keep my mother alive. You do not know our race! We are superstitious! We are strange and Oriental! Help me! If you can, please get it for me! It carries the good fortune of our family!"

"Wait for me," repeated The Wasp. "I might be long."

"Time is nothing," murmured the girl. "Help me! I will wait."

Robert Henry Blane took the same route to the house of Ferdinand Darren that he had taken on the previous evening. He hurried down Blythe Road into Aynhoe Road. Now it was easier to find the house, as the fog had lifted.

The Wasp looked at his watch as he reached No. 21½. It was ten-thirty. He wondered if the Magyar coachman had already made his attempt to get possession of the goblet. The house was in darkness, the street deserted.

Obeying the instructions given in the note he pressed the bell button four times, slowly counted seven, then pressed it again.

There was no response. For a few minutes the big American stood listening, then for the second time pressed the button in the prescribed manner. He heard the pealing bell in the rear of the house. Yet the door did not open!

Blane recalled the words uttered by the gambler on the previous evening. Darren had stated that he had not left the house for seven years!

Once more The Wasp pressed the bell according to the instructions given him. He listened intently. Not a sound came from within. To the keen ears of the listener on the doorstep there seemed to be in the quiet of the place an actual protest to his continued assaults upon the bell.

Blane stepped back onto the sidewalk. For a minute he stared at the upper windows of the house. then with a little exclamation of astonishment he turned and ran swiftly down the street in the opposite direction to that in which he had come. He was heading for Sulgrave Road in Shepherds Bush, the address given in the note that he had abstracted from the mirror in the home of the coachman's wife. To The Wasp had come a belief that the Magyar husband had already paid his threatened visit to the home of the gambler!

Down Shepherds Bush Road hurried The Texan Wasp. He swung through Melrose Gardens into Sulgrave Road, a barren, ugly street behind which runs the line of the Hammersmith and City Railway. The girl wished for the cup that had belonged to her father and Mr. Blane was possessed of a great desire to bring it to her. He, Blane, had been promised the wonderful goblet on the previous evening if he solved the riddle of the pine needles, and as he had the solution well within reach the cup was actually his property.

The Wasp found the house in which the coachman had a lodging. It was one of a bleak terrace, each house divided into three apartments.

The door of the lower hall was open and Blane stepped into the dark interior. He considered quickly the question of locating the lodger. There were no letter boxes in the hall. In London fashion the postman mounted the stairs and thrust the mail through the door openings.

The Wasp struck a match and glanced at the name on the lower flat. It was "Jones" —plain "Jones" with no initials.

"Bet the next one will be Brown and

the top one Robinson," growled the American. "The nerve of that fellow in a city where a million people carry the name of Jones to stick up the word without any initials."

He cautiously climbed the stairs to the first floor and located the second door. Again he struck a match and glanced at the card tacked to the woodwork above the bell. The householder's name, "Chapel," was printed on the card, but beneath this name, clumsily written in pencil, was another. The Wasp read it with a little thrill of pleasure. It was "Nicholas Grahn." Of the name Grahn he knew nothing, but the girl had said that the coachman's name was Nicholas!

The Wasp stood in the darkness of the landing and considered the means of reaching Nicholas. It was after eleven o'clock. The household was asleep and there was no certainty that the coachman was at home.

As the Texan stood debating the matter there came an interruption. Another person had entered the lower hall. A person who like Robert Henry Blane was evidently not familiar with the names of the occupants. A flash light was turned for an instant on the name of the occupant of the lower flat, then The Wasp thrust himself back into the darkness of the landing as the person came up the stairs.

The unknown stood for a moment at the head of the stairs, then the spear of light flashed out from the torch upon the door. The bearer of the light stooped to examine the name and as he did so he thrust his face into the illuminated area. Robert Henry Blane saw him for a fleeting instant but the instant was sufficient. It was a face that Mr. Blane would never forget. Always the big Texan would remember the cold, merciless eyes that looked like frozen hailstones, the nose bred of battles and the chin that had thrust peace to the winds. The face that had shown for a second was the face of No. 37!

As the torch was extinguished The Wasp crept close to a window on the landing opening on the rear toward the line of the Hammersmith and City Railway. He crouched breathless and waited to see what the man hunter would do.

No. 37 had no scruples about rousing the inmates. He pressed the bell button and backed up this appeal for admittance by rapping loudly on the door. His heavy breathing came to the ears of The Wasp in the silence that followed.

From within the flat came sounds of movement, protesting scraps of conversation—irritable questions and answers. The door opened a few inches, a swath of light fell upon the broad form of the great detective. He was completely visible to Robert Henry Blane.

The detective drove his right shoe into the opening as the door swung back and his voice boomed through the stillness. "I want Nicholas Grahn!" he cried. "Step back! I am the Law!"

He disappeared within the flat and Robert Henry Blane was left on the landing with the words of the man hunter ringing in his ears. "I am the Law!" He repeated the words to himself. They seemed strange and curious. "I am the Law." It was an extraordinary statement.

The Wasp, not admitting fear, lifted the sash of the window on the landing. It opened out on the yard and beyond the yard were the lines of the railway. He tried to thrust the strange remark of the man hunter from his mind. The conceit of the fellow! "I am the Law."

The Wasp peered without. The landing was a dangerous place on which to wait. He thrust his hands into the darkness and discovered that a cement ledge some twelve inches in breadth ran along the wall of the house directly beneath the window.

He climbed through the opening and tested the strength of the ornamental ledge. Scraps of cement fell away but it seemed solid. Cautiously he lowered himself onto it, clinging with his hands to the window sill.

The door of the flat was again flung open. The landing was fully illuminated and The Wasp blessed the thought that had prompted him to find a safer hiding place. No. 37 strode out onto the landing, followed by the flat holder, the flat holder's wife, and their son. The chatter of the three last was deafening. Again and again they assured the man hunter that Nicholas Grahn, their new lodger, had not been home since morning. They were respectable people—this was their main assertion—they knew the vicar, they knew the police, the postmaster, the head of Gapp's grocery on the corner, and they would never have taken a lodger who had trouble with the police. "The imperence o' the feller! What was the world a-comin' to?"

The man hunter cut their remarks short. He waved them back into their flat, telling them that he would wait till Mr. Grahn arrived. His voice showed displeasure. The three hurried back into their apartment, still muttering about their respectability and the injury to their standing that had been done by the lodger. No. 37 was left in the darkness of the landing. The Wasp clung to the window sill and hoped that Mr. Nicholas Grahn would not stay out all night. The ledge was not a very secure resting place.

A clock chimed midnight. Robert Henry Blane wondered about the girl he had left in the taxicab. He wondered about the silent sleuth not more than twelve feet away. No. 37 had not moved since the closing of the door upon the flat owner and his family. He had stood motionless at the head of the stairs, waiting for his man. A tireless hunter. Into the mind of The Wasp there echoed again and again the words he had used when entering the flat. "I am the Law!"

There came a sound of dragging feet in the lower hall. The Wasp listened. Some one was coming up the stairs!

A slow climber to judge by the sounds. The Wasp, listening intently, pictured the man hunter waiting at the stair head. He sensed in a way the joy which the great sleuth took in his work. He was the hunting animal waiting for his prey. A human panther with the law on his side.

There sprang out a spear of light that centered accurately on a frightened face, showing clearly the small, blinking eyes, the loose mouth, the unshaven chin, the big, low-placed ears. The man hunter spoke in a voice that was cold and emotionless. "Don't move, Nick Grahn! Stand steady, man, or I'll send you into kingdom come!"

There was the click of handcuffs, the shuffle of feet, the whimper of a trapped fool. The probing light danced over the captured man. The Wasp saw his manacled hands, the queer, humped shoulders, the cheap clothes. The torch squirted its light downward and he saw more. Nicholas Grahn was wounded. His right trousers leg had been cut away and the leg had been bound up!

No. 37 saw too. He put a string of questions to his prisoner. "Where? How? When?" They were hungry queries that called for immediate answers. The detective thrust his man against the wall. Grahn made noises that suggested the presence of iron fingers on his windpipe.

"I'll tell all!" he gasped. "Let me alone! I'll tell! I went after the cup! I did! Don't hit me! The hound had a trap on the stairs and it blew up. Nearly took my leg off! But I didn't kill him! I didn't! I swear I didn't! He—he died of fright! That's what he did! He died of fright!"

"Who?" cried the man hunter.

"Why, Darren!" gasped the prisoner. "I went to his—to his house at No. 21½ Aynhoe Road! I went after the cup—I went—why—why—what are yer arrestin' me for? What have you grabbed me for?"

The spear of light was on the face of Nicholas Grahn, and The Wasp saw the dreadful horror in the little eyes that were seeking the face of the man hunter in the darkness.

There was a moment's pause, then the detective spoke. "I've got you for the murder of Antoine Vorömartry at Cap-Martin over seven years ago," he said slowly. "You are one of the few long-outstanding accounts on my books. Come on! I'll look into the Darren business later."

The door of the flat was pushed open timidly, the landing was again illuminated so that Robert Henry Blane saw plainly the Magyar coachman being hustled down the stairs by the detective. The prisoner was making queer, disconnected remarks. At times he whimpered like an animal in pain.

Robert Henry Blane waited. Silence came down upon the house. The flatholder and his family went back into their apartment but their terrified whispers drifted out to the keen ears of the Texan.

The Wasp climbed back through the window onto the landing. Cautiously he descended the stairs. He peered out into Sulgrave Road. The man hunter and his prisoner had disappeared. No. 37 had probably taken his capture up toward the tube station.

The Wasp thought of the cup. Hurriedly he reasoned out what had happened. Nicholas had forced his way into the house of the gambler. He had attempted to climb up the stairs and had been injured. The terrified gambler, according to the story told by Grahn, had expired from fright. The question that troubled The Wasp was

whether the Magyar coachman had got possession of the goblet.

Mr. Blane thought that he had failed. Then where was the cup? The Wasp answered his own question. "Why," he murmured, "it must be still in the little wall safe behind the water color!"

At a run The Wasp started back for Aynhoe Road. The real owner of the goblet was waiting for it and he had promised her that he would bring it. He must not fail! Through the nearly deserted streets he tore full speed, indifferent to the notice he attracted from late homegoers.

He wondered what No. 37 would do. Probably telephone to the Hammersmith police station and tell them to send men around to Darren's residence. The Wasp wondered as to his chances of securing the cup. If the police were in possession it might be difficult. But he had promised the girl! He ran swiftly on.

Near the corner of Caithness Road, a block from the home of the gambler, he overtook two hurrying policemen. He slackened speed. The audacity and cold nerve which Robert Henry Blane, one time of Houston, Texas, possessed in quantities unknown to any other person, was immediately put into practice.

"Where is No. 21½ Aynhoe Road?" he demanded sharply. "I've been telephoned to get there as quick as possible. I'm from the Yard!"

"We're going there!" cried the pair. "Come right along, sir. Something has happened there. Chap's been killed, eh?"

"Robbery and murder!" snapped The Wasp. "They've got the man. Let's hurry!"

Running abreast the three turned into Aynhoe Road and bore down upon the house. As they approached they knew that they were not the first comers. The house was illuminated, a policeman stood on the sidewalk hustling inquisitive night owls, another was on guard at the door. The Wasp prayed to the little black-cat mascot that he carried in his vest pocket.

The two officers and The Wasp ran up the steps. The policeman on guard looked at Robert Henry Blane. Blane ignored him.

"'Ow now?" growled the doorkeeper. "Who are you, pushin' yer wye in without as much——"

"He's from the Yard," interrupted one of the two. "We showed him the way."

The doorkeeper wilted under the eye of The Wasp. The American rushed up the stairs where a fat sergeant was poking stupidly at the shattered step that had exploded under the feet of Nicholas Grahn. The fat man looked up, saw Authority in the cool gray eyes that fell upon him, saluted and muttered something about the dead man being in the sitting room on the next floor.

Robert Henry Blane knew his way to the sitting room. It was the room where he had talked with Ferdinand Darren, "Count of Pierrefond," on the evening previous. With long strides he crossed the landing and entered.

The room was in disorder. Everything had been turned upside down. Ferdinand Darren, still wearing the long silk dressing gown, lay upon the couch. A tall, stupid-looking policeman stood watching the dead man, seemingly a little afraid lest the gambler should come to life suddenly and bite him.

The Texan Wasp acted swiftly. He returned the bobby's salute and spoke sharply. "Stand outside the door and keep every one out!" he cried. "I'm Inspector Blane from the Yard!"

The policeman stepped nimbly out onto the landing. The Wasp sprang to the little water color. He thrust it aside and seized the knob of the safe. It was locked.

Robert Henry Blane, perfectly cool, gave his full attention to the combination. No. 37 might be on his way to the house but the Texan was not disturbed by the man hunter's possible arrival. With ear close to the safe he listened as his muscular fingers twirled the knob. Before his mental eyes was the vision of the girl waiting—the girl who believed in him, the girl who blushingly told him that he was a gentleman! He smiled as he recalled her words. A gentleman!

The fat sergeant came to the door. The Wasp heard his throaty questions as the long policeman informed him in a whisper that "Inspector Bline had told him to keep every one out." Round and round went the knob. The Wasp asked himself who was it that had previously called him "Bline?" He remembered. It was the Whitechapel rat that brought the note from Darren. He spun the knob again. It was queer about the English. Their pronunciation of words was so ridiculous.

"Now my name," murmured The Wasp, "is so easy to——"

He stopped abruptly. The little door of the safe had opened. He was looking at the chamois bag within which was the Cup of the Magyars!

Hurriedly Robert Henry Blane transferred the cup to the pocket of his overcoat. He shut the safe and again twirled the knob and pushed back the little water color. With three long strides he reached the door. The fat sergeant was standing beside the tall policeman, the round eyes of the sergeant resembling the bulgy optics of a highly bred Pekingese.

The Wasp spoke sharply. "Sergeant," he cried, "can you pronounce my name? It's Blane!"

"Yes, sir! Bline, sir!" said the fat man.

"Not Bline, confound you!" cried The Wasp. "Blane! Blane! B-l-a-n-e! Now try again!"

"Bline!" cried the sergeant.

The Texan Wasp made a wry face. "Give me your notebook!" he cried. "Quick!"

The perspiring sergeant handed over his notebook and pencil and The Wasp hurriedly wrote a message. It ran:

I thought that your "I am the Law" remark was a little chesty. Also the "You are one of the few outstanding accounts on my books." Chesty stuff, bo! Chesty stuff!

Always yours. ROBERT HENRY BLANE.

"Show that to the biggest man that comes here to-night," he said, returning the book to the dumfounded sergeant. "You'll know him when you see him. He's alive! And I'll wager he can say my name as an ordinary person should say it. Tell him I couldn't wait."

It was thirty minutes after leaving the house of the dead gambler that Robert Henry Blane said good-by to the girl, Thérèse Vorömartry, at the door of a little red-brick house in Chelsea. The girl was beyond herself with delight. She clutched the famous goblet to her bosom and again and again she told the big American of the effect the cup would have upon her mother.

"She will get well!" she murmured again and again. "Oh, I know! I know! And I have to thank you for it! Oh, how can I thank you?"

"It is nothing," said Robert Henry Blane. "Take it up to your mother. It belongs to your family. Tell me one thing before you go. Why does the cup distort the faces of those that look into it?"

"It only distorts the faces of bad people," whispered the girl. "Of wicked people and —and enemies."

"But my face was not the same in it," protested The Texan.

"Oh, it should be!" cried the girl. "Oh, you must look again!" She clutched the sleeve of Robert Henry Blane and pulled him into the little hall where a gas jet was burning. Hurriedly she took the cup from its chamois bag and tilted it high up before the face of the man. Her own face was close to his as he looked; her childish curiosity to see making her momentarily forgetful.

Robert Henry Blane looked. In the splendid yellow interior he saw his own face reflected beside that of the girl and there was nothing evil in the reflection. The look of greed and avarice that the cup had flung back to him on the previous evening was missing. A handsome, smiling Blane looked down at him from the shining depths of beaten gold.

"There!" cried the girl. "I knew you were good! I shall always think of you as —as a Sir Galahad who helped me through a great trouble. Good-by! Good-by! I must show my mother! Good-by!"

She stood on her tiptoes and hurriedly kissed the suntanned cheek of Robert Henry Blane. Then she fled up the stairs. The big Texan stood for a moment in the hall, then he turned and went out of the street door, closed it softly and walked off down the silent street.

He was thinking of Betty Allerton of Boston. In the long ago she had told him that he was "a handsome Galahad from Texas who would do great deeds." He smiled softly.

Another adventure of "The Texan Wasp" in the next issue, October 20th.

Hale and Farewell

By C. S. Montanye

Author of "Simple Simon," "Page Mr. Scandrel," Etc.

Mr. Scandrel watches a romance bloom and a white hope fade—and takes his profits.

BACK in the days of our childhood when we used to drop in to dear old public school to grab off a little in the way of learning, the instructors there had it that the leopard was as totally unable to change his spots as the average street-car conductor a ten-dollar case note. Take it from me, the purveyors of knowledge surely had the correct hashish and no mistake. And this piece of instruction goes just as well for everything else. Take a race horse and hitch him to a milk wagon. For a while he'll be quiet and peaceful but let somebody bellow "They're off!" within earshot and he'll do the same. If a millionaire craved plain mutton stew when in the flower of his youth it's fifteen to one that he'll find the same dish just as tasty when he enters the mid-seventies. That which is bred in the bone does not usually escape through the skin, all wise cracks to the contrary.

If you're sneering at this, how about the habits of the dear old public that are making dizzy bootleggers so rich that they wouldn't think of wearing anything but platinum-lined pajamas to bed?

Mortimer Higgins wasn't a bootlegger but he ran true to form nevertheless. If the leopard-and-the-spot stuff needed any verification Higgins was the bimbo that supplied it. Really, before he got through he had furnished quite a number of people with a dash of excitement. These included Mr. Ottie Scandrel, the popular boulevardier, Franklyn Marvin, the owner of Westwind, that smiling estate that makes the motor men gape when they're wending a merry way through the wilds of Long Island, Hale Marvin, the débutante daughter of the house, myself and a youth who answered to the name of Fitzroy Cadwallader.

Oh, but Fitz was some youth for a fact!

It all dated back to about the time that Shelby, Montana, had discovered the wages of fame are bankruptcy. The month was May and the scene was a rough-and-tough neighborhood in the vicinity of the East River. Our reasons for being there were good and plenty. While returning from Brooklyn, where Ottie had given a friend a laugh by trying to collect a three-year-old debt, Scandrel's gas eater had sprung a leak on the bridge and had limped into Manhattan on three wheels.

Until the boiler had tossed in the towel we had been questing a garage.

"It's funny there ain't none around," Ottie said when we had alighted and set forth on foot. "From the prices these gyppers charge just to take a slant at your axles you'd imagine they'd be six or seven of the snares on every street. Well, we'll keep going until we find one if we got to walk from here to the end of New Jersey!"

A mile or so south we cut across an avenue to take a look down a side street where Ottie thought he remembered once having seen a garage. We turned the corner and

found the street was half blocked by a twenty-ton truck that was shooting a stream of coal down into the cellar of a cut-rate bakery that had more customers than flies. The cart with the black diamonds had an overseer on board in the person of a young man whose height, weight and build made a party by the name of Jess Willard resemble a dwarf who hadn't eaten in a month.

This specimen of the Daily Dozen was picturesquely attired in shoes, trousers and the latest thing in black undershirts. Even from where we stood we were able to see he had shoulders on him wide enough to move a ship, a chest that looked as if it might have been blown up, to say nothing of a waist that a chorus girl wouldn't have jeered at.

And the muscles of his mighty arms were as strong as iron bands.

"Look at that prize saphead!" Ottie chuckled when the big boy climbed up into the tilted top of the truck and began to help the coal down the chute with a piece of broom. "There he is wasting the best years of his life when he could be clouting them stiff in the ring and dragging down important money. Honest, it's beyond me how some of these dumb-bells get fun out of letting some one else clean up the jack. I'll bet a Russian ruby to an English shilling that if I had him under *my* wing I'd be creating quite a sensation with him."

The subject of his remarks let the last of the anthracite slide and dropped down to the sidewalk with the grace of a ballet dancer. With one hand he wound up the coal chute and with the other he carelessly knocked out a cog in the machinery that let the top of the truck slide slowly down and level out.

Then, as if the effort was less than nothing, he picked up the weighty steel tailpiece of the vehicle and threw it in place.

"Fragrant violets!" Ottie muttered. "If strength was baking powder what a swell cake *he'd* bake! Stick around, Joe. I'm aware that dark complexions haven't been popular with the fight fans since that day out in Reno but not to get this bird's name and address would be like burning up dollar bills. Pardon me while I hand him a little gab."

"Leave him alone," I advised. "He's happy as he is."

Shrugging a careless shoulder Scandrel approached the truck. Its caretaker was completing the job by putting the cover of the coal hole back in place.

"Listen, black boy," Ottie began, "what's the idea of doing all this heavy work for a few pennies a day when all that you need is a fancy cap and a whisk broom to get a job in a Pullman? You're all wet. I hate to see you now—Southerners act so intensely stupid. Take my advice and——"

"Where do you get that Southerner stuff?" the other snarled, swinging around. As he did so he passed a bare arm across his forehead to wipe away the sweat and proved that the color wasn't fast. What Scandrel had mistaken for the complexion of an Ethiopian was merely coal dust and nothing more. "What are you trying to do—kid me?" he went on with a growl. "If I wasn't in a hurry to get back to the yards I'd slap you silly!"

Ottie looked at me and began to laugh.

"Ha-ha! This is ridiculously humorous but it simplifies matters somewhat as far as I'm concerned and the fight-loving public. Drop that shovel and put on your coat! I'm going to make you rich and celebrated!"

I looked to observe the effect of his statement. The well-built young man curled a sarcastical lip.

"Yeah? And you're going to make me a present of a satin suit trimmed with solid mahogany buttons, ain't you? Say, you hop heads have got a nerve carrying it out in the street and interrupting people who are working hard. Get away now before I crash you to the ground!"

"Reach for the emergency!" Ottie bawled. "I guess you don't know who I am!"

"That's an easy one," the other sneered. "You're Vincent Morgan, come to crown me queen of the May. Step aside before I crown you first, you dizzy sniffer!"

He would have turned and walked away at this if my boy friend hadn't clutched his arm.

"Awake!" Ottie screamed. "I'm Scandrel, the manager of box fighters! Go over to Broadway and you'll find out what a rep I've got. This party with me is Joe O'Grady and even he can prove it! Leave that shovel be and listen to reason. I want your name and address. I might be able to make something out of you!"

"What—a baboon?"

"A fighter—a pugilist!" Scandrel rushed

on. "You look as if you scale two hundred as you are and you don't seem to be carrying any extra poundage. The build on you alone is good enough to scare half these push-overs out of a year's growth! How do you know that with me looking out for you you won't become somebody? In time I might even fix up a bout with the champeen!"

"What do I want to fight the champeen for?" was the surly answer. "He never done nothing to me."

"Act intelligent!" Ottie ordered. "You look like you can punch and take it. All I want you to do is to let me give you a try-out and if you're one quarter as good as I think you might be we can split up some big dough. Dwell on that. Wouldn't you rather be a fighter than a chambermaid on this bus?"

"What for?" the other shot back. "I got more than enough quarrels on the books with my boss about getting my wages raised than I know what to do with. Why should I fight people I don't know and who never done nothing to me? Fix me up a bout with the general manager of the Eagle Coal Company and I'm yours."

"How much a week are you dragging down?" Scandrel inquired.

"I'm getting four dollars a day now and this is my third year. What business is it of yours?"

Ottie's answer was to dive into the inner pocket of his form-fitting jacket and haul out his leather. Notwithstanding the fact he owned a car he still laid claim to a bundle of bank notes which would have won respect from a head waiter. The chauffeur of the coal truck looked at the roll with the same interest he would have given the Yosemite Valley.

"Here's half a hundred!" Ottie yelped, stuffing that much into the other's hand. "This is merely to show you I'm on the square. Now will you talk business with me or not?"

The black white hope secreted the money, threw on his coat and nodded curtly toward the front seat of his omnibus.

"Climb in," he invited tersely. "I got to roll this car down to the yards and hand in my resignation. If I leave it in the street here I'm likely to get arrested."

"Fair enough," Scandrel murmured. "You sit next to him, Joe," he added, with a nudge.

During our journey downtown we learned that Mortimer Higgins was the name of our host. He was as close-mouthed, however, as if he was up for grand larceny and it was with the greatest of difficulty that we managed to get any information out of him. What we learned was that Higgins was just sweet twenty-five, that he lived in the Gas House district but didn't mind it, that he liked the winter better than the summer and had only one enemy in the world.

That was the general manager of the Eagle Coal Company.

"That bozo," Higgins growled, "is one of the kind that plays solitaire with marked cards. For a fact, his middle name must start with E because he's full of excuses. Every time I paste him for a raise he tells me the boy that owns the company is cutting down expenses and that there's nothing doing. I'm peaceful by nature but I'd like to crash him to the ground just once. What right has a company to make millions a week while I'm only getting four dollars a day?"

"Don't ask me," Ottie said hastily. "I never was good at mathematics. But don't be worrying your head about capitals and laborers. From now on you'll be clicking off four dollars a minute—if you can sock as good as you look!"

The coal yards proved to be in the center of a thickly populated neighborhood where a human life wasn't worth a French dime any time from twilight on. Mortimer Higgins shot through the front gates, drew up beside a building labeled "Office" and began to play "La Bohême" on the siren. Two minutes of grand uproar and the door was flung violently open. Out of it rushed a bald-headed man with a fountain pen in his hand and an angry look in his eyes. Scandrel's discovery informed us that he was no less than the general manager.

"What's all this?" the newcomer chanted. "And how many times have I told you the company does not allow its drivers to ride with their friends? I have a mind to fire you instantly. Instantly, I say!"

Mortimer Higgins climbed to the ground and fumbled in his pocket.

"You boys get right down off that truck!" the general manager hollered at us.

"Be quiet," Ottie murmured lazily, "or I'm apt to give your chin a permanent location at the back of your head."

Meanwhile Higgins had produced a sheaf of documents and was shoving them in the general manager's hands.

"Here are the receipts for the day's work! I lost the key to the ignition last winter but a hairpin will work it. I'm quitting instantly. Instantly, I say!"

The one he addressed sorted through the receipts, looked at Higgins and coughed.

"I'm afraid that you are acting rashly," he said in a tone that was as mild as a fifty-cent cigar. "In an old and reputable concern like this there are chances for advancement that should not be overlooked. In time, if you are diligent and industrious, you might be able to double your salary. And not only that but there's just the chance the president might take an interest in you and let you drive one of his limousines. We strive to be democratic and to——"

"Gimme the wages due me!" Higgins hollered. "In another minute I'll be crying all over your collar. And, say, make it a little hasty. I'm afraid if I stay here much longer I'll lose my temper and cause sorrow to your family. Let's go!"

Once Higgins had kissed the coal yards good-by we took a surface car back to the spot where Ottie's car had succumbed. There was no sign of it. Where it had once stood was a spot of grease and three drops of gasoline.

"Hot dog!" Ottie gasped. "I'll bet it went and melted!"

We were still gaping witlessly at the spot when one of the merchants in the vicinity came out of his delicatessen store.

"You own a car, no?" he stated in a brogue that came direct from Moscow. "You stand it here a while ago, yes? Well, two men come up with a rope and dragged it away. They went by that street, mister!"

"Then we'll go by *this* street!" Ottie yelped, heading in the opposite direction. "Well, well!" he chuckled a minute later, "There is such a thing as luck after all, eh, Joe? I only hope them crooks don't find out where I live and bring the boat back!"

We reached my gym in the Bronx an hour later. If either of us expected signs of extreme interest on the part of Mortimer Higgins we were doomed to disappointment. Higgins betrayed no more excitement over his surroundings than the Westminster Kennel Club would over a frankfurter. We went upstairs and found a couple of local lightweights were getting in shape for scheduled combats by pushing each other around. The usual gang of ornaments were on hand and over in a corner "Philadelphia Frank" O'Shay, a heavyweight with a notorious glass jaw, was industriously pelting one of the bags. The atmosphere was one of excitement, conflict and spirits of ammonia. It thrilled Higgins so much that he could hardly suppress a yawn.

"This," Scandrel said, giving the room a nod, "will be your future training shed. Right here is where you get tightened up for all your big battles. And it's right here that the newspaper boys will be flocking around, once you're famous, and beautiful women will be calling to give you presents of lovely flowers!"

Higgins turned pale.

"I thought," he stammered, "this was a gym and not a funeral parlor!"

"Right here," Ottie went on, "is where you're going to get whipped into condition. This is the place where you're going to learn that a punch isn't a drink and that fancy diving should be done in a tank. Show me just a little something and we'll show the world a lot!"

The ooze didn't get a rise out of Higgins. He turned and watched O'Shay drop a few wicked ones into the bag.

"What's that baby doing over there pounding the sack?"

"That's part of his training," I explained. "He's the Philadelphia Frank O'Shay who once staved fifteen frames with 'Michigan Mike' Morrison. If you could flatten O'Shay you'd have a wonderful chance to rise to great heights. He's a tough card, no fooling!"

"Why should I want to stiffen him?" Higgins replied curtly. "He looks like a good egg and what did he ever do to me? If you're going to make me a champ," he told Scandrel, "why don't you fix it up as soon as possible? I've decided I'll fight him and lick him because I need the title but I can't for the life of me see beating up a lot of others who don't mean nothing at all to me. What's the idea?"

Ottie looked at me and then at the ceiling. Finally he controlled his emotions and touched Higgins' arm.

"Never mind the why's and the why-should-be's. We'll argue that out some snowy night next winter. Just now you're coming downstairs with me. I'm going to

introduce you to the delights of a shower bath. After that I'll fit you out with all the clothing you'll need in the future—trunks, ring shoes and a pair of gloves. Then maybe you and Frankie can step a few together. If you don't want to hit him hard enough to hurt him you don't have to. How's that?"

"Fine!" Higgins answered with some degree of enthusiasm.

Ottie led him away and returned some ten minutes later.

"Listen," he said to O'Shay, "I got a mockie I just now picked off a coal cart. He looks good but so do a lot of phony-jewelry store windows. From his chatter I get the idea he's one of these here—now—pacifics, too peaceful to fight. I want to see if he can take plenty and how it affects him. Here's ten dollars. Tie into him with all you've got. If you can knock him kicking so much the better."

O'Shay leaped at the money as if he had been touched with a hot harpoon.

"You mean that freak you were talking to? I didn't like his looks anyway. I'll punch him groggy, don't worry a thing about that. You pay me ten but you'll get fifty dollars' worth and maybe more! That's a promise!"

"With the exception of that sugar sign up the Hudson, what could be sweeter!" Ottie chuckled. "This boy might be all the world to the coal business but a bust in the eye in the ring."

Some twenty minutes later Mortimer Higgins in the habiliments of his new profession came shyly in. Minus nine pounds of coal dust, the stalwart youth appeared as embarrassed as a girl in a bathing suit a size and a half too small. There was no doubting the gym yeggs would have presented Higgins with a snicker if it hadn't been for his build. That commanded the same respect as a .38 loaded full of bullets!

In his somewhat abbreviated clothing he gave the world a chance to admire his swelling biceps, his sturdy legs and his rippling muscles. If he carried an ounce of superfluous weight it was above the ears. As he stood he looked good enough to give the "Wild Bull of the Pampas" a few exciting minutes.

Ottie did the honors, leading Philadelphia Frankie O'Shay forward.

"This here gentleman," he explained briefly, "will take you on for a couple of chapters. I'll stop you with the Ingersoll. Get going now while we can have the use of the ring."

O'Shay promptly swung up under the middle rope and stood waiting. The studio loungers gathered around with a display of interest. When Higgins entered the ring he looked it over with an expression that said: "So this is pugilism!" and gave ear to the instructions Ottie tossed up to him.

"Get mad!" Scandrel snapped, dragging out his grandfather's clock.

O'Shay immediately began to feel Higgins out with a few light taps that went through the truck chauffeur's guard like raindrops penetrating a ninety-eight-cent umbrella. It was obvious from Higgins' crouch and the way he almost broke his neck blocking feints that his knowledge of scientific slugging was conspicuous by its absence. He dealt out a few that hadn't all his steam behind them. To prove it, one of the punches caught Philadelphia Frankie on the piece of bric-a-brac masquerading as his jaw. The mediocre heavyweight grinned and stuck it out for more.

"C'me on!" Scandrel hollered. "Lay off the fox trot and let's see a little up-to-date action!"

O'Shay, once he got my word, began to slap over some torrid ones. Before Higgins could know what it was all about the young man fell back under a cyclone of furious belts. Cutting loose with all the merchandise he had to brag about, O'Shay rushed him from one set of ropes to the other, hammering him meanwhile with uppercuts, hooks, jabs, swings and straight ones that had Higgins' eyes sticking out a yard and a half. At that, O'Shay couldn't drop him until he had him in a corner, measured him off and timed a left to the jaw that introduced the pride of the coal yards to the Oriental rug on the floor of the ring.

"Right here," Scandrel sighed, "endeth the first lesson. And what a grand build he had on him to be sure!"

Commotion on the part of the bystanders lifted our eyes to the roped inclosure. Bounding up from the pad like a rubber ball, Higgins shot across at O'Shay, his arms swinging like windmills. Yelling something that nobody understood or wanted to the former caretaker of the coal truck collided with his adversary and pulled back a right

hook that landed in a spot directly between Philadelphia Frankie's ribs.

It lifted O'Shay three feet from the floor and hurled him over the ropes and down into the ranks of the spectators who immediately broke cover and rushed for the door! Then, still yelling, Higgins dropped down to the level of the floor, caught two of the crowd that were in the rear and knocked them cold.

He was halfway to the doors when Ottie overtook him and brought back sanity with a rabbit punch.

"Enough!" Scandrel bawled. "This tryout don't include the general public! Get in order!"

Higgins licked his lips and shook himself.

"I'm sorry," he mumbled. "I guess I forgot myself. I didn't want to hurt him but he got me mad and when I get sore I don't know what I'm doing."

Ottie dragged him over in a corner.

"Be mad all the time—you've got the pillows on. The madder you are the more money you'll make. Listen, 'Farewell——'"

"Which?" Higgins asked, puzzled.

"I forgot to tell you that that's your new name!" Scandrel explained. "Farewell Higgins—one punch and it's good-by!"

So that was all arranged.

A month later Farewell née Mortimer Higgins had made considerable progress in the line of shaping himself up for fisticuffs with any of the topnotchers Ottie could lure into the ring. Scandrel was an eighteen-carat buffoon, a pessimistic optimist with more conceit than a girls' boarding school but when it came to instructing a prospect in the art of Give and Take he was all the face cards in the deck. He pulled a Simon Legree on the lad but the result, as demonstrated, proved conclusively that it's a wise manager who knows his own feed bag.

Like most of the big ones, Higgins was slow and considerably awkward. There was no questioning the wallop he carried in each hand. The trouble was that he found it difficult to get his stuff across when matched against any of the gym bunch who knew enough about boxing to hold him off and fight him at long range. Higgins was essentially a slugger who could sock and receive it in quantities without staying down for the maximum toll. When he forgot himself and angered up there was always a spectacular bout in the gym.

Several matchmakers for local clubs who had dropped in to watch the big fellow at work had made tentative offers to Scandrel for a fight but had been turned down as cold as a smelt's eye. Ottie had no desire to rush his charge before the public before Higgins was set for a climb up the ladder. So a couple of more weeks rolled by with Higgins eating and working his head off and his gifted manager touring Manhattan in an imported car which he had picked up for a song and dance in a secondhand plumbing establishment.

"When are you going to send Higgins out to earn his living?" I inquired one warm afternoon when Ottie had dropped in the office to match pennies with himself.

He shrugged.

"Plenty soon—maybe. You know how these two hundred pounders stand with the sport writers. They're all a witticism until they register fifty fights or more, win each with a clean K. O., never get knocked down, never refuse a challenge and always keep trying. I don't intend to let all the work I've put in on the kid run for Sweeney until I'm sure of him. I could get him any number of mills but he'd cop a draw on them as sure as there's a nose on your face—if he didn't *hate* the party he battled with. That's gossip truth. You seen how he acted that first day with O'Shay and you know how he's been acting since. I should be a fall guy for some third-rater who'd take advantage of Higgins' merciful disposition! I'm laughing!"

He went on matching pennies until he owed himself a dollar sixty-nine. Then he stood up and yawned.

"Where are you bound?" I queried.

He was about to answer when a hurried knock sounded on the door. It was repeated, with variations, a few more times.

"Somebody thinks this is a hotel," my boy friend mumbled. "If all the knocking around here was done on the door what a sweet place it would be. Come in!" he bawled.

The door opened and Fitzroy Cadwallader entered the room and our lives. The newcomer's *robes de Park Avenue* were the first thing we noticed. They consisted of patent-leather Boston terriers, a four-inch cuff that got by as a collar, a suit cut from two yards of delicate lavender serge, a pussy-willow neckpiece and a double-breasted waistcoat. In addition to bearing a strik-

ing resemblance to a deceased herring Cadwallader possessed a pair of navy-blue eyes, a fur-bearing upper lip and was so thin that if he had shivered twice he would have slipped through a trousers leg or choked to death in a buttonhole.

"Help yourself to the cake," Scandrel chuckled after our visitor had introduced himself. "Fitzroy Cadwallader, hey? What are you selling?"

"I'm not," the other went on in a nervous contralto voice. "I'm *buying*. Can you direct me to a gentleman who is known as Mr. Scandrel?"

"I'm he!" Ottie said, surprised. "What are you in the market for?"

"Vitality, strength and a robust physique!" was the answer.

Ottie and I traded a glance apiece.

"I'm afraid you've got the wrong address. This is a gymnasium—not a drug store."

Cadwallader took out a solid-gold cigarette case and helped himself to a nail.

"Perhaps I had better explain. To begin with I am one of the Westbury Cadwalladers. We trace—er—back to William the Conqueror, you know."

"Not so good!" Scandrel interrupted. "I date back to Adam, and before he went in the express business at that. Never mind the saps in your family tree. Continue with the vitality thing."

Cadwallader took the rebuff with an undisturbed smile.

"For some time," he went on, "I have been in Wall Street—in the bond business. Close application to my office has left but little time for the rough, strenuous sports that now pass as recreation. That is to say, with the exception of a few games of golf a month, I have almost entirely neglected physical exercise. Now there comes a time when it is necessary that I combine brawn with brain. In a word, I want to be built up."

Scandrel lifted a brow.

"I thought you were in the wrong shop. You want to see an architect."

"I applied at one or two gymnasiums in the business district," Cadwallader continued imperturbably. "In both cases your name was given to me. Please understand that I do not expect you to work miracles. What I do think and know is possible is that if I devote a certain number of hours a day to diligent training and become very strict on the question of diet, I can, within a reasonable time, increase my weight, strengthen my muscles and put myself in the very pink of condition. What say?"

Scandrel didn't. He looked at me, he gazed at the ceiling and then he looked at Cadwallader, who had produced a hand-embroidered handkerchief and was fussing with it nervously.

"When a set-up goes in for this sort of bunk," Ottie muttered, "one of two things are responsible—liquor or a gal. Which is what?"

The gilded youth colored.

"Er—ha-ha—I see that you have guessed my secret," he stammered. "Yes, the most wonderful girl in all the world has fired my ambition. I will confess all. Hale—the young lady in question, I should say—is a typical American girl who loves the great outdoors. Not only does she play marvelous golf, splendid tennis, swim and drive a car but she fairly worships strength and power. I—er—have reason to believe that she would consider me with more interest if I could surprise her with some feat of strength, display my prowess in some striking manner. Money is of no particular importance if I may attain my goal. I must carry out my plan! Will you think it over and let me know? A letter to the Blue Stocking Club will always reach me here in town."

Ottie said that he would and Cadwallader departed.

"Ain't it a snicker the way the girls can stand them up and have them begging like poodles, Joe? All *he* wants is to be made strong and powerful! In another minute I would have been forced to give him the street—the silly mockie!"

"It looks to me," I cut in, "as if this was a chance to collect a little easy sugar. You've got a heavyweight eating three times a day. Here's an opportunity to cut down the overhead. I hope you're not going to pass it up."

He grinned.

"Get calm! The only reason I said I'd think it over was so that I could have a chance to get a line on how good his business is. I guess fifty berries a day ought to be about right. I'll send that in. Then if he turns me down I can cut the price to three dollars a day—American plan."

Fitzroy Cadwallader made no objection to Scandrel's usury. A few days later he showed up at the gym with his dinner pail at noon, worked his head off and quit at

twilight. The members of the Leisure Association that had its clubrooms in the gym thought that Fitzroy was quite the most amusing thing that had happened since Solomon had given the Queen of Sheba a tumble. Knowing Ottie's disposition, however, and having respect for their health, they were careful to conceal their merriment whenever he or the Westbury Cadwallader was in sight.

Burlesque might have had more comicals than Fitzroy in his gym costume but any one who had ever seen him smacking the bag, skipping rope or working with the Indian clubs, doubted it. Cadwallader would have been a panic at the seashore. He was frail and he was pale and he had more bones than your crap games. But despite his appearance he was as game as they were being served. Fitz could not have worked harder if he had belonged to a union. There was a certain grim, unflinching determination to his efforts that soon turned sarcasm to sympathy and contempt to admiration.

"I give him credit on a plate," Scandrel said one afternoon when he was treating Higgins and myself to a roll through Long Island in his car. "The little freak has got more snap than a rubber band. If he was three feet higher and a yard wider I'd have him belting a few of these cream-puff lightweights that are around town. No fooling, *you* could take a few tips off him, Mort."

"I never play the ponies," Higgins replied shortly. "And don't be getting personal. I'm getting paid for my training and he's paying for his. That's where all comparison ends."

He lapsed into silence and Scandrel, anxious to get home to his gruel, turned the beak of the bus around and started back toward ludicrous Gotham. At the time we were traversing one of the North Shore roads that was lined with handsome estates on either hand. Ottie was drinking them in like wine when, without notice, there came into sight a young lady on horseback. It did seem that the nag was clicking off some pretty speed but no one took extreme notice of it until Scandrel suddenly jammed on the brakes and let out a yell.

"Sweet mamma! If that ain't a runaway neither was Helen of Troy!"

The truth of his statement was instantly perceived. Not only was the mustang galloping like mad but the young lady on board had clasped both her arms about its neck and was hanging on for dear life. We heard the thunder of hoofs and then Mortimer Higgins' exclamation. Neither of us understood it until the heavyweight had slipped over the side of the boat and was in the center of the road.

"Get away from there!" Ottie roared. "What stable did you ever work in that you know how to stop horses? Leave that plug run and he'll unwind by himself!"

Farewell Higgins' reply was to tear off his coat and brace himself. The plunging runaway came nearer. Honest, we could almost see smoke coming out of his nostrils. Ottie had turned away but I stared in fascinated horror. There was a breath-taking second of suspense and then Higgins had leaped at the bridle. He caught both reins and dug his heels into the road. If he hadn't been as big as a mountain the broncho would have flicked him carelessly aside. But with two hundred pounds sawing at the bit the pony changed its mind and after some fancy dancing came to a stop. Higgins made sure of it by grabbing the goat's nose.

"He done it!" Scandrel hollered.

The young lady passenger slid safely to the ground. She tucked a fluffy wisp of brown hair in place, looked herself over to see if she was all in order and sighed. Then she turned a button on her cute little scarlet riding coat and faced Higgins with shining eyes.

"You undoubtedly saved my life!" she cried in a voice no different from the sterling mark on silver. "Pedro is a bad actor and father has forbidden me to ride him. This afternoon I felt in rather a reckless mood and so I ordered him saddled—with this result. He got his head back at the crossing and I was powerless to stop him. But I must introduce myself. I'm Hale Marvin."

"Yes, ma'am," Higgins mumbled witlessly.

By this time both Ottie Scandrel and myself were aware that Eve's relative was beautiful enough to have made a hoppie throw away his layout. Eyes, hair, teeth, smile and what not were all perfect and pulse-quickening. Hale Marvin was one of those girls who could make calico look like georgette. It's safe to say that if she had been entered in the Comely Sweepstakes against Diana, Cleopatra, Madame du Barry and the chorus of the Winter Garden she would

have been an even-money favorite and could have beaten the field from here to Peru.

That's how enticing *she* was!

"You saved my life!" she went on to the speechless Higgins. "If you hadn't risked serious injury I know that the end would have been fatal for me. My, how strong you are! And how modest. I don't suppose you even realized your heroic deed."

"Yes, ma'am," Higgins stammered. "I mean, no, ma'am."

"You're just like all heroes," the girl went on, giving him a smile that would have upset an ocean liner. "But you're one hero who is not going to be overlooked. You must come back to Westwind—my home—with me. I want you to meet my father. I want dad to understand what you did."

"I'm terribly sorry," Higgins stuttered, "but the three of us are in a hurry to get back to the Bronx."

"Apple sauce!" Scandrel butted in hastily. "Of course we'll all go up and meet your old man, Miss Marvin. I don't want to take away none of the big boy's glory but it was me that seen you coming and tipped him off to do his stuff. Don't mind the kid—he's bashful to the point of imbecility. Climb in and leave Joe lead Pedro from the back seat. Westwind, hey? I like the sound of the name."

The estate, some two miles distant, turned out to be one of those picture-book places that sound like a gross exaggeration when mentioned by the week-end guest. In round numbers it possessed a marvelous swimming pool, tennis courts, sunken Italian gardens, terraces, arbors and all the rest of the fittings that cost big dough. Only a billionaire, a retired police commissioner or an active rum runner could have owned Westwind.

Once we reached it Hale Marvin turned the bad-acting Pedro over to a groom and rushed us into the library to meet the head of the house. This answered to the name of Franklyn Marvin and looked it. The viceroy of industry took all his breathless daughter had to say and congratulated and complimented Higgins until the former employee of the Eagle Coal Company had ears on him that looked like a pair of red lanterns.

The fact that Higgins was a box fighter apparently made little difference to Franklyn Marvin. But after all, why should it have made any difference? A college education and a knowledge of the correct way to drink soup makes but scant impression on a runaway horse. After a half an hour of flattery Marvin invited us all for dinner. Despite the fact that Ottie almost gave Higgins fallen arches by stepping on his foot the big heavyweight mumbled excuses and queered the party.

Father and daughter accompanied us to the front door. There Marvin stuck a hand in his pocket.

"Have a cigar, Mr. Higgins. Smoke a Corona-Corona."

"One will be enough, thanks," Higgins answered nervously before turning to Ottie. "Er—I guess we'd better start back now. It's beginning to get dark."

"But surely you can come down and have tea with me some afternoon," Hale Marvin exclaimed, giving him a look more intoxicating than anything put up in bottles.

"We'd love to!" Scandrel assured her. "Will Thursday be O. K.—at, say, about three bells?"

The date was registered and we were allowed to depart—to Mortimer Higgins' infinite relief.

"Well, what a cheese hero you are, for a fact!" Scandrel snapped the minute we were out of Westwind. "Ain't you got no brains? That dolly's father is only worth about six billions and fifty-five cents. Even I have heard about him. He's Marvin the multimillionaire!"

"I don't care if he's Henry Ford's employer!" Higgins muttered. "What's his money got to do with me? All them millionaires are a bunch of crooks—like the birds that own the coal company."

"Don't be so dumb!" Ottie snapped. "Look at the gal—anybody with one half of an eye could see she was sold on you. And look at you—rude to the point of having no manners. If you'd have played your hearts right you could have trumped her ace and no doubt gotten in strong. Now it's even money that she'll never want to see you again, having learned what a clown you are."

"What do I care?" Higgins retorted. "Them rich dolls are as bad as their old men. All they think of is powder and paint and rouge and how many lemons in your tea and all that junk. The gal I marry may be weak financially but you can bet she'll be strong enough to do a good day's wash and fling a pot of stew together after. And

she won't have a name like a snowstorm neither. I hope she don't bother with me. I never want to see her again!"

As it turned out Higgins was due to see quite a little of Miss Hale Marvin. Grotesque and ridiculous as it was, his studied indifference only seemed to add fuel to the fires of the young lady's interest. Not only did she use Mr. Bell's invention frequently and daily but even went so far as to start dropping into the gym each morning and pursue Higgins, while he was doing his road work, in a natty little speedster. It was obvious that the rescue he had pulled had made the beautiful débutante his infatuated worshiper.

Discouragement acted on her like a tonic and rudeness might have been etiquette for all the notice she took of Higgins' lack of attention. Don't make the mistake of thinking that she was bold or brazen, because no one could have acted more refined or ladylike—chase him though she did.

The amusing part of it was that while Higgins avoided her Ottie did everything possible to set himself in right with the ringer for Venus. Hale Marvin was as much taken with Scandrel as any of the society leaders would be with a dinner guest who put his feet on the table! She tolerated him only because he was her idol's manager.

While tempus continued to fugit Fitzroy Cadwallader continued to devote his afternoons to the pursuit of strength and power. While not a Hercules in any sense of the word, this error in Nature's column of figures began slowly but surely to reap the reward of perserverance. He had put on some twenty pounds which covered every bone—except his head—had lost his languor and had begun to show the same amount of pep as cayenne. There was a sparkle in his blue eyes, a glow in his cheeks and a certain jaunty alertness to his walk that made one suspect rubber heels until they noticed he featured it even in his nude feet.

To kid him along Scandrel had let him mix it with one or two lightweight boys who were living on hope and existing on charity. They pulled their punches for a dollar each and let Cadwallader make spectacles out of them. The day following the cuffing he had administered to the lads the young aristocrat showed up at my office around tea time and helped himself to a chair. Once seated he began to bat .1000 in the League of Explanations.

"I have a remarkable idea," he began tersely. "The—er—young lady I am interested in seems to be slipping away from me. I might as well tell you frankly that she is Hale Marvin, the daughter of the enormously wealthy Franklyn Marvin of Westwind, Long Island. Hale, the dear girl, as much as admitted she is interested in another and all will be lost if I do not immediately make a tremendous effort to win back her favor. All these weeks I have said nothing about the afternoons I have spent here and little does she realize my present physical fitness. Is that much clear?"

"As genuine Three Star!" Ottie assured him. "Spin the rest of it."

Fitzroy drew a breath.

"It so happens," he went on, "that Franklyn Marvin is giving a dinner and a lawn fête for some of his business associates next Wednesday night at Westwind. I happen to know that part of the entertainment will consist of a boxing exhibition and I feel certain that I can arrange to have Higgins engaged as one of the combatants."

He paused and looked at Scandrel oddly.

"Keep stepping."

Cadwallader leaned slightly forward.

"Wait! Don't laugh! I want to be Higgins' adversary for the bout! Before we go any farther let me explain at once that if Higgins will allow me to go two or three rounds with him and then *apparently* knock him out, I will give you a check for five thousand dollars!"

"You're as crazy as Russia!" Scandrel snapped.

"I'll make it ten thousand!" Cadwallader cried hoarsely. "What is money compared with my future happiness? I'm certain that if Hale can observe me in my new rôle—see me not only hold my own against a huge, formidable brute like he is, but actually trounce him severely, my stock will immediately go far above par. I'm so confident of it that I'm willing to gamble the amount mentioned. And, to remove the stigma of defeat that might hurt his reputation, Higgins can use a *nom de plume* for that night. I can promise you that there will be absolutely no publicity attached to it."

Scandrel got his jaw back in place.

"Ten grand! Give me time to think this over."

"By all means," Cadwallader replied

smoothly. "If you and Higgins reach a decision before eight o'clock telephone me at the High Hat Club. Otherwise ring me up in the morning at my office."

He bowed and withdrew. The instant the door shut behind him Ottie fell off of his chair.

"Ten thousand ducats! Wait until Higgins hears that he's got a chance to make a thousand clear! This Cadwallader must be crazy but what do we care? C'me on, Joe! Let's get the kid before he goes out for dinner and picks up indigestion or something to put him in a grouchy humor!"

He found the former slave of the Eagle Coal Company in the act of emerging from the showers which were still a pleasing novelty to him. Ottie grabbed him before he could escape and handed him the frame. Higgins listened without comment or a change of expression until he was finished.

Then he drew himself up to the last inch of his six feet and showed his teeth—both of them.

"Say, where do you get that stuff? Me lay down for mere money? What amount of it could ever set me right with my conscience? I ought to poke you one for even suggesting it, you blackmailer!" He broke off abruptly, drew a hissing breath and clutched Scandrel so quickly that Ottie sidestepped and tried to use his left. "Wait a minute!" Higgins bellowed. "I'll take all that back! I'll take it back because when Hale Marvin sees me laying stretched out stiff in the ring maybe she'll quit running after me and bothering me! The broads hate losers! I accept!"

Scandrel gave his clock a tumble.

"Fine!" he barked. "I'll telephone the Derby Club at once!"

Cadwallader lost little time in arranging matters. Forty-eight hours later Farewell Higgins received a *billet doux* from Franklyn Marvin stating how pleased the multimillionaire would be to have that young man box at Westwind for the edification of his business acquaintances. The note went on to say that he hoped Higgins would defeat "Hell's Bells" Regan, his opponent. The laugh came when Fitzroy explained that *that* was the name he intended winning under.

"Hale," Cadwallader chuckled, "will indeed be astonished when she learns the identity of Mr. Regan. Oh, but I shall certainly get ten thousand dollars' worth of enjoyment out of it, never fear. Even her father has absolutely no inkling of the plot. I look for total bewilderment on his part, also—to say nothing of a decided change in his opinion of me. Wait and see!"

We did.

The fatal Wednesday night rolled around with Higgins only mildly interested in what was due to break. He and the Westbury Cadwallader had rehearsed the bout several times and were punch perfect. They had decided it was to go three frames, that Higgins was to kiss the canvas twice in each round and that Fitzroy was to administer the sleeping powder toward the end of the third chapter with a slam to the plexus that was to bear every evidence of being bona fide.

"The little freak wanted to make it curtains with a smack on the button," Scandrel laughed when we were over the Queensboro Bridge. "It was with the utmost difficulty that I made him understand stepladders aren't used in the ring. I hope this gets across with them money dukes. I wouldn't want a good guy like Marvin to think we was pulling a nifty on him."

"All I hope," Higgins cut in softly, "is that it gets across with the chicken. Honest, I'd let that little dumb-bell tear me to rags if I was only sure she'd get over that hero stuff and leave me be."

Westwind, once we reached it, was beautifully lit up. So were the majority of the guests. We received a hearty welcome from the admiral of commerce and were then turned loose to wander at will around the sunken Italian gardens where one of Broadway's Class A orchestras was playing jazz as it had never been written before. Lanterns swayed in the sweet night air and there was more color around than in any gal's hand bag.

Three minutes of gape and then a vision in a silver evening creation with fluffy brown hair and eyes that were as dangerous as dynamite, came out of the crowd and greeted us. This was no other than Hale Marvin, so intensely lovely that while Scandrel was piping her off he almost walked into one of the pools by mistake.

"So you're actually going to display your skill and science here to-night!" the enticing débutante cried after she had shaken the hand Higgins reluctantly gave her. "Oh, you simply have no idea how thrilled I am. I know you will triumph and that I shall be

so proud of you. No, I shouldn't say that either. I couldn't be prouder of you than I have always been!"

The man mountain she had pursued so industriously made her a present of a weary look.

"Don't be too sure about me winning. I wouldn't be surprised if——"

"Pay no attention to him," Scandrel cut in quickly. "He's always like that. If gloom was ink he could write more letters than them cuckoo movie stars get in a year. He'll win by the width of the Atlantic!"

"I'm sure of it!" Hale Marvin cried softly. "Come," she said, taking the helpless Higgins by the arm. "Before the call to battle sounds there are several things I must talk to you about. And we have the cutest little summerhouse just back by the arbor."

There was no sign of Fitzroy Cadwallader until a few minutes before the opening of hostilities. A regulation ring had been pitched on the lawn to the left of the gardens. Camp chairs circled it and high-powered electric lights dangled from wires above it. It looked like the real thing and no mistake—with Marvin's millionaire guests lounging about and a society man playing the part of referee in an open-work evening suit. It was obvious that the gallery had dined heavily on liquids as well as solids.

"This is made to order for us," Scandrel whispered, once we got a line on the fact Volstead had been foiled again. "They're just in the mood to be amused and they won't be ready to razz both boys if their stuff is raw."

Farewell Higgins entered the ring first and went to his corner with his seconds. Terrific handclapping on the part of Hale Marvin, seated on the west side of the roped inclosure, sounded as he squinted at the electric lights. Higgins gave her a surly nod and promptly turned his back on her.

"Equal that for politeness!" Scandrel hissed. "If the old man don't have him flung out I'll be greatly surprised. "He was about to add something when he suddenly stiffened and stared in the direction of the public-library garage which had been used as a dressing room for the warriors. "Hot tomato! Take a look at the first part of the parade, Joe!"

I turned and saw Cadwallader approaching, followed by a number of gay young blades who were acting as his seconds and handlers. Fitzroy was wrapped up in a two-hundred-and-fifty-dollar bathrobe. He strode blithely down to the ring, entered it and turned toward the audience.

The sight of him was a signal for not a little consternation.

"It *is* Fitz!" we heard the silvery soprano of Hale Marvin exclaiming.

The next minute Franklyn Marvin was on his feet.

"What kind of monkey business is this, Cadwallader?" he bellowed. "'Where's Hell's Bells Regan—the pugilist engaged to spar with Mr. Higgins?"

Fitzroy shed his kimono with a careless gesture.

"Right here, Mr. Marvin! I hope you are enjoying the surprise as much as I am. Some time past I adopted pugilism as a hobby. Without egotism, I think I can truthfully say I am at the top of my form and perfectly confident of winning. Mr. Scandrel can bear witness to the fact that in the first two tussles I engaged in, I registered K. O.'s and——"

"You're off your nut!" the multimillionaire roared, champing on his cigar. "Get out of that ring before you're carried out!"

Ottie, putting mental wings to the ten thousand bucks, lost little time in taking the center of the stage.

"That's straight, Mr. Marvin! Fitz—I mean Regan—is as tough as they come. He's a fighting fool for a fact and I only wish you could have seen him in his first two bouts. My boy outclasses him and no doubt wins but it ought to be a rough souffle, no fooling. You take my word for it!"

Franklyn Marvin shrugged and sat down. The referee got busy with a typewritten set of instructions and I took a peek at Hale Marvin. Her eyes glowed like stars and her beautiful face was flushed—naturally. She was as excited as a child taking a first ride on a scenic railway and could not have been more interested if the French Revolution had been going on above her. There were three more minutes of gab before some impoverished Wall Street magnate, playing the part of timekeeper, pulled the bell and Scandrel slid down beside me.

"Now the fun begins, Joe! Watch 'em step!"

It is quite possible that a close student of scientific swatting could have detected the

flaws in the first-round mix-up. But none of the millionaire guests looked for them. They took appearances at face value and let it go at that. And really, Mortimer Higgins gave a perfect impersonation of a lumbering truck horse trying to slam the bad news over on a stinging wasp that wasn't still for a minute!

The wasp, as aoted by Cadwallader, was the real article. Fitzroy hooked and jabbed and let Higgins pursue him from corner to corner. He only stood still long enough to send in a flurry of punches and when he dropped the big heavyweight he had the spectators on their feet howling for a quick finish.

"This is so ridiculous as to appear ludicrous!" Scandrel laughed, as Higgins slowly climbed to his feet when the count was one from the end. "Don't it make the Dempsey-Gibbons go look like a fight between errand boys? On the level, Ziegfeld ought to use this in his show. It's a folly in itself!"

The second round ended with Higgins ready for the towel. As an actor he had the Barrymore brothers looking like amateurs. It was perfect acting and any proof needed that it got over big could be had by a glance into the round, excited eyes of the daughter of the villa. Hale Marvin had reduced one handkerchief to shreds and was starting on the second!

When the third spasm began the expensive guests at Westwind had thrown decorum overboard. Hell's Bells Regan started a fresh offensive against the groggy Higgins and the noise must have been heard as far as Times Square. Even Franklyn Marvin, completely forgetting who had stopped Pedro, the charging palfrey, stood on his seat and ordered Cadwallader to put over the slumber punch.

In view of the noise and confusion the youth who traced directly back to William the Conquerer can be forgiven for losing his mental balance. Actually imagining that he was really winning he ceased to remember the rehearsals in the gym and tore into Higgins with everything he had. Before the astonished heavyweight knew what it was all about a smart left hook caught him directly on the end of his beak and snapped his head back like an elastic. From our position we could see the look of pure amazement that flickered across the face of the ex-truck attendant—an expression that gave way immediately to a scowl of fury.

"You dumb freak!" he yelled. "I'll put you on ice for that!"

"Sugar papa!" Scandrel groaned. "He's *mad!* Now——"

He was cut short by a medley of shrieks and cheers. We turned our attention back to the ring and found that Higgins had Cadwallader exactly in the center of it. He pulled back his right and then jammed it over with the rapidity of lightning.

As in the case of Philadelphia O'Shay, the boy with the telephone exchange for a first name, shot over the top rope and hit the grass below the ring with a thud that shook the gilded minarets of Westwind!

"Get your hat!" Ottie moaned. "The party's over!"

But it wasn't—quite.

Another round of minutes and Hale Marvin stood a foot away from the amazed Mortimer Higgins, stamping her foot with every indication of extreme indignation.

"Oh, you bully, you brute!" she cried in a trembling voice. "To strike a man half your size! And I thought you were a hero! I thought you were the perfect cavalier! Go—go quickly! I never want to see you again!"

"Yes, ma'am!" Higgins replied, smiling for the first time in weeks.

A month after Farewell Higgins had said good-by to pugilism forever and the morning dailies were devoting some space to the news of Miss Hale Marvin's engagement to Mr. Fitzroy Cadwallader. Ottie and I, while crossing Sixth Avenue, escaped a near-beer truck that rounded the corner on two wheels, by an inch and a half.

"Watch your step, you blockheads!" the chauffeur of the van yelled. He was about to add something else to the remark when he suddenly applied the brakes, climbed down and came over to us. "Say, I thought you two looked kind of familiar. How's tricks?"

"Higgins!" Scandrel exclaimed. "So this is what you turned down big jack for, is it? Pardon me while I turn away to smile. Here you are back to what you come from when if you had used your head you could have been married to that Hale Marvin rib, dolled in a diamond suit and waited on by six or seven butlers."

"Be yourself!" the big boy snarled. "I never said nothing but that night while me and the freak were getting dressed in the

garage one of the chauffeurs told me the name of one of the sixty-five companies Franklyn Marvin owns. I should do him the favor and take his silly flapper daughter off his hands when——"

"Just a minute," Scandrel interrupted. "I don't make you at all. What does old man Marvin own?"

Higgins grinned like a wolf.

"The Eagle Coal Company! That dive where I worked my head off for twenty-four berries a week. I'm getting thirty on this job and I expect to get married in October. Well, so long. Give my regards to the champ when you see him!"

Fancy that!

More stories by Mr. Montanye in future issues.

THE HEROINE OF CHÂTEAUDUN

OCTOBER the eighteenth will be the fifty-third anniversary of the obscure but none the less noteworthy exploits of Laurentine Proust, whose heroism during the vain defense of the city of Châteaudun in the Franco-Prussian War has just been rewarded by the French government, tardily enough, with the bestowal of the Cross of the Legion of Honor.

She was just turned eighteen on that eventful day when the Prussians stormed the gates of her native city, which lies a short journey south of Paris, on the banks of the Loire. The city was defended only by a regiment of sharpshooters and a ragged rabble of townsmen, and was doomed in advance. Instead of fleeing with the women and children, Laurentine Proust remained with her father, a humble day laborer. In spite of protests she followed him to the defense of the city gates and took up her stand by his side.

An officer observed her and ordered her off. She refused to leave. "My place," she cried, "is beside my father. If he falls I shall be here to bear him to safety."

A soldier standing near, the story goes, flung his musket away and turned to run.

"Why do you flee?" said Laurentine Proust.

"My musket is broken," mumbled the soldier.

"Here is another," she replied, snatching a gun from a heap on the ground.

"It's a different kind," persisted the soldier. "I don't know how to work it."

Laurentine threw open the breech of the weapon, loaded it, took aim, and fired.

"There," she said, quietly. "It is a simple matter."

And the soldier, shamed into courage, took the musket and returned to his post.

All that day, the French girl stuck behind the ramparts under devastating fire, bringing up and distributing ammunition, filling the canteens of the men, passing out rations, rendering aid to the wounded, comforting the last minutes of the dying. Not until the general retreat began did she and her father turn their backs on the enemy, and when they finally left the ramparts Laurentine Proust was stumbling under the weight of a wounded man whom she guided to comfort and safety.

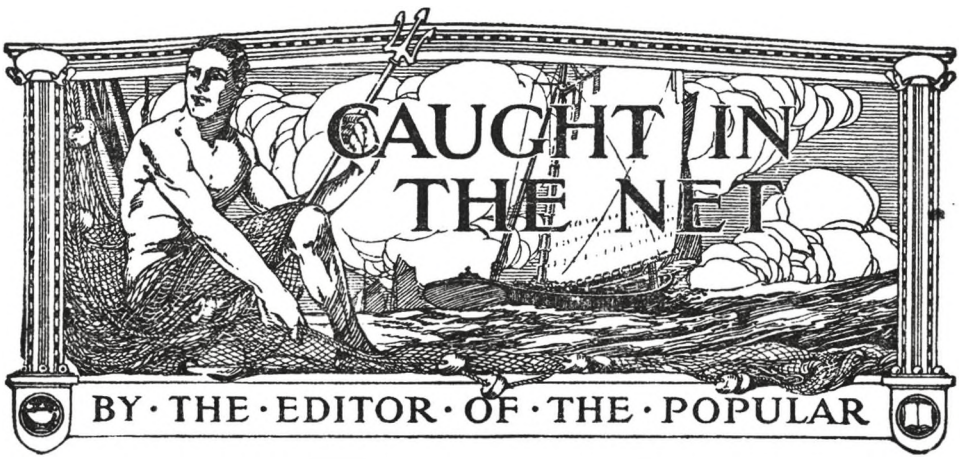
On October 20, 1871, the municipal council of Châteaudun recommended her to the national government for award of the Legion of Honor. The award was not forthcoming, and two years later the councillors of Châteaudun, "at a loss to explain this denial of justice," conferred upon her a special medal to commemorate her heroism.

Meanwhile the "Heroine of Châteaudun," as she was now known to her townspeople, had all but passed from public ken. For years she worked as a servant, supporting her parents. Then she became a saleswoman in a little news shop.

But the colonel who had commanded the sharpshooters at the gates of Châteaudun remembered her. An old and infirm man, he returned to find her, when she herself was turning gray. She became his wife, Madame the Colonelle Ledeuil, when she was fifty, and tended him through his declining years until the grave claimed him.

To-day she presides over her own little book shop at Châteaudun. It was there that word was brought to her that she had at last received national recognition for her deeds of half a century ago.

"But," said the little old lady of seventy summers, "what for? It was nothing. Any one can be a hero when France is the stake!"



EXPERIENCE AND ABILITY

A BUSINESS leader tells the story of one of his younger and more able lieutenants whose career narrowly avoided disaster in the early stages by very reason of the young man's ability.

"Young Jones was a very capable citizen," says his chief, reviewing his lieutenant's record, "and I knew it perfectly well. The difficulty was that Jones himself knew it too. He was aware that men of far less inherent talent than himself were working in better jobs than he held. He could not see the logic in the arrangement and he began to fret. He had all the ambitious impatience to get ahead fast that characterizes the rising generation. Finally his balked ambition got the better of him. He handed in his resignation. But he was too good a man to lose casually. I called him in and talked to him for an hour.

" 'Why are you quitting?' I asked him.

" 'You promoted Brown over my head,' he told me. 'I am perfectly sure that I am an abler and more valuable man than Brown. Your firm doesn't seem inclined to recognize ability.'

" 'Brown has been with us three years,' I said. 'You are just completing your eighteenth month. Did you ever consider, Mr. Jones, that experience has a cash value! I will concede, for the purpose of this discussion, that you have unusual inherent ability. Perhaps you are an abler man than I, even. If ability alone is the measure of business value, why don't you apply for my job!'

"Then I began to ask him questions about the business. I supposed various problems he might be called upon to meet if he were advanced to higher responsibilities. His answers were intelligent, but they were academic—impractical in many cases. I was able to rake up the past and prove to him from experience how easily simple situations can be turned into minor catastrophies through ignorant handling. The upshot of our conference was that Jones stuffed his resignation in his pocket and went back to work, convinced that it takes more than pure gray matter to make a sound business man—or any other kind of successful man, for that matter."

The world is full of Jones', impatient young men who believe themselves undervalued by their chiefs. They do not understand that latent ability is of relatively small value until it has been ripened and fructified in the sun of experience. Yet a few moments' consideration ought to show them their error. It is true that some men are born to greatness—but how few they are. Most men work slowly to success. And they work along well-defined lines. There is no reason to suppose that because a man is an outstanding success in his chosen field he must necessarily be successful in any other field. It would be an absurdity to ask the great surgeon, who earns fifty thousand dollars a year, to step into the shoes of the equally great manufacturer who earns a like amount. Ability to utilize experience is what has

made each great, but it is the experience that they use in practice, not the bare ability.

Ability is a necessary attribute of success. But alone it is not a salable commodity. It cannot be safely applied to any problem until experience has taught the technique of application.

We heard of a master workman once whose product was incomparable. A rival workman could not understand the perfection attained by this man.

"I ought to be able to make these things as well as you," said the rival craftsman. "I have the ability, right enough. You must have special tools. What tools do you use?"

The master workman answered deliberately. "The only tools I use that you haven't got," he said, "are a lifetime of experience—and lots of patience."

SUN POWER

A MAN held up a potato. "If I only knew how to use the power that the sun has put into this tuber," he said, "I could probably run my car for a hundred miles!"

His whimsical remark brought to mind the scheme that Dean Swift had for using the stored-up sunshine in cucumbers.

Whether it is coal or oil or water power, we must go back to the chief source of all light, heat and energy—the sun. At present we can make only indirect use of its force, but when the happy day comes that we shall be able to make direct use of the power of the shining sun, then indeed may we boast of achievement rivaling that of Prometheus.

For ages scientists have experimented with the harnessing of the rays of the sun for industrial and domestic purposes, but while parabolic mirrors have been constructed which burned ships of an enemy, cooked dinners, and even turned motors, the machinery has always proved highly impracticable when applied to any large scale of service. Captain John Ericsson, of *Monitor* fame, spent $100,000 upon sun engines, but finally quit the expensive, disheartening task.

Many inventors have tackled the problem without success. It has been calculated that the sun power wasted upon the Desert of Sahara would do the work of the world. Physicists tell us that at any sunny noon hour we have about 5,000 horse power of energy per acre pouring upon us from Old Sol.

However, we can hope the day is near when some genius will discover the way of employing not only present floods of sunshine, but perhaps also the stored-up sunshine that has been soaking into the rocks for millions of years. This is not so fantastic if you consider the mysterious force pent within the atom. And it is a comforting thought when you hear of projected coal strikes, of dollar gasoline, of water power only to be developed at prohibitive cost.

HAUGHTON AT COLUMBIA

EVERY football fan is interested in two problems this fall—what his favorite team is going to do to its dearest enemy and what Mr. Percy D. Haughton, founder of the Harvard coaching system, is going to be able to do with the team which will represent Columbia University.

Columbia's gridiron record since the New York university returned to football after a long absence during which the game was changed radically has not been an impressive one. There have been some good Columbia football players but no really good Columbia football teams. Various explanations have been offered for this unsatisfactory showing; perhaps the most convincing is that because of Columbia's lack of prominence in football boys ambitious to excel in that sport have entered other colleges. Mr. Haughton's engagement as coach should change this; and his genius for building up winning football systems should put Columbia back where that college belongs in the football world—with the leaders.

Even with Haughton leading it will take Columbia more than a single season to climb the heights. The effects of his coaching will be more apparent next season than this. He is a firm believer in drill in the fundamentals of the game and the development of good individual players into pieces of football mechanism that fit perfectly into the team machine. He insists upon strict discipline and careful training. Trick plays have little lure for him; he thinks that a team that has been taught a moderate assortment of plays that it can perform perfectly is a more likely winner than a team with a large variety of half-learned plays and a habit of fumbling the ball. Above all, he believes in the spirit of fight.

Columbia's team is not likely to do anything especially startling this fall. It may lose its big games. But it will play sound football and hard football from kick-off to the last whistle. And a college whose team does that need feel no shame, no matter what the score may be.

A REAL ACHIEVEMENT

"WHAT has the airplane ever done in a practical way, what can it ever do?" Thus the Missouri skeptic who desires to be shown how aviation fits into everyday commercial life. The skeptic will admit willingly that airplanes helped materially in the winning of at least one war, that they have spanned oceans and continents, but he asks to be furnished with one convincing achievment of the airplane in the dollars-and-cents field.

Let him, therefore, consider the following.

During the first fifty-five months of operation the United States air-mail service accomplished 90.39 per cent of all deliveries intrusted to it. It traveled over four and one half million miles during this time, averaging over eighty-four thousand miles monthly. It carried over 150 million letters, an average of nearly three million letters every thirty days. Of the twenty-five thousand service flights scheduled during this period, less than a thousand were not completed.

Thus baldly stated, the record of the air mail for its first four and one half years of existence is not to be sneezed at. But the story is not yet all told. Consider that the accomplishment was made under anything but ideal conditions. Twenty out of the fifty-five months during which our mail planes have operated were months of storm. Flying in the face of contrary winds, rains, snow, sleet, hail and fog they still upheld their schedules. Moreover they flew without any appreciable assistance from the ground. Their routes were not marked by signs and beacons. They were denied the refuge of intermediary ports of safety. Practically all the safeguards that render transport by rail and water secure were absent in the case of these air carriers. Yet they hung up a record of service that need not blush by comparison with any other vehicle of travel. And they did a job that can be valued in terms of hard cash.

To the man who wants to know what the airplane can do we commend the records of the United States air mail. He will find there a story of human pluck and energy that amounts to heroism and a romance of practical achievement that has few parallels in the history of transportation.

GOOD WILL TO ANIMALS

EIGHTEEN years ago a New York woman spent a summer traveling in Europe. Her enjoyment of the Old World was marred by the fear that a dog she had left at home would get lost and wander the streets suffering the miseries of a friendless animal in a large city. When she returned home her dog was safe, but she didn't forget her fears. The woman's name is Mrs. Harry U. Kibbe and she now is president of the Bide-A-Wee Home Association for Friendless Animals, an organization that deserves the interest and support of every animal lover. Some time ago we mentioned the Bide-A-Wee Home and since then a woman reader of THE POPULAR who was one of the early members has been good enough to write us about Mrs. Kibbe's work. She says in part: "The credit for Bide-A-Wee is due

Mrs. Kibbe. A woman with many social advantages, she gave her whole time and strength to establishing the home. She worked day and night, not alone with her brains but with her hands, caring for and cleaning the dirty and sick animals that were brought in." Since its establishment the home has cared for well over a hundred thousand animals. Good homes have been found for almost three quarters of the dogs and for more than half the cats that have been fortunate enough to fall into its hands. Bide-A-Wee goes further than most organizations of its kind. It stands for the promotion of kindness to animals as well as the prevention of cruelty. Its fundamental principle is the preservation of life instead of extermination. The bedraggled animal taken to the home is fed and cleaned and medical attention given if it is needed. If a good home cannot be found for it at once the animal is taken to the association's country shelter and given another chance. In addition to this work, the Bide-A-Wee was the first organization to operate a free clinic for the animals of the poor.

We hope that some day every city in the country will have a home for animals modeled after the Bide-A-Wee Home—and that each one will be as fine a memorial to Mrs. Kibbe's great-hearted work as is the New York organization.

POPULAR TOPICS

HERE is a list of the ten richest men in the world. We can't guarantee its accuracy, for estimating vast fortunes is more or less guesswork: Henry Ford, 550 million dollars; John D. Rockefeller, 500 million; the Duke of Westminster, 150 to 200 million; Sir Basil Zaharoff, 100 million; Hugo Stinnes, 100 million—how many marks would that buy?—Percy Rockefeller, 100 million; Baron H. Mitsui, 100 million; Baron K. Iwasaki, 100 million; J. B. Duke, 100 million; George F. Baker, 100 million; the Gaekwar of Baroda, 125 million; T. B. Walker, from 100 to 300 million. Ford made his fortune in flivvers, the Rockefellers in the stuff that makes them fliv; the Duke of Westminster's fortune is in land that was left to him; the Gaekwar of Baroda got his in the same easy fashion; Mitsui and Iwasaki are in "big business" in Japan; Zaharoff's fortune is based on Vickers guns; the Duke money came from tobacco; Baker's from steel and railroads, among other things; and Walker's from lumbering in the Northwest.

IS it not probable that some of these richest men of the world, when judged by worth-while standards, are among the world's poorest men? No, it isn't. The idea that men who have a great deal of money get very little out of life may be comforting to certain philosophers but we doubt if it works that way in practice. Money opens the doors to many pleasant and valuable things, and we think that most—not all—rich men use it for that purpose. But money, like almost everything else in the world, can be bought at too high a price.

WONDER what Cadet Emilio Aguinaldo and Cadet Frederick Funston had to say to one another when they met as classmates at West Point last July? Twenty-five years ago Cadet Funston's father, the late General Frederick Funston, captured Dom Emilio Aguinaldo, Cadet Aguinaldo's father, by a brilliant display of catch-as-catch-can warfare, and broke the back of the Philippine insurrection. Afterward they became good friends.

THE tobacco-using habit is increasing rapidly in the United States. Before the Civil War the average man consumed less than four pounds a year. Now the per capita consumption is eight and one-half pounds. The use of chewing tobacco is decreasing; the use of cigarettes increasing. In 1895 we manufactured four billion

cigarettes; now we manufacture sixty billion a year. The United States leads the rest of the world in tobacco production. North Carolina is the leading State, Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, the leading county, and Hartford County, Connecticut, where many acres are devoted to the cultivation of shade-grown tobacco, leads all the counties of the nation in crop value.

MRS. PENNY, wife of J. C. Penny of chain-store fame, left her husband a fortune of a hundred and fifty thousand dollars. There must be some truth in the old saw about a Penny saved and a fortune made.

THE editor of the *Coal Trade Journal* says that if coal is consumed at its present rate it will be six thousand and thirty-three years before the available supply of this country is exhausted. What worried householders last winter wasn't how many thousand years the supply of coal in the earth was going to last; they were more concerned about how many hours the few lumps left in the bin would keep the home fires smoldering. A ton in the cellar is worth a hundred in the mine.

LITTLE indeed does it mean to our beerless citizenry, but in Germany there has been built a "King of Casks" that holds 66,250 gallons of beer, enough to keep even a German family supplied with that beverage for a long span of years. Ambitious home brewers may be interested to know that this superkeg measures 24 feet 6 inches across the head and is 21 feet high. An unhandy piece of kitchen furniture should Brother Anderson and his Anti-Saloon League pals drop in.

PANA, Illinois, hereby is awarded the world's championship for commercial rose growing. Its present production is more than fourteen and a half million roses a year, and additional acreage devoted to this purpose soon will raise its production to twenty-five million a year.

OLD GLORY is going to have its proportions changed, but its meaning will remain the same. After extensive experiments the government's Fine Arts Commission has decided that the flag is too long in proportion to its width, and has given official approval to a ratio of 1.67 to 1, in place of the present 1.90 to 1.

IT'S an appropriate slogan that the Motorists' League for Countryside Preservation has adopted for its own: "Clean Up As You Go." It will be familiar to a certain type of auto driver—the wild-eyed citizen who for years has been cleaning up the pedestrian population as he goes at illegal speed. The slogan of the new league, however, means that its members should clean up the litter of lunch boxes, Sunday papers and so on that too often is left in the country as a reminder that city folks have been visiting the great open spaces where men are men—and often mighty untidy ones.

UP in northern Ontario last June they used an airplane to carry voters to the polls. Votes came high, but they had to have them.

AMERICAN raisins are favorites the world over. This year's raisin exports are estimated at 100 million pounds, twice as much as for the fiscal year 1922. In 1913 our raisin exports were only 16 million pounds. Great Britain is our best customer.

Four Bells

By Ralph D. Paine

Author of "Anchors Aweigh," "First Down, Kentucky!" Etc.

WHAT HAPPENED IN PREVIOUS CHAPTERS.

Colonel Fajardo was not a man to be lightly crossed in love. Not that that made any difference to the mountainous second officer of the *Tarragona*. Dick Cary's Devon forbears, sailing under the flags of Drake and Hawkins, had played at love and death with grander and greater men than the saturnine *comandante* of this sleepy Colombian city. As a matter of fact, nothing was farther from Cary's mind as he strolled the moonlit streets of Cartagena than the *comandante* of the port. He was thinking of Teresa Fernandez, the plucky little stewardess of the *Tarragona*. To-night, in the moonlit patio of her uncle's home, she had introduced him to a new Teresa, no longer a capped and aproned stewardess but a grand lady whose pedigree traced back beyond the days of the Spanish conquistadores and into the glittering courts of Castile and Aragon. She had introduced him, too, to old Ramon Bazán, her uncle, wrinkled with years and warped with quaint eccentricities. She had showed him the bronze bell that hung from an oaken beam in the courtyard, and she had told him its strange story. Once it had rung the watches on a high-pooped galleon, *Neustra Señora del Rosario*, the gaudy vessel commanded by her ancestor, Don Juan Diego Fernandez. But there had come a day when an unseen hand had tolled four warning peals on the bronze bell. And that night the vessel of Don Juan was a charred hulk, her treasure a prize of the sailing men of Devon, and her commander a prisoner. The bell was all that was saved to Don Juan Fernandez of his ill-fated treasure ship. And, according to Teresa, the same unseen hand that swung its clapper on the eve of the looting of the *Neustra Señora* still tolled four bells whenever disaster threatened a Fernandez. The bell and its story had impressed Dick Cary. He walked slowly through the deserted streets of Cartagena now, thinking of Teresa, and of the bell. He had forgotten Colonel Fajado completely. But Fajado had not forgotten Cary. Slinking silently in the shadows behind the huge American trailed five sinister figures—Fajado's hired bravos. Suddenly they closed in on their prey. When the fracas subsided, two of them were dead, another dying, a fourth fleeing in mortal terror. But on the rough-paved roadway lay the second officer of the *Tarragona*, Fajado's rival, a knife between his shoulder blades. And a fifth bravo was speeding through the shadows to tell the tale to the *comandante* of the port.

(A Five-Part Story—Part II.)

CHAPTER VII.

THE MAN WHO LIED.

THESE last hours before the sailing of the *Tarragona* made the indolent wharf bestir itself against its inclination. It was a pity to disturb the tranquil noontide when all Cartagena closed the shutters and went to sleep. In its baking, quivering streets the proverbial pin would have dropped with a loud report. However, for every departing passenger many friends exerted themselves to go down to the steamer, even though the voyage might be to no farther away than Santa Marta or Porto Colombia. The promenade deck was like the stage of an opera, tears, embraces, perfervid dialogue, animated choruses surrounding the excited actors swollen with sudden importance.

The railroad whose tracks ran out upon the wharf shared this intense excitement. Belated freight cars filled with hides and sacks of coffee came rolling down in frantic haste. It was always that way, a general air of surprise, almost of consternation that the steamer actually proposed to sail on time instead of mañana. Why, she was mad enough to leave passengers, influential people of Colombia, and heaps of coffee and hides, even if they were only a few hours late. It was discourteous, to say the least of it.

Amid this confusion and noise Colonel Fajardo moved like an imperious dictator. He was unmistakably the *comandante* of the port. Thievish idlers fled from the gaunt figure in the uniform of white with the medals and gold stripes. A scowl and a curse and the traffic untangled itself to let a porter pass with a trunk on his back or to give room to an American tourist buying a green parakeet and the beaded bags woven by the Indian women.

Teresa Fernandez desired another interview with Colonel Fajardo. It was imperative. To make a scene on board the ship, nowever, was repugnant to her sense of decorum, of her fidelity to the company's service. This difficulty perplexed her. She was jealous of the ship's good name. She was a deep-water sailor with a sailor's loyalties and affections for the ships she sailed in.

Her eyes followed the movements of Colonel Fajardo who found much to do on the wharf. She had certain questions to ask him. Liar that he was, the odds were all against his answering anything truly but the chance would be offered him. Justice demanded it. Intently she watched him as he stalked to and fro. She was singularly unmoved by impatience. What was destined to happen would happen.

No longer did her gaze, questing and wistful, turn landward in the hope of seeing Richard Cary come back to the *Tarragona*. There was no such thing as hope.

The cargo sheds extended almost the length of the wharf. Between them and the ship were the railroad tracks and the entrance from the customhouse gate. On the farther side of the cargo sheds was a narrow strip of wharf where smaller vessels could tie up, mostly Colombian sailing craft that traded with the villages on the lagoon or made short trips coastwise. Just now the graceful masts of one schooner lifted above the roofs of the sheds.

It did not escape Teresa's notice when Colonel Fajardo passed around the outer end of the cargo sheds to the narrow strip of wharf behind them. He was screened from the sight of the ship, also from the laborers at the freight cars and the hoisting tackle. He had betaken himself into a certain seclusion which offered Teresa the opportunity she craved.

Unheeded she tripped down to the wharf. It was usual for her to pass to and fro on farewell errands, perhaps to purchase curios for the ladies who were unable to bargain in Spanish. And there were always friends, residents of Cartagena, with whom she enjoyed exchanging greetings. The sailing hour was likely to be a gala time for Señorita Teresa Fernandez. She was the most popular stewardess of the steamers in this service.

Slipping aside, she followed Colonel Fajardo around the outer end of the long cargo shed. He had been on the deck of the Colombian schooner alongside and was just stepping back to the stringpiece of the wharf. Evidently he had found no one in the schooner. Whatever the purpose of his visit may have been it was banished from his mind by the sight of Teresa Fernandez. He appeared startled.

Walking a little way along the edge of the wharf, he was abreast of the schooner's stern when Teresa confronted him. He halted there, lifted his cap with an elaborate flourish and signified that he could not be detained. Teresa put a hand in the pocket of her apron. She kept it there while she said:

"Please do not move, Colonel Fajardo. It will be unfortunate for your health. I am so glad you came to this quiet spot where we are not interrupted. I could not sail without giving myself the pleasure of saying adieu. The other side of the wharf is so crowded, so conspicuous."

He was not deceived into surmising that this desirable woman had repented of her coldness. It was no coquetry. Her voice had a biting edge. Her face was even whiter than when he had met her on deck. Uneasily he glanced behind him and then over her shoulder. They were alone and unobserved. The Colombian schooner, the crew ashore, rocked gently at its mooring lines. Beyond it was the wide stretch of azure har-

bor upon which nothing moved except a far distant canoe as tiny as a water bug. Between this strip of wharf and the shore was a high wooden barrier with a closed gate. It was a curious isolation, with so much life and motion on the other side of the cargo sheds, only a few yards away.

Colonel Fajardo bared his teeth in a forced smile as he said: "As I remember, señorita, you were not so anxious for the pleasure of my company yesterday. I am, indeed, flattered to have you seek me out for an adieu, but I must return to my duties. The *Tarragona* will soon blow her whistle. Have you anything of importance to say before you sail?"

Teresa removed her hand from the pocket of the white apron. Her hand almost covered the little automatic pistol. The colonel caught a glimpse of it, this object of blued steel with a round orifice no bigger than a pill. He was still standing close to the edge of the wharf. Astonished, he almost lost his balance. Recovering himself, he snatched at Teresa's hand She eluded him with a quick backward step.

The pistol was aimed straight at the belt of Colonel Fajardo. He stood rigid, his posture that of a man mysteriously bereft of volition. Carefully Teresa lowered her hand until the pistol nestled in the pocket of her apron, concealed from view, but the short barrel bulged the white fabric. It was still pointed at the middle of Colonel Fajardo. Instinctively he flattened his stomach until it was like a board. He had a shrinking feeling in that region, like that of a man who has fasted many days.

Thus they stood facing each other in a tableau as still as a picture. When Teresa Fernandez spoke, it was not loud but her voice vibrated like a bell.

"Place your hands on your hips, outside your coat, Colonel Fajardo. Ah, be careful to keep them so. Your own pistol is in a holster inside your coat. I have noticed it there. It will be unwise for you to try to get it."

Her captive's gaze was wild and roving. He dared not cry out. This hell-begotten woman carried death in a touch of her finger. Lunacy afflicted her. It was a predicament for such a man as himself, a situation incredibly fantastic. His gaze returned to her face and also to that little bulge in the pocket of her apron. It gave him the effect of being cross-eyed. The nervous twitching of his upper lip was like a grimace. He was grotesque.

Teresa Fernandez had no time to waste. She asked, peremptorily: "Where is the second officer of the *Tarragona*? What misfortune occurred to Señor Cary in Cartagena last night? The truth, Colonel Fajardo, or, as God beholds me, I shall have to kill you."

He could not make himself believe that the game was up. He had twisted out of many a tight corner. It was impossible for him to conceive of being beaten by a woman. He would endeavor to cajole this one, to play for time. Her nerves would presently break under this strain. He was watching her like a cat. Let her waver for a fraction of a second and he would pounce. He answered her questions in the earnest tones of a man who lived on intimate terms with truth.

"By the holy spirit of my dead mother, señorita, your words are like the blank wall of the shed yonder. They mean nothing. You have deluded yourself. Some malicious person in the ship must have led your mind astray. I have made enemies. Why not? It is evidence of my integrity and courage. What is this big second officer of the *Tarragona* to me? I have not even spoken to the man. He is a stranger."

Teresa's hand moved slightly in the pocket of her apron. The little bulge indicated that the orifice of the pistol was pointing somewhat higher than the colonel's belt. He perceived this. His two hands rested upon his hips, outside the coat. They seemed to have been glued there. His leathery cheek blanched to a dirty hue. He swallowed with an effort. The cords stood out on his neck.

Solemnly Teresa Fernandez framed her accusation in words.

"You have killed Señor Ricardo Cary. You yourself, Colonel Fajardo, or more likely by the hands of others. If you are ready to confess it I will permit the government of Cartagena to decree the punishment. It will be left to the law and the courts. Do you confess?"

"Confess to what, my little one?" he blurted with a touch of the old bravado. "Careful! You are in a strange frenzy and that pistol may explode before you know it."

"I will know it," said Teresa, "and you will know it, Colonel Fajardo. I am famil-

iar with the little pistol. For the last time, are you a guilty or an innocent man?"

"As innocent as the Holy Ghost," he protested but his voice stuck in his throat, for he read his death in the girl's unflinching glance. Desperately he attempted to snatch at the holster on his hip, with one swift motion to take her by surprise and slay her where she stood. It was instinctive, like the leap of a trapped wolf.

Teresa read his sinister purpose. If he was swift she was the swifter. She raised her hand from the pocket of her apron. It paused for a small fraction of a second and almost touched a bit of red ribbon attached to a medal on the left breast of Colonel Fajardo's handsome white coat. He stammered thickly:

"Ah, wait—you wretched woman—Heaven have mercy—oh, oh, my heart—may you roast in hell——"

The report of Teresa's pistol had been no louder than the crack of a whip. One report, no more. When a bullet has drilled clean through a man's heart it is unnecessary to fire again.

Colonel Fajardo's hands flew from his hips. They were beating the air. His mouth was slack, like that of an idiot. He blinked as if immensely bewildered. His chin fell forward. His body swayed tipsily. Teresa stood waiting, her left hand clasped to her bosom. It was the end. She had seen death come by violence to men on shipboard.

The unforeseen occurred when Colonel Fajardo, swaying and sagging, tottered backward and disappeared. He had been standing close to the edge of the wharf. His fingers clawed the empty air as he plunged downward, barely clearing the overhanging stern of the Colombian schooner.

Teresa laid hold of a piling and stared down at a patch of frothy water. Small waves ran away from it in widening circles. They lapped against the schooner's rudder. Nothing else was visible. Presently, however, a huge black fin, triangular, sheared the surface like a blade. Another like it glistened and vanished. There was the sheen of white bellies as the greedy sharks of Cartagena harbor swirled downward into the green water.

Teresa Fernandez averted her eyes. The body of Colonel Fajardo would never be seen again. He was obliterated. She let the pistol fall through a crack between the planks of the wharf. Then she walked to the side of the cargo shed and leaned against a timber. She had pictured herself as almost instantly discovered and seized, the body of Colonel Fajardo lying upon the wharf. For this she had prepared herself. She had been willing to pay the price.

Now she realized that her deed was undiscovered. The isolation was unbroken. The harsh commotion of the ship's winches, the rattle of the freight cars as the switching engine bumped them about, the yells of the Colombian stevedores had made the whiplike report of the pistol inaudible. And the whole thing had been so quickly done. Perhaps two or three minutes she had stood there and talked with Colonel Fajardo.

A revulsion of feeling shook the soul of Teresa Fernandez. Why should she suffer bitter shame and die in expiation of a righteous act? It was no crime in her sight. She had administered justice because otherwise it would have been forever thwarted. These thoughts raced through her brain during the moments while she leaned against the timber of the cargo shed.

She mustered strength. Her knees ceased trembling. A hint of color returned to her olive cheek. Her lips were not so bloodless. Head erect she walked along the narrow strip of wharf but not to pass around the outer end of the shed. Instead of this she sought the shoreward exit through the high wooden barrier. The gate was fastened, she found, but another way of escape led through an empty room of a shed in which baggage was sometimes stored for examination. She passed through this room and emerged on the railroad tracks.

Between two freight cars she made her way and so to the customhouse gate and the main entrance from the open square beyond. In a shady spot squatted an Indian woman with beaded bags displayed on her lap. Another drowsed beside a pile of grass baskets. Teresa paused to buy two beaded bags and a basket. Just then a carriage dashed into the open square. A portly Colombian gentleman and his wife called out cordial salutations to Señorita Fernandez. A small boy fairly wriggled with joy as he flew out of the carriage to fling both arms around the waist of the stewardess of the *Tarragona*.

She welcomed them gayly. They had made the southward voyage with her several months earlier, en route to their home in Bogotá. Teresa walked back to the ship

with them, the small boy clinging to her hand and piping excitedly in Spanish. Would she show him again how to play those wonderful games of cards? He had forgotten some of them. And the story of the jaguar that sat on the roof of the peon's hut and clawed a hole through the thatch and tumbled right in?

Yes, Teresa would tell him all the tales she could remember. There would be plenty of time during the voyage to New York. In this manner the stewardess returned to the ship, beaded bags and grass basket on one arm, the happy urchin from Bogotá clinging to the other. The youthful third officer was at the gangway. He halted her to say:

"Nothing doing. Not a sign of Mr. Cary. The chief engineer drove into town. He may dig up a clew but I doubt it."

"Mr. McClement is a sharp one," said she, "but the time is too short."

"Sure! It seems as if that chesty gink, Colonel Fajardo, might have helped. He ought to be wise to what goes on in Cartagena."

"Ah, yes, it would seem so," said Teresa as she stepped on board the ship. She found the staterooms of the family from Bogotá and saw that nothing was lacking for their comfort. Then she proceeded to her own room but not for long. She washed her hands, scrubbing them with particular care. In a way, it was a symbol. Then she put on a fresh apron. The one she had worn on the wharf was wrinkled. The pocket showed a small stain of oil where the little pistol had nestled.

A few minutes later she met the chief steward in the corridor. He detained her to rumble:

"You haf tooken my advice, Miss Fernandez, and laid off a leetle while? You look better already, not so limp like a dishrag. Now go chase yourself on the job."

"All right, Mr. Schwartz. I will make myself pleasant to that cranky woman in seventeen."

Teresa went and knocked at the stateroom door. A querulous voice said, "Come in." The woman curled up on the divan under the electric fan was not much older than Teresa but she looked faded and unlovely. Rouge and lip stick simulated a vanished bloom. An empty cocktail glass was at her elbow. An ash tray reeked with dead cigarettes.

"For Heaven's sake, Miss Fernandez, is the ship ever going to leave this hole?" she complained. "I'm dying with the heat and bored sick. Rub some of that bay rum on my head. It feels as if the top would fly off."

"Yes, madam. It will be cooler soon, when we get out of the harbor. Cartagena is always hot in the middle of the day."

"Hot? You said something. And stupid! I didn't mind the cruise until we tied up to this dump. A fool doctor shoved me off on a sea voyage and my husband couldn't leave his business. It was wished on me, all right."

"Cartagena is very beautiful, so many people think," ventured Teresa.

"Huh, they must be dead ones. Nothing has happened here in three hundred years. I'll bet you couldn't wake it up with a ton of dynamite. How did you ever stand living here? You seem to have some pep. Got it in little old New York, I'll bet."

"Perhaps, madam. New York is a live one."

"Right-o. That's where you get action. No Rip van Winkle stuff. You can always start something. These Colombians? Dead on their feet—asleep at the switch."

"I am a Colombian, madam," smiled Teresa, an absent look in her eyes. "Yes, nothing ever happens in Cartagena. It is stupid and asleep. Nobody could start anything at all."

Deftly the stewardess ministered to the aching head of the woman in seventeen, soothing her with a murmurous, agreeable flow of talk. The steamer blew three long, strident blasts. Teresa excused herself and hastened on deck. The *Tarragona* was moving slowly away from the wharf. Presently she swung to traverse the wide lagoon and so reach the open sea through the narrow fairway of the Boca Chica.

The swell of the Caribbean was cradling the steamer when Teresa Fernandez found time to rest in the wicker chair beside the staircase. She gazed into the dining saloon. At a small table in a corner sat a wireless operator and the assistant purser. Between them was an empty chair. Teresa sighed and closed her eyes. She would move her wicker chair to another place. She did not wish to see the second officer's empty chair.

Late in the afternoon she met the chief engineer on deck. In spotless white clothes he strolled with hands clasped behind him, alone as usual, a lean, abstracted figure who

eyed the capers of frivolous mankind with a certain cynical tolerance. He paused to stand at the rail beside the stewardess.

At first they found nothing to say. They were staring at the misty city of Cartagena. It seemed to rise from the sea and float like a mirage. It was a mass of towers, domes, and battlements, of stone houses tinted pink and yellow with tiled roofs that gleamed and wavered. The surf flashed white against the wall of enduring masonry that marched around this ancient stronghold of the conquistadores. Teresa Fernandez said in a low voice:

"Do you understand what Mr. Cary meant when he talked about the Cartagena of ages and ages ago, as if he really lived there once before? He is dead, I know, but it seems to me that he must be alive, that he will always be alive in the spirit in Cartagena."

"Aye, Miss Fernandez, I can't explain it, but his soul goes marching on. By the way, did you say anything to Colonel Fajardo? I fancied you might have given him the third degree, after the session in my room. I found out nothing when I drove into town. It was a gesture, as you might say. I had to be doing something."

"I asked him very straight, Mr. McClement," replied Teresa, her eyes meeting his. "He swore he had nothing to tell me."

"Humph! Then I'm afraid we can never find out."

McClement resumed his stroll. More than once he glanced at Teresa still lingering at the rail and looking at distant Cartagena, now a vanishing vision. The chief engineer shook his head. The expression on his intelligent and reflective face was inscrutable. To himself he muttered:

> "But men at whiles are sober
> And think by fits and starts,
> And if they think, they fasten
> Their hands upon their hearts."

CHAPTER VIII.

UPON THE CITY WALL.

The prison of Cartagena consisted of a long row of arched, tomblike apartments built against the inside of the city wall. Two centuries earlier this series of stone caverns had been the barracks of the Spanish troops who had defended this treasure port against one furious assault after another. Here was a prison likely to hold the most desperate malefactor. Only an earthquake could have weakened such masonry as this.

Upon a cot in one of these gloomy rooms lay stretched the body of a young man of heroic proportions. He was not a native. The fair skin and yellow hair were alien to the coasts of the Caribbean. His hairy chest was bare. Around it was bound a strip of cloth as a hasty bandage. His head was half swathed in other folds of cloth. It was perplexing to know whether he was alive or dead.

The door faced a small open yard in which was a rude shelter from the sun, a shack knocked together of poles and boards. It had a covered porch in which hammocks were slung. A Colombian soldier lolled in one of them. Two others squatted on the floor and languidly shook a leather dice box. They were small coffee-colored men wearing coarse straw hats and uniforms of blue cotton drilling much faded. Their rifles leaned against a plank table littered with soiled dishes and black with flies.

The soldier in the hammock was a corporal. He aroused himself to scuffle to an iron door and peer in at the silent figure upon the cot. It had not moved. A waste of time to have washed and bandaged this murderous Americano. Now these poor soldiers would be put to the trouble of digging a grave, and such a devil of a big grave! The two privates, Francisco and Manuel, were shaking the dice to see who should wield the accursed shovel.

The corporal yawned and loafed back to the hammock to rest. The journey of a few yards to the iron door had fatigued him. The trio chewed sugar cane and lazily discussed the huge Americano, a most uncommon fish to be landed in their net. Alive and vigorous he would be a most dangerous prisoner. It would be as much as a man's life was worth to enter his cell. Fortunately he had been hit on the head and stabbed in the back when discovered in a street not far from the little plaza of the Church of San Pedro Claver.

He had run amuck, *loco* with rum, not much doubt of that. He had attacked as many as five young men of Cartagena, a serenading party innocently singing and playing the guitar. He had broken the neck of one and the head of another and smashed the shoulder of a third. Like a flail he had swung an iron bar actually plucked from a window with the strength of a giant.

By chance the *comandante* of the port, the famous Colonel Fajardo, walking home from the Café Dos Hermaños, had discovered the body of the Americano and his victims, a sight to wonder at in that respectable street of peaceful Cartagena. Colonel Fajardo had summoned the police. They had decided to keep the matter hushed until they could investigate. They had been annoyed to find a little life in him. Such a man was better dead. He was unknown to the police. Perhaps a sailor from a ship or one of those red-faced, hard-fisted foremen from the gold mines of the Magdalena.

It had been advisable to put him in the prison instead of the hospital. Think what he had done! Tried to kill five young men because he disliked the way they sang and played the guitar.

Richard Cary was not quite so near burial as they took for granted. His breath so faint that it would scarcely have fogged a mirror, he had remained in the black realm of unconsciousness until now. The return to life was blurred and glimmering, like a feeble light in this profound darkness. It refused to be snuffed out. At first like a mere spark, to his stupefied senses it seemed to become hotter and hotter until it glowed like a coal, burning inside his head and torturing him.

He did not try to move but lay wondering why these fiery pains should dart and flicker through his brain. He raised his leaden eyelids and dimly, waveringly perceived the arched stone ceiling blotched with dampness. It was like a dungeon. Were these merely things he had read of in books that shocked and quickened the mysterious process of his awakening? His groping mind was ablaze with illusions which seemed intensely actual. Tenaciously he endeavored to banish them but they poignantly persisted. The sweat ran down his face. He groaned aloud. Spasms of alarm shook him.

Was this a dungeon of the Holy Office of the Inquisition? The cord was already twisted around his temples. His head was almost bursting. The stake and the fagot were waiting for him in the courtyard. Such had been the cruel fate of other stout seamen of Devon—burly James Bitfield twice racked and enduring the water torment until death eased him—young Bailey Vaughan slashed with two hundred stripes in the market place and enslaved in the galleys for seven years—gray-haired John Carelesse dying of the *strappado*, the pulley that wrenched joint and sinew asunder.

The pains in his head were intolerable. The yellow-robed agents of the Holy Office were twisting the cord tighter, to bite into his skull. By God, they could never make him recant like a whining cur and a traitor to his faith! The torture of the cord wasn't enough for them. The fiends were pressing the red-hot iron to his back, between the shoulder blades.

It was the agony of these hallucinations that roused him out of his coma, that held him from slipping back into the dark gulf. One hand moved and clenched the frame of the cot. His eyes remained open and wandered from the gray stone arch above his head. His chest rose and fell in normal suspiration. Mistily he recognized himself as the Richard Cary who was the second officer of the *Tarragona*. Cartagena in the moonlight and Teresa Fernandez—a galleon's bell that foretold disaster—*dong, dong—dong, dong*—the twang and tinkle of a guitar, of an ominous guitar.

He had been knocked out? Well, it was a mighty hard head to break. Solid above the ears, his young brother Bill had once delicately hinted. The pain was terrific but this didn't necessarily mean a crack in it. That head had been banged before now.

Stabbed in the back, besides. That was more serious. It ought to have finished him. Such had been the bravo's intention. But he had never thrust a knife into a back as broad and deep as this, with such thick ridges of muscles that overlaid it like armor. Also, in the flurry of haste, he may have driven the blade aslant.

Anxiously Richard Cary drew in his breath and expelled it. He concluded that his lungs were undamaged. That his heart was still beating proved that the knife had missed a vital part. A deep flesh wound and muscles that throbbed and burned! So much for that.

He was alive and not mortally hurt. And not in the clutches of the Inquisition. He felt hazily thankful. This stone kennel was too much like a prison cell to be anything else. A rotten deal, to throw a man in jail after failing to kill him. This seemed like the fine hand of Colonel Fajardo. It was one way to finish the job. His five bravos had made a mess of it.

His disordered mind fitfully clearing, Richard Cary became aware of the one thing

of supreme importance. His ship was to sail at noon. He fumbled in the pockets of his trousers. His watch and money were gone. What hour of the day was it now? He rolled his head and blinked at the little window set in the iron door. The sunlight blazed like a furnace in the yard outside. It was the breathless heat and brightness that smote the city near the middle of the day. Perhaps it was not yet noon.

His first voyage in the *Tarragona* and logged as a deserter! An officer who had earned promotion on his merits in the hard schooling of the North Atlantic trade! It was an imperative obligation to return to the ship. Had Captain Sterry made an effort to find him? Perhaps not. Good riddance might be his feeling in the matter. An official word from the Union Fruit Company would have set powerful influences at work in Cartagena. Political connections safeguarded its vast commercial interests on the Colombian coast. The inference was that Captain Sterry had been willing to let his too candid second mate go adrift.

The hope of getting back to the ship was another delusion. This the battered man on the cot presently realized. He was buried alive in this stone vault of a prison and lacked strength even to lift his head. Tears of weakness filled his eyes. He felt profound pity for himself. He was a forlorn derelict on a lee shore.

Soon, however, the sweat dried on his face. His skin grew dry and hot. His heart was beating faster. The burning sensation in his head was diffusing itself through his body. The air of the room was more stifling than ever. It was like a furnace. Strange, but he felt less inert, not so helpless to move. He was dizzy, lightheaded, but this was preferable to the incessant waves of pain. He did not know that fever was taking hold of him. He mistook it for a resurgence of his tremendous vitality, evidence that he could pull himself together and break the bonds of his weakness.

He lay motionless, waiting, trying to think coherently, while the fever raced through his veins. He seemed to be floating off into space. The sensations were agreeable. No longer sorry for himself, he was unafraid of any odds. Keep him in a Cartagena jail? Nonsense. All he had to do was to use his wits. He laughed to himself. Snatches of song danced in his memory but he was careful to lock his lips. Not a sound escaped him. He was wary and cunning. One song came floating out of a distant time. It amused him to fit the words together and to picture to himself the rare seamen who had bawled in chorus:

> "A randy, dandy, dandy O,
> A whet of ale and brandy O,
> With a rumbelow and a westward—ho!
> And heave, my mariners all, O!"

The Colombian corporal of the guard decided to pry himself from the hammock and ascertain whether the big Americano was dead by this time. Instead of peering through the window the corporal thought best to make a closer investigation. He was impatient with this prisoner who had stubbornly refused to become a corpse. A clumsy iron key squeaked in the rusty lock of the door. The corporal walked in and stooped over the cot.

Yes, the Americano had about finished with the business of living. A hand held over his mouth detected no breath at all. The corporal was about to shift his hand to the naked chest to discover if the heart had ceased to beat.

Two mighty arms flew up. One of them wrapped itself around the corporal's neck and pulled him down. Fingers like steel hooks squeezed his throat. He gurgled. He was pop-eyed. His grass sandals were kicking the stone floor. It was a small, scratching noise unheard on the porch of the shack where the two privates drowsed and rolled cigarettes.

The corporal's toes ceased their rustling agitation. His lank body was as limp as an empty sack. It slid gently from the side of the cot. It sprawled so still that a green lizard ran over one twisted leg and paused close by to swell its ruby throat. The hour of the siesta appeared to have overtaken this luckless corporal somewhat earlier than usual.

His absence would cause comment. Richard Cary upheaved himself from the cot and almost toppled over. He struggled to keep his feet. Drunk with fever he began to walk with a giddy, erratic motion in the direction of the door. He succeeded in reaching it. Grasping the timbered framework he stood there half blinded by the dazzle of the sun. The two Colombian soldiers looked up and saw him.

Body and blood of San Felipe! What an apparition! A man raised from the dead

and such a man! What had befallen the corporal? It was easy to guess that. For the moment these two affrighted soldiers were incapable of motion. The love of life, however, pricked them to scramble for their rifles. Already the fearful specter of the Americano was lurching from the doorway, across the yard, straight at them.

With chattering teeth Private Francisco dived to clutch a rifle. Private Manuel tripped and rammed into him. They clawed each other, with bitter words. The sturdier Francisco was first to lay hands on a rifle. He pulled trigger. Nothing but a foolish click. It was the corporal's rifle, unloaded because he had intended cleaning it mañana. Francisco flung the useless thing aside. He could run faster without it.

The Americano picked up the discarded rifle and wheeled in pursuit of him. For a dead man, this yellow-haired ogre could be as quick as a tiger. As if the rifle were no heavier than a pebble, he hurled it, butt foremost, at the fleeing Francisco. It struck him on the hip. He turned a somersault. So fast was he running that his heels flipped over his head. When he fell the dust whirled like brown smoke. He tried to crawl away on hands and knees.

The Americano turned to find the other soldier. He was on the porch, about to fire his rifle. The barrel waved like a leaf in a gale. Here was enough to disturb the bravest soldier. The first bullet went singing off into the blue sky. Before Manuel could shoot again something like a house fell upon him and flattened him out. His head whacked a plank. A fist drove his jaw askew. He was instantly as peaceful as the corporal who slumbered with a green lizard for a comrade.

The disabled Francisco had not crawled far on hands and knees. Richard Cary tottered after him and dragged him to the timbered doorway of the vaulted cell. A thrust of the foot and Francisco rolled inside like a bale. It was better to stay there, he thought, than to try to run away again. And now Manuel was dumped in on top of him. The iron door closed and the key squeaked in the rusty lock. Richard Cary tossed the key over the roof of the shack. Thus far he had behaved with normal promptitude and efficiency. Now he reeled to the bench on the porch and fought against utter collapse.

His head spun like a top as he groped for a coffeepot on the table and drained the black brew to the dregs. It seemed to steady his quivering nerves, to clear the mists of fever from his brain. He would go and search for his ship until he dropped in his tracks. One of the discarded rifles caught his eye but he found it too heavy to carry. A machete hung from a peg in the wall. It was a handy weapon, with a straight blade. With it he slashed strips from the hammock and tied them around his bare feet. There was a grain of method in his madness.

The machete in his hand he moved out into the yard and gazed up at the city wall. Here and there were easy ascents, he knew, built for the passage of troops and vehicles. One of these sloping roadways ought to be somewhere near the prison which had once been the barracks of the Spanish garrison. From the lofty parapets he should be able to see the harbor and the wharf where the *Tarragona* berthed. Then he could perhaps made his way thither before an alarm was raised. If they tried to stop him he would hack a path with the machete.

Rocking on his feet and muttering aloud he walked out of the yard and turned at random. Unseen he passed into a paved alley and saw in front of him a wide ramp leading to the top of the wall. Fortune had not deserted him. Very slowly he climbed the rutted, crumbling slope, panting for breath, his face a bright crimson, his knees crippling under him. He could not finish the ascent and yet he did. He was broken in body but his will urged him on.

Gaining the broad esplanade he made for the nearest parapet. It was at the corner of a bastion where stood a small, round sentry tower. With arms outspread he clung to this support while his swimming gaze raked the harbor. It was not yet noon, for the white hull and the yellow funnel of the *Tarragona* glistened alongside the cargo sheds. The distance was not far. Through a gateway in the wall he might reach the beach and so leave the city behind him. Unless his strength should utterly forsake him a merciful deliverance was beckoning.

He found it much easier, however, to cling to the small, round sentry tower than to resume his pitiable pilgrimage. He tried it once, twice, and stumbled drunkenly. But he was not beaten—he could not be while the blessed sight of the *Tarragona* compelled him. He tried again and advanced toward

a square grim mass of stone that marked the nearest gateway.

Then he heard three blasts blown on a steamer's whistle, deep-throated and prolonged. He knew the *Tarragona's* voice and what this signal meant. It was her courteous adieu to Cartagena. She was outward bound, through the Boca Chica and to the rolling spaces of the Caribbean. Richard Cary dragged himself to the parapet and stood looking at his ship, but only for a moment. Then he buried his face in his arms. Sobs shook him. It was the cruelest joke that ever a man had played on him. He damned Captain Sterry for a dirty hound that would leave his second mate in a fix like this.

Ashamed of crying like a silly woman he retraced his steps to the sentry tower. It was shady inside, with deep slits of windows. He did not wish to see the *Tarragona* slide away from the wharf. He slumped to the floor and sat propped against the wall, his chin against his breast. His ruling impulse had kept delirium under for a little while. Now he became a prey to all manner of curious thoughts. Dominant was the resolve that they should not take him alive. He whetted the edge of the machete on a rough stone and tested the balance of it and the grip of the hilt. He would give a good account of himself on the wall of Cartagena. Pistol and cutlass were more to his taste but this machete was a weapon not to be despised at close quarters.

CHAPTER IX.

THE KINDLY HERMIT OF LA POPA.

The cloth bound round his tousled head, the torn shirt that bared his chest, the pongee trousers soiled with sweat and dust, the strips of canvas wrapped about his feet, made this wounded fugitive the image of a buccaneer as he sat waiting in the round watch tower with the machete across his knees. It was not long before the temper of savage defiance yielded to exhaustion. Oblivion infolded his senses and he relaxed in a stupor that was a counterfeit of sleep. The scowling visage took on the gentler aspect, boyish and engaging, that was familiar to his shipmates. It was an interlude.

He did not stir when the stone barracks inside the city wall were agitated by some loud excitement. There was confused shouting, orders bandied to and fro, the shrill *alerte* of a bugle, squads of soldiers pattering at the double quick. All this indicated that the hapless privates, Francisco and Manuel, had found an audience.

The hue and cry passed by the broad ramp that led to the top of the wall. It was perhaps assumed that the mad Americano would spread havoc in the city streets or break for the harbor to hide in some boat and escape by sea. It was the first duty of the soldiers to protect the people of Cartagena. Therefore they scattered to warn and search, ready to shoot on sight.

Meanwhile the hunted man's respite was unbroken. When at length he lifted his head and hastily caught up the machete to resume his sullen vigil the prison area had resumed its wonted quietude. There were no sounds to suggest an alarm. The sun had passed the meridian by an hour or so, as Richard Cary discovered through a slitted window. He was surprised that his hiding place had not been discovered. He could hope for no such good fortune as concealing himself in the watch tower until nightfall. And how would that aid him? He was trapped between the devil and the deep sea. Death clamored for him in the city. It was certain to overtake him in the swamps and jungle if he should succeed in stealing away. The sea was also impossible. He could never reach it.

The effort of rising to his feet left him all spent and trembling. He could not have walked a score of yards in the deadly heat of the sun. The muscles of his back were so stiffened and inflamed that he was bent like an old man knotted with rheumatism. His head was even more troublesome. After the lull it was aflame again. One moment he was able to think, the next he was lost in a welter of phantasms. He closed his eyes because the light hurt them. He would hear the Colombian soldiers when they came near the watch tower.

A little while, however, and the aching brightness of the sky was tempered by clouds which gathered swiftly. They grew black as they rolled toward the zenith, with a flickering play of lightning. The distant mutter of thunder swelled in rolling detonations. At first the rain came in a flurry of drops. Richard Cary mistook the sound for the pit-pat-pat of the hurrying feet of Colombian soldiers. With a groan he lurched out of the watch tower to finish the thing in the open.

The tropical rain came down like a flood, as if the clouds spilled a solid deluge of water. A whistling squall swept it in sheets. Between the parapets was a gushing river which spouted through the embrasures and rushed down the ramp. It was a torrential downpour unknown to northern climes.

To Richard Cary it was the saving grace of heaven. It beat against him, cooling his parched skin, refreshing him like an elixir. It quenched the fires that had so grievously tormented him. He felt the strength revive in his weary body. He forgot the stiffness, the hurts, the hopelessness of a man in the last ditch. He scooped up the rain in his cupped hand and lapped it like a dog.

The blessed rain did more than this. It offered a chance of extricating himself from the immediate perils besetting him. The squall drove the rain in sheets, obscuring the buildings of the city, veiling the harbor. He gripped the machete blade between his teeth and threw a leg over the outer parapet. It was a thirty-foot drop to the bottom which was a shallow depression where the moat had been. The stones had been cunningly cut and fitted to build a wall with a smooth facing but the tooth of time had gnawed deep crevices in which grass had taken root.

Richard Cary's fingers found rough corners to cling to and lodgment for his toes. Cautiously groping, he let himself down from one stone to another. It was not a vastly difficult feat, easier than those other seamen of long ago had found it to scale these same walls with ladders and fascines. When giddiness halted him he fastened himself to the stones like a great bat and waited for the spell to pass.

Finally he let go and dropped to the ground. It had been a wrenching ordeal but when the pain was unendurable he had the machete to bite on. The space outside the wall, which was a populous open-air market and resort for idlers, had been suddenly deserted. The terrific rain had driven every last soul to shelter. The fugitive made a limping detour to reach a strip of beach beyond the quay. Fishermen with their baskets, the venders of green stuffs, the carts and the burros had scampered to find dry places.

It was a homing instinct, this endeavor to escape to salt water. There was no plan. In fact there was no clear expectation of getting anywhere. It was enough for the moment, to be outside the walls of Cartagena. Far better risk drowning than to be riddled with bullets by the comrades of Francisco and Manuel.

Between the driving sheets of rain he caught glimpses of the yellow beach. Two or three dugout canoes were drawn up. One of them had a lading of green bananas. The fugitive plodded toward them and no man came to hinder him. The rain was all about him like a misty curtain. He stumbled in the soft sand above high-water mark and fell against the gunwale of an empty canoe. It was a small craft but very heavy. To push it into the water seemed a task altogether beyond him. However, he set his shoulder against the blunt bow and dug his feet into the sand.

Gashed and harried and fevered, it was the inherited bulldog strain in "Big Dick" Cary that sufficed for this final struggle on the sands of Cartagena. The canoe moved, an inch at a time, to the harder surface of the tide-washed beach. Then it slid faster until the surf kicked up by the squall was splashing against it. The stern floated. Cary stood up and looked out at the foaming rain-swept lagoon. He could not drive the canoe ahead against the wind but he remembered a wooded point not far away and a lee beyond it. This he might fetch on a slanting course with the ebbing tide to help.

A last dogged thrust and the canoe floated in the surf. He tumbled over the side and fell face downward in the tepid rain water that washed over the bottom board. Righting himself, he caught up a short paddle and swung the bow away from the beach. He crouched amidships and did little more than steer, with a few strokes now and then to hold the course and avoid drifting broadside on. These motions were done mechanically, like an automaton. The canoe safely skirted the shore where it curved an arm out into the lagoon. Behind it was calmer water, a rippling surface on which the canoe floated lazily.

The paddle was idle. The Americano sat with folded arms, indifferent to the whims of destiny. The tide pulled at the sluggish canoe and it slowly moved abreast of the shore. The rain ceased as suddenly as it had flooded down. The clouds broke and dissolved in ragged fragments until the sky was an inverted bowl of flawless blue. The sun poured its breathless radiance upon a lush landscape that steamed as it dried.

To Richard Cary this was an affliction. An hour of sun would be the finishing stroke. He had not even a straw hat to shield his head. It didn't very much matter what happened to him. He was beyond caring, but it was peculiarly unpleasant to be grilled alive. He made shift to steer the canoe inshore until it grounded. Just beyond the belt of marsh he saw a densely verdured knoll marked by one tall palm. He filled the baling can with the rain water in the canoe and carried it with him. The machete served to chop a few bushes and so make room for him to crawl into the thicket and lie down.

In spite of the heat a fit of shivering seized him, the chill that presaged a recurrence of fever. Mosquitoes swarmed to plague him. The afternoon waned and he had not moved from his lair in the thicket. Not until sunset did he go crashing through the brushwood and hold fast to the palm tree while he stupidly glared this way and that, imagining ambushed foes or turning seaward to find the ship that must be winging it to rescue him, a high-pooped, round-bellied ship with clumsy yards and gaudy pennants and a battery of carronades in the waist.

Behind this bit of low land was a hill that soared abruptly to a height of several hundred feet. Its crest was stark and rugged, with a sheer cliff that dropped toward the sea. It stood alone, this bold and frowning hill and was a famous landmark for many miles offshore. La Popa, mariners had always called it because of the resemblance to the castellated poop of a galleon. What made it even more prominent was the massive convent whose walls were like a fortress, a structure which at a distance looked as if it had never been despoiled and forsaken. Both Drake and De Pontis the Frenchman, had held it for ransom.

It had become a mere shell, a noble relic of the religious zeal of another age. At one end nestled the chapel and this had been preserved, still used for the infrequent advocation to Our Lady of La Popa by priests and pious pilgrims of Cartagena. From the city a rough path led up the sloping ridge of the hill, a path trodden by many generations of nuns and worshipers.

La Popa! The huge white convent looming on the summit of the cliff! A place for a man to hide and scan the Caribbean for sight of a ship. There Drake had posted his sentries to guard against surprise by galleons coming from the north or south. A long, hard climb up the hill, through the jungle at the base, and then a circuit to get clear of the cliff where the defenders had rolled rocks down upon the heads of certain English seamen. It might be done, however, if a man could find the path. A full moon rising early and the convent gleaming above to set his bearings by!

Soon after dawn of the following morning the caretaker of the Chapel of Our Lady of La Popa came pottering out of a hut built in a corner of the roofless convent. His errand was to tether his two goats on the herbage of the slope. He was a sparse man, lame in leg and feeling the burden of years. Having lived much by himself in this lonely retreat he had formed the habit of talking to himself in his unkempt gray beard. By way of variety he often talked to the goats whom he fondly addressed by name.

Having tethered them while the air was still cool this kindly Palacio untied a rusty tin cup from his belt and milked Mercedes, who was a docile animal. The cup of warm milk and a tortilla of coarse meal was a breakfast that sufficed him. While munching the sooty tortilla he gazed about him from under shaggy brows and, as always at this time of day, admired the roseate splendor of Cartagena and its everlasting walls. There was nothing in all the world to compare with it, reflected this elderly recluse. The browsing Mercedes waggled her tufted chin in agreement.

Presently Palacio picked up his cane and wandered along the slope to inspect his garden patch of beans and peppers. It was a continual skirmish to save the beans from the forays of the other goat, Lolita, who was a young creature of feminine caprices and often possessed of a devil. Palacio's rebukes, even the threat of making goat's meat of her, left Lolita's heart untouched.

In the grass beside the garden patch Palacio was startled to perceive a large object which had not been there before. Cautiously he backed away and leaned on his stick while he scrutinized the phenomenon. It was a man asleep or dead, a man of prodigious bulk and brawn whose clothing was no more than dirty tatters. His skin was crisscrossed with scratches and smeared with dried blood. A stranger to Palacio and

a man so strange to this part of the world that he might have dropped from the skies.

Timidly the caretaker approached the body in the grass and knelt to touch its cheek. The flesh was warm, even hot and angry. Gaining courage he tugged at the man and rolled him over to discover any serious injuries. He found a knife wound in the back and a lump on the head as big as a tangerine. If the man had climbed the hill of La Popa it was a miracle. Where had he come from? It was the divine influence of Our Lady whose shrine was in the chapel that he should be found alive in this place.

"What a thing to stumble on when I lead my goats out in the morning," said Palacio, both hands in his beard. "Never has a wonder like this happened to me. I am at the end of my poor wits. If I go down to Cartagena to find a doctor it is slow walking for me with my lame leg on the rough path —and this enormous man may die in the grass. Soon the sun will be too hot to leave him without a roof over his head."

In his agitation Palacio limped to and fro. Could he roll this man over and over like a sack of coffee as far as the threshold of the convent? Then perhaps he might drag him into the hut. It could do him no more damage. As it was, he looked as if he had fallen off the cliff. In spite of his lameness Palacio was tough and sinewy. When in his prime he had been a laborer on the quay, carrying heavy freight on his back.

The goats had cropped the grass until it was a greensward. Palacio grunted and began to roll the man like a cask. A groan dismayed him. This would not do. It was more merciful to try to drag the body a little way at a time, like a burro hitched to an ox cart. Nobly Palacio hauled and panted until he had progressed as far as the stake that tethered Mercedes. She trotted over to nuzzle him. It was an expression of sympathy. He felt much encouraged. Lolita, the jade, was waiting to rear on her hind legs and butt her master behind the knees so that he sat down suddenly.

"Horned offspring of perdition," he told her, "do not add to my troubles. Poor Palacio is almost breaking himself in two for the sake of love and charity. Butt me again and the dust shall fly from your speckled hide."

A back-breaking task it was but Palacio managed to drag his burden to the hole in the convent wall where a door had been. A bed of straw and a blanket on the floor of his hut were all the comfort he could contrive for the unbidden guest. So fatigued that his legs were like two sticks, the anxious Palacio mixed a little warm goat's milk and rum in the tin cup and forced it between the man's lips. It seemed to trickle down his throat. Then he dosed him with a bitter draft from a bottle, a tincture of quinine and herbs which had assuaged his own spells of fever.

With a singular deftness Palacio washed the patient and tore up a clean shirt to bandage him. That wound in the back was alarming, so livid and inflamed, but it might heal if kept cleansed and dressed.

"A man like this is very hard to kill," he said aloud. "To look at him you would say he had already suffered several deaths. The air is cool and healthy up here on La Popa and there is the sweet presence of Our Lady. I will light a candle at her shrine and a fresh one as soon as that is burned down, poor man though I am. The life of this enormous stranger with the hair like gold belongs to me. It is a gift of God."

It was a battered, useless gift, the wreckage of Richard Cary. Hard to kill, though, as Palacio had concluded. In his favor were youth, extraordinary vitality and clean blood untainted by dissipation. Illness was unknown to him. Through two long days and nights the devoted Palacio watched and nursed him, nodding off at intervals. That bitter brew in the bottle was holding the fever in check and the diet of goat's milk and onion broth was efficacious.

The patient babbled while delirious. Palacio understood almost nothing of what he said but one inference was beyond doubt. The sick man's voice, the message of his eyes, the restless movements of his hands were easily interpreted. He was afraid of discovery. Enemies were in pursuit of him It was an issue of life and death. Palacio referred the problem to the responsive Mercedes while milking her.

"What is to be done, little comfort of mine? This man is innocent of crime. You have seen him for yourself. He has won my trust and affection and he is my guest. Not many visitors come to La Popa from the city. It is an old story to them. But the Americans from the fruit boats will come early some morning to see the con-

vent. The men will sit on the rocks and say, 'Owie! Damnfineview!' and the women will poke their noses everywhere. Our guest will make curiosity and be chattered about in Cartagena and down at the ships. He wishes to be hidden away until his health is restored. What do you advise, most intelligent of little goats?"

The most intelligent Mercedes tossed her head and ambled in the direction of the convent wall, as far as her tether permitted. Then she pawed the grass with a sharp hoof. Palacio eyed her gravely. She was trying to assist him. He pondered the matter, twisting his beard tight. Blockhead that he was! To have to be instructed by a goat! She was showing him what to do. He hurried into the hut for a lantern. Into the convent cellar he clambered and then crept into an opening where the stones had been dislodged.

It was the entrance of the ancient tunnel which was said to have led to the foot of the hill and so beneath the walls of Cartagena as a secret passage to be used in time of siege. Such was the tradition. It was possible, however, to explore only a short distance from La Popa because rocks and dirt filled the tunnel.

"Two or three days more," said Palacio, "and I can move my guest into this chamber where only God himself will find him. Visitors can be told that the tunnel has caved in since the last heavy rain."

This was partly the truth. A hole had appeared in the gullied surface of the hill but it was a dozen yards away from the convent wall and hidden by a clump of small trees. It let the light into the tunnel and the air drew through it by day and night. Palacio courteously thanked Mercedes for stamping her hoof directly over the underground passage. She had handsomely solved the problem.

He spared no pains to make the secret chamber habitable for his guest. In the chapel was found a disused table and a carved oak chair big enough to hold an archbishop. There was also a strip of carpet and two brass candlesticks. Palacio fashioned a bed of limber poles bound with rawhide thongs and stretched a piece of old canvas across the frame.

During the labor of love, what of Richard Cary? The stormy stress of mind and body was past. The whirling tumult of emotions, the repeated shocks of perils and escapes were no more tangible than dreams. Indeed they seemed to belong with his dreams of the Cartagena of the galleons and the conquistadores. He was in a haven of lucid tranquillity, unvexed by the past, with no thought of the future. Physical weakness constrained him but nature was eager to heal and restore and he felt no great discomfort. It was a state of apathy that brought the anodyne of contentment.

It amused him to listen to the droning monologues of Palacio as he pottered about the hut. They exchanged a few phrases in English and Spanish and became amazingly well acquainted thereby. Between them was the fondness of a father and son. The goats walked in to pay their respects, Mercedes the well-mannered lady at a bedside, Lolita rudely foraging for provender and chewing stray garments until Palacio thumped her with a broken stool.

It was a memorable moment when the guest was helped to lift himself from the pallet of straw and swayed against the straining Palacio, their arms across each other's shoulders. In this manner they staggered into the cellar by arduous stages and thence to the chamber inside the tunnel entrance. The guest expected his weight to crush the spare Palacio but it was do or die. The achievement made them hilarious. Palacio uncorked a treasured bottle of red wine. Later he knelt at the shrine of Neustra Señora de la Popa and humbly offered thanks for the recovery of his dear friend and guest.

In the underground room the hours passed without impatience. Light filtered through the gullied opening in the roof. The air was never sultry. A roving armadillo tumbled through the hole and consented to stay a while, lured by bits of food. It curled up in its scaly armor and slept under a bench. Its serene attitude toward life was worthy of imitation.

"But I can't stay here curled up in *my* shell," said Señor Cary to the placid armadillo. "For one thing I am imposing on Palacio's good nature with no way of repaying him. And the old codger is pretty well worn out. As soon as my legs will hold me up I must work out some plan of campaign or other. But why fret about it now? Mañana!"

With a steady mind he returned to the situation day after day. To try to smuggle himself aboard a Fruit Company's

steamer was one possibility. It was thrashed out and dismissed. Ignorant that Colonel Fajardo had ceased to be the *comandante* of the port or anything else, he pictured him as venomously vigilant to watch and search every vessel leaving Cartagena. Without friends or money it was out of the question to try to reach some other port by land. The delta of the Magdalena was one vast wilderness of swamp and watercourses.

He was still trapped but no longer a frenzied fugitive without a refuge and he possessed the unquenchable optimism of a strong and competent young man.

Very often his thoughts dwelt with Teresa Fernandez. Her kisses were dearly remembered, her voice echoed in his heart, and the gay fortitude with which she met the buffets of life appealed to his chivalry. She was a woman worth loving. Yes, for longer than a little while.

Another fortnight and the *Tarragona* would be steaming across the Caribbean on another southern voyage, to pick up her landfall for Cartagena, sighting the abrupt and lofty hill of La Popa from many miles at sea. Now that his strength was flowing back Richard Cary could not remain buried like a mole. Inaction would soon become both irksome and cowardly. One thing was certain. He swore to find Teresa Fernandez, returning in the *Tarragona*, and to hold her in his arms.

There was only one hope of attaining this desire, of making the resolve more than an empty boast. Teresa's uncle, that "funny old guy" Señor Ramon Bazán, had shown a liking for him during that brief visit in the moonlit patio. "A delicious hit," Teresa had called it. This might mean nothing at all. A man in his dotage, tricky and whimsical, had been the impression left by the shriveled uncle with the little brown monkey perched on his shoulder.

What his relations might be with the officials of Cartagena was impossible to surmise. He had been a person of consequence in earlier years, a figure in the political affairs of Colombia. This much Teresa had conveyed in the remark that he had once been sent to Washington by the government at Bogotá. Would he feel inclined to protect an American fugitive whom the authorities were hunting like a dangerous animal? What of the obligation of the hospitality which he had so warmly proffered? A rope of sand, as likely as not. Spanish courtesy in its finest flower had been displayed by the lowly Palacio but with Señor Ramon Bazán it was a very different situation. Doubtless he knew what Richard Cary had done and why he was branded as a criminal condemned to execution.

Ah, well, what else was life than a gamble on the turn of a card? A proper man ought not to hesitate whenever the stake was worth the hazard. Teresa Fernandez would risk as much for him, of this Richard Cary felt convinced. She was that kind of a woman. Win or lose, he should try to meet her in the house of Uncle Ramon Bazán while the *Tarragona* was in port.

There was only one way to put the hazard to the touch. This was to send Palacio into Cartagena with a note to the bizarre old gentleman. It meant revealing the hiding place on the hill of La Popa and inviting capture. The message would have to be an appeal to find some ingenious plan of smuggling the fugitive in through the city streets. He was not yet strong enough even to walk down the rocky path to the foot of the hill.

"A rotten poor bet," said the guest of the good Palacio, "but show me another one. And if I can get into Cartagena, I can get out again. By gum, I'm going to kiss my girl."

CHAPTER X.

THE GREAT YELLOW TIGER.

Sending a message to Señor Bazán was easier said than done. Pen and paper were not essential to the simple life of Palacio for the excellent reason that he had never learned to read or write. The hut was rummaged in vain. Much perturbed, Palacio limped into the chapel and returned with a tattered missal. Heaven knows how long this illuminated black-letter volume had reposed in a dusty niche of the pulpit. Sacrilege it might be to tear out a broad-margined leaf but Palacio promised himself to do penance. With a sharp bit of charcoal the derelict mariner wrote on the margin:

My Dear Señor Bazan: Will you help me to reach your house? I am disabled and in serious trouble. The police of Cartagena are after me, but I have done nothing to be ashamed of. If you feel like lending a hand, you will have to send somebody to get me down the hill of La Popa, and safely to your house. The Señorita Teresa Fernandez told me how to say *ver las orejas del lobo.* To see the ears of

the wolf means to be in great danger, I take it. This seems to fit the case of

Yours sincerely, RICHARD CARY.

Anxiously Palacio looked on and furiously rumpled his gray beard. He did not approve. To hear the name of old Ramon Bazán was enough. Some unpleasant gossip or other had lingered in his simple mind. He had not always been the hermit of La Popa. Timidly at first and then in a scolding humor he objected to the procedure. The beloved guest was safe, as things were, and rapidly regaining health and vigor. Leave it to Palacio to safeguard him against his enemies and in due time to devise some means of flight. It might be up the great river and across the mountains to the other ocean, such a journey as Palacio had made in his own youth.

Gently but stubbornly the guest persuaded his benefactor to undertake the mission. Consent was hard wrung but in the last resort Palacio could not deny any wish of the mighty, fair-haired Ricardo, the apple of his eye. It was toward the middle of the afternoon when the reluctant messenger took his staff and said farewell:

"God willing," he called back. "God willing," he was repeating to himself as he trudged past the garden patch, *"Como Dios es servido, ó si Dios es servido ó siendo Dios servido."*

Shortly after the departure Richard Cary concluded to essay walking out of his tunneled chamber, as far as a gap in the convent wall. It was necessary to know whether he was capable of this much effort. Very carefully he guided his uncertain steps across the cellar, like a child learning to walk. It seemed ridiculous. A touch would have pushed him over. His brawn had been so much fuel for the fever to feed upon.

Elated by the venture he sat down to rest on a broad stone slab from which he could see the slope of the hill toward Cartagena and the sea flashing beyond the barrier of the Boca Grande. It filled him with a sense of buoyancy and freedom, with emotions too deep for words. Circumstances still shackled him but once more he beheld wide horizons and felt the freshening trade wind brush his cheek, the wind that had blown so many stout ships across the Caribbean.

He was alive again, eager to follow wherever fickle fortune might beckon. If the odds should veer in his favor would he want to go back to the monotonous trade of seafaring in a merchant steamer out of New York? It seemed incongruous, a world away. The Spanish Main had been cruel to him but he had ceased to feel resentment. It had been a game of give and take. His was the winning score. Although not yet out of the woods he could afford to laugh. The next turn of events was worth waiting for. Heads or tails?

The peaked straw hat of Palacio had long since bobbed down the hill and across the causeway to a gateway of the city wall. Gradually the violet shadows crept over the sward beside the melancholy pile of the convent. The goats raised their voices to notify the lonely watcher that something was wrong. It was time for them to trot in to shelter.

It was time also for Richard Cary to seek his own retreat before the dusk should make him stumble in the débris of the cellar. He was most loath to leave the open sky and the westering glow and the communion of the salt breeze. Laboriously he made his way to the darkened refuge in the earth and lighted a candle. The complaisant armadillo had sauntered off on some twilight errand of its own. Silly, but the solitary man wished he had the armadillo to talk to. Again immured, his spirits were heavy and overcast.

Out of doors, he had regained his large and placid indifference to whatever might impend. Now his nerves were tautening. The answer of Señor Ramon Bazán might be a file of Colombian soldiers hurrying up the hill. With a shrug, he thrust such fears aside. Win or lose he must play his hand out. No more of that crazed torment which had bitten into his brain while he had crouched in the round watch tower, whetting the machete on a rough stone.

Once while he had stood with Teresa Fernandez at the rail of the *Tarragona,* she had hummed a verse or two of a song called "The Breton Sailor's Litany," remembered from a voyage to Brest in her girlhood. He had learned it as well as he could, for the pleasure of hearing her murmur the words over and over again.

Dieu puissant, notre Père,
Qui commandez aux flots,
Ecoutez la prière.
Des pauvres matelots.

It came back to him now, with the translation she had also taught him to say. He found peace and comfort in it, as if Teresa

herself were bidding him hold fast to his courage.

God all powerful, our Father,
Thou Who commandest the sea,
Listen to the prayer
Of the poor mariners.

The first significant sound to catch his listening ear was the excited bleating of the goats tethered almost over his head. Nothing else than the return of Palacio could make them so suddenly vocal. A delay while he found his lantern and the weary messenger came stumbling through the cellar, shouting to ask if Ricardo was alive and well. It was hard to find out what news he brought. There was no word in writing from Señor Ramon Bazán and Palacio's long narrative was poured in tumultuous Spanish which meant very little to his guest.

It had something to do with a pile of wood and a mule and a muchacho. This much was picked out of the jumble. In Palacio's croaking accents was also a violent distrust of the manners, morals and motives of the aged Señor Bazán. Having simmered down he made it comprehensible that Ricardo was to make ready to go at once, pronto, into Cartagena by night. Means had been provided. Much distraught, Palacio toddled to his hut to find and offer a patched tarpaulin cape and a new peaked straw hat woven by himself. He had already washed and mended Cary's tattered shirt and trousers.

Lack of a razor contributed to the general effect of a Robinson Crusoe as the fugitive emerged from his earthy abode. It was, indeed, a venture in the darkness. Quién sabe? The riddle of Señor Bezán's intentions was still unsolved.

"Here goes," said Richard Cary, looking about him in the starlight. "I'll soon find out whether I am putting my head in a noose or not. Where do we go from here? *Donde?*"

Palacio whistled. A gray mule came sidling into the lantern's glow. Leading it by the bridle was the Indian lad whom Cary recalled seeing in the patio of Uncle Ramon. There was no saddle. A sack was tied across the mule's back.

"What kind of foolishness is this?" objected the passenger. "I see myself parading through Cartagena on the quarter-deck of a flop-eared mule. *Oiga!* The Colombian infantry could never miss a target like that."

The Indian lad caught the drift of this tirade and grinned a reassurance. Palacio volubly insisted that it was *"muy bueno,"* so far as the mule was concerned. Again he chattered about the mysterious pile of wood. He had labored with it himself. He lifted imaginary sticks and groaned with both hands clapped to his back. Richard Cary subsided. He was in no position to quibble over details.

His companions hoisted him astride the mule. It was a very strong mule or its legs would have bent. Palacio limped as far as the garden patch. Another journey down the hill and back again was too much for him. He embraced his guest, his splendid son, and fervently commended him to God and Neustra Señora de la Popa. If he weathered the stormy gale of circumstances, Richard Cary pledged himself somehow to repay this humble recluse with the heart of gold.

The sure-footed mule picked its way down the broken path, the lithe Indian lad chirruping in its ear. Beyond the foot of the hill, where a road swung inland from the harbor, the lad turned aside. At the edge of the jungle was hidden a ponderous two-wheeled cart. It was heaped high with cordwood. Stakes at the sides prevented it from spilling. The muchacho nudged Cary to dismount. The mule was backed into the shafts and a brass-bound harness slung on its back.

"I suspected a colored gentleman in the woodpile," reflected the dubious Cary, "and now I know it. Just where do I fit into this load of wood? Hi, boy! What about it? *Qué esesto?*"

The lad motioned him to examine for himself. A false bottom had been laid in the body of the cart. Between the floor that rested upon the axle and the upper platform of boards was a space perhaps a foot and a half deep. Into this the bulk of Richard Cary was expected to insert itself. He thanked his stars that illness had reduced his flesh. It was the utter helplessness of being flattened in there, underneath the pile of wood, that made him flinch. It was too much like being nailed in a coffin. To be discovered and hauled out by the heels would be a fate too absurd to contemplate.

However, if there was a beggar alive who could not be a chooser, it was this same Richard Cary. He had to admire the ingenuity of the contrivance. A belated coun-

tryman hauling a load of firewood to the city in the cool of the night would pass unnoticed whereas a curtained carriage might invite scrutiny. The stratagem was worthy of the wizened little man of the patio, with the grimace of the clown and the eye of an inquisitor.

Very unhappy, Richard Cary inched himself in beneath the load of wood, flat on his back. The Indian lad, who had a wit of his own, hung over the rear of the cart two bags stuffed with fodder for the mule. These concealed the protruding feet of the melancholy stowaway. It was one way to enter Cartagena, but hurtful to the pride of an adventurer who had waged one hand-to-hand conflict after another in escaping from these same walls. There were precedents among other bold men, however, as far back in history as the wooden horse of Troy.

The springless cart bumped and shook him infernally. He swore at the mule, in muffled accents, and even more earnestly at the crafty Señor Bazán. He could not be blamed for a petulant humor. After an hour or a week or a year, over streets that seemed to be paved with boulders, the load of wood turned into an alley and halted. The muchacho was in no haste to extricate his passenger. First the wood had to be thrown off and the false bottom knocked apart. The lad was unequal to the task of hauling his gigantic human cargo out by the legs.

Released from the ignominious cart, Richard Cary was a prey to renewed qualms. The rear wall of Señor Bazán's house was darkly uncommunicative. It told nothing whatever. Presently, however, a door opened on a crack. The Indian lad hissed, *"Rapido!"* The Americano was to erase himself from the alley. He obeyed as ***rapido*** as the cramps in his legs permitted. His senses were set on a hair trigger for whatever emergency might leap at him.

The door opened far enough to admit him. He brushed through, into a shadowy hall, and collided with the shrunken figure of Señor Bazán who yelped dismay and retreated as if afraid of being trodden upon like a bug. The uneasy visitor charged after him, having a fancy for quarters more spacious than this dim, confined hall. It was like a pursuit during which Señor Bazán scurried into a large room which to Richard Cary's unaccustomed vision seemed ablaze with lights. He stood and blinked like an owl.

Many shelves of books, a desk littered with papers and more books, heavy furniture of mahogany and stamped leather, this was evidently a library in which the aged uncle of Teresa spent much of his time.

He, too, blinked bewilderment. The ragged scarecrow of a Cary, with the stubbled beard, the blanched color and the drawn features, was tragically unlike the ruddy young giant who had towered beside the galleon bell in the moonlit patio. The contrast was deeper than this. Then he had been easy and smiling, the massive embodiment of good nature. Now his jaw was set, his haggard eyes somberly alert and his whole demeanor that of a man on guard against an ambuscade. Still absorbed in studying him, Señor Bazán said not a word but dragged a chair forward and thrust it behind the visitor.

Cary could not have stood on his feet much longer. He dropped into the chair. As a gesture of good will the old gentleman patted his shoulder and silently vanished to reappear with a tray of cold chicken, salad, bread and cheese, and a bottle of port. Then he cocked his head like a bird and said in English:

"Make yourself easy, my dear young friend. I have no soldiers hiding behind the curtains and I have not informed the department of police. There is a hot bath and a soft bed, and my poor company to-morrow."

"I shall have to take your word for it that I am in safe water," sighed Richard Cary, his scowl fading. "Comfort like this is worth any trouble that may break later. There was no reason why I should feel sure of a friendly welcome, sir. I am an outlaw, as you know. It was taking a blind chance."

"'Ver las orejas del lobo!' To see the ears of the wolf," gleefully quoted the old gentleman. "So this is the wolf's den? First I must ask pardon for talking only Spanish when you called with Teresa. It was rude, a shabby trick. There is no better English scholar in Colombia than Ramon Bazán. That girl is so full of the devil that I thought she might lead you on to make fun of her venerable uncle. It would have amused me to listen. Where did I learn my English so well? It means nothing to Teresa—these things happened before she was born—but for several years I

was the minister for my country in Washington and later in London. A withered old back number now, with one foot in the grave, but Ramon Bazán was almost the president of Colombia. A revolution exploded under him. That was many years ago."

A breast of chicken and a glass of port were not too diverting to prevent Richard Cary from paying keen attention. He surmised that Señor Bazán was eager to make a favorable impression, exerting himself to dispel the idea that he was a senile object of curiosity. He desired to awaken respect as well as gratitude. This might be laid to an old man's childish vanity. At any rate he had ceased to be merely grotesque.

There was no malice on the wrinkled, mobile features of the little old man in the flapping linen clothes. Furtive he was by nature, the beady black eyes glancing this way and that, the bald scalp twitching, but for the present at least there was no harm in him. This was Richard Cary's intuition. He also guessed that Señor Bazán was anxious to ingratiate himself. If there was a motive behind it, this could be left to divulge itself. The situation hinted of aspects unforeseen.

"You can sleep calmly to-night, Mr. Cary," said the host, with his twisted grin, "but many people in Cartagena would stay wide awake if they knew you were so near."

"Am I as notorious as all that, sir? Of course I want to hear the news——"

"As they say, you stood this city on its head," shrilly chuckled Ramon Bazán. "Revolutions have begun with less disturbance in some of our hot little republics of the Caribbean. Rumors flew about until your exploits were frightful. The children of Cartagena have never been so obedient to their parents. All they have to be told is that *'El Tigre Amarillo Grande,'* the Great Yellow Tiger, will catch them if they are naughty. It was this way—your dead body was not found although you were on the edge of death when you escaped from the prison. You could not have fled far. This was why you were not looked for at La Popa. Therefore you were no man but a wicked spirit from hell. The common people are very foolish and ignorant."

"I never meant to upset the town when I came ashore that night," said Cary, smiling in his turn. "You are good enough to shelter me and you ought to know the facts It was just one thing after another. A gang of roughs tried to wipe me out. In self-defense I stretched two or three of them. My hunch was that Colonel Fajardo had put up the job. If I stayed in jail he was bound to get me. And my ship was ready to sail. My duty was to join her. So I walked out of the prison but was too late to get aboard the *Tarragona*. My head went wrong with fever. I don't know how I climbed La Popa."

"Five of the *bravoné* and three soldiers of the prison," grinned Señor Bazán, ticking them off on his fingers. "Am I not a valiant old man to sit alone in the same house with the Great Yellow Tiger?"

"Not while a word in the telephone yonder would cook my goose," grimly answered the prisoner of fortune. "Please tell me one thing. Did I kill any of those poor devils at the prison? I didn't want to. They got in my way and I had to treat 'em rough."

"By the mercy of God the corporal whose neck you wrung had a little breath left in him. The two other soldiers are also alive. The five *bravoné* who were serenading the ladies that night? Two were found very dead. Another whose shoulder felt the iron bar died after four days, I am happy to say. That iron bar? My dear young man, crowds of people still gather to look at the window from which *El Tigre* pulled the iron bar like a straw in his hands."

Richard Cary blushed. He was never a braggart nor had he aspired to a reputation like this. "Then I am a bigger fool than I thought I was. to come into Cartagena like this," said he.

"A splendid fool," replied Señor Bazán, with a whimsical twinkle. "How you expect to get out again is too much for my feeble old wits. Not in a cart, under a load of wood. Not in a Colombian sailing boat of any kind. Every sailor of Cartagena crosses himself when he hears the name of The Tiger. The muleteers and men of the river are carrying it back into the mountains. It will soon spread as far away as Bogotá."

"Then why in the name of common sense did you fetch me in from La Popa?" was the blunt question.

"How could I refuse, Mr. Cary, when you appealed to my hospitality—you a friend of my niece, the Señorita Fernandez?"

This answer was palpably evasive. Here was a riddle which only time and the crotchety impulses of Ramon Bazán could

disclose. The puzzled young man was in no mind to confide that his love for Teresa had urged him to this blind adventure. Cross currents were already visible. The uncle of Teresa had some design of his own in harboring the sailor refugee. The situation was cleared of immediate peril, however, and Richard Cary concluded that he was not to be betrayed. The rasping voice of Ramon Bazán awoke him from a reverie.

"You suspected Colonel Fajardo of plotting to kill you? Why?"

"Jealousy," was the admission. "And I was warned that he had a bad record."

"Jealousy, Mr. Cary?" twittered the old gentleman, highly diverted. "And the woman was that spitfire of a Teresa! I had my suspicions but it is not politic to wag the tongue too much in Cartagena. As it turned out, this Fajardo convicted himself."

"The devil he did," cried Richard Cary. "Then my conscience is clear from start to finish. What do you mean? How did he convict himself?"

"He fled next day—disappeared like smoke. Afraid because you were not dead? Perhaps. Afraid of a plot he had hatched while half drunk? The fact is that he was seen for the last time on the wharf before the *Tarragona* sailed. Yes, he ran away somewhere and so confessed himself guilty."

"He was that kind," said Cary. "The blackguard invited me to sit and drink with him in a café a little while before his gunmen attacked me. So he lost his nerve and decided to vamose. How did he get away?"

"Possibly in the *Tarragona*. There was some talk that he might have bribed one of the crew to hide him for the short trip to Porto Colombia or Santa Marta. But he has not been seen in those ports. I have inquired of friends. He was very well known on this coast as a colonel of the army before he was appointed *comandante* of the port. There it is. Colonel Fajardo has most thoroughly vamosed. I regret you did not hit him with the terrible iron bar."

"I shall always regret it," said Richard Cary. "Doesn't that make it more hopeful for me to climb out of this infernal scrape, Señor Bazán?"

"Not very much. You are charged with murder, assault, breaking prison and the good God knows what else. And you are *El Tigre Amarillo Grande*. The Fruit Company's agent has shown no interest in your behalf. That would be most useful."

"Captain Sterry may have turned in a bad report in New York, sir. He was biased—there was a personal difference—a grudge of his. He signed on another second mate, I presume, and I was thrown in the discard."

"Then you will have no employment as an officer, even if you are lucky enough to get away from Colombia, Mr. Cary?"

"It sounds ridiculous to look that far ahead," lazily answered the prisoner who found it hard to stay awake. "At present I seem to be cast for the part of *El Tigre* and it doesn't appeal to me at all."

Señor Bazán scolded himself for exhausting a guest already weak and in distress of mind. He took the young man by the arm and tried to steady him as they crossed the patio and entered a bedroom. The bath was near at hand.

"Pajamas to-morrow, Ricardo," said the host. "The woman in my kitchen is sewing them together. She will also make some white clothes. There are none big enough in the shops. If I visit a tailor he will pass it around as a joke that Ramon Bazán must have The Tiger in his house. Bolt your door, if it pleases you. The window has strong iron bars and nobody in Cartagena can pull them out to molest you. There are worse friends to have than old Ramon Bazán. That Teresa has called me a funny old guy to my face. You mustn't believe all she tells you."

The old gentleman went fluttering off in his hurried fashion as if shadows were forever chasing him. Richard Cary was awake for a long time. Sounds in the street disturbed him. Once he fancied he heard the distant voices of men singing and the melodious tinkle of a guitar. Again it was the pit-pat-pat of feet on the pavement outside the window. He found himself listening for the mellow note of the galleon bell in the patio. The legend returned very vividly. Would he hear a ghostly *"dong-dong—dong-dong,"* four bells, if any disaster should threaten Teresa Fernandez?

When sleep came to him, his dreams were unhappy.

CHAPTER XI.

SPANISH TREASURE.

A different man in fresh white pajamas and straw slippers, Richard Cary idled in a shady corner of the patio. A razor had reaped the heavy stubble clean. Not in the

least resembling the Yellow Tiger that gobbled naughty children, he looked amiable enough to pur. His status in this household was even more perplexing than at his arrival. Señor Bazán seemed to be afraid of his disfavor. Afraid? It should have been the other way about. It was for the helpless fugitive to exert himself by every means in his power to win and hold the regard of the eccentric old gentleman who held his life in the hollow of his hand.

Every precaution was taken to guard the secret of his presence in this house. The outer doors were kept locked. The only servants were the Indian lad and a fat black woman in the kitchen. These two mortally feared the wrath of Señor Bazán and were close-mouthed by habit. He had taught them the doctrine of assiduously minding their own business. Moreover it was a thing far more perilous to risk the vengeance of The Yellow Tiger should they drop even a whisper outside the house. How calm and harmless he seemed but imagine him in one of those rages! It was common report that no bullet could slay him.

Señor Bazán endeavored to display his very best behavior. The flighty fits of temper were restrained and he was thoughtful of the small courtesies. His energy was remarkable. As Teresa had said, he was a very old man, brittle and easily tired. At times the wheezing spells almost choked him. Quite often he dozed off with a book in his lap. Otherwise he was diabolically wide awake.

More like himself every day, Richard Cary knew that inaction would soon fret him beyond endurance. In the New Hampshire farmhouse at home he could sit and look at the fire through long lazy spells but this senseless confinement was very different. He was living and waiting for the arrival of the *Tarragona*. After that? Ramon Bazán insisted that it was impossible for him to flee this hostile coast nor did he offer the smallest hint of willingness to cooperate in any attempt. Why, then, had Richard Cary been fetched into Cartagena? It was a question that pursued itself in a tedious circle.

With all the leisure in the world to mull it over Cary found solace in the brier pipe with the amber bit which was the sole possession left him. Through his tempestuous escapades it had stayed in a trousers pocket. A pipe with a charmed life, he thought, and a precious reminder of Teresa Fernandez and their last glimpse of each other.

Now he laid it on the stone flagging beside his canvas chair and the little brown monkey came frisking over from the trellis. He snatched the pipe in a tiny black paw and was about to stick it in his mouth when Cary interfered. He laughed at the indignant little beast which squeaked profane opinions of a man who would deny a petted monkey a mere pipe. The puckered countenance, the spiteful grimace, the gusty temper were absurdly like Señor Bazán when things displeased him. At one moment the Spanish gentleman of culture and manners, in the next he might be a chattering scolding tyrant with no manners whatever.

Crack-brained? So Teresa had expressed herself but her relations with her uncle appeared to be uncertain, an intermittent feud, and she was not likely to give the devil his due. As a rule Richard Cary's verdicts were slowly formulated and uncolored by prejudice. In this instance he felt more and more convinced that there was some unseen method in the madness of Señor Ramon Bazán. He had enticed *El Tigre Amarillo Grande* into a comfortable cage and proposed to keep him there.

Meanwhile the wizened keeper of the tiger was frequently leaving the house on some affair of his own. He went jogging off in a hired carriage and was not seen again for hours. He brought back American magazines and tobacco, phonograph records, delicacies from the market, anything to amuse the restless Ricardo who chafed under the increasing burden of obligation. Nothing was said to explain why Señor Bazán should spend so much time away from his house. Secretiveness enwrapped him. He moved like an industrious conspirator.

On the day before the *Tarragona* was due in port Richard Cary took occasion to say:

"You have been a wonderfully kind friend to me, Señor Bazán, and I don't deserve it. Now that I am getting fit to take care of myself, I must plan to get away somehow. I have been waiting for the arrival of the ship, to see the Señorita Fernandez again——"

Uncle Ramon bounced from his chair and wildly waved his hands as he cried:

"It was that girl all the time? The

devil fly away with her! But I must let you see her or there will be another commotion with an iron bar. All right, Ricardo. Teresa is sure to come to my house to ask if anything was heard about you after the steamer sailed away with her. How can I keep you from seeing that girl? You have an infatuation."

"I'll take no chances," was the dogged reply. "She might be kept on board. I can write her a letter and you will send it down to the ship or take it yourself."

This ripped the temper of Señor Bazán to shreds. He slapped his bald pate and his false teeth clicked as he vociferated:

"Writing letters is a trick of idiots. It would make me as big a fool as you are to let a letter go out of my house, a letter you had written to a sweetheart. What happens to me if Cartagena finds out I am hiding you here? Bah! That girl has turned your brain into a rotten egg."

Taken aback by this tantrum Cary was strongly inclined to twist the old gentleman's neck. It was not really essential, however, to write a letter. Soothingly he suggested:

"Then you will promise to let her know that she must come to the house while she is in port? Without fail? She will guess that something is in the wind."

"Yes, I will do that much," grumbled Uncle Ramon. "I have to keep you quiet. I will drive down to the ship and bring Teresa back with me. What if the chief steward or somebody forbids her to go ashore?"

"She will come anyhow, unless I have been guessing all wrong," said Cary.

"God knows what is in the heart of a girl like that," spitefully retorted her uncle.

"One thing more, Señor Bazán. The chief engineer of the ship, Mr. McClement, is a friend of mine. I wish to get word to him, too. He can be trusted absolutely. If you will slip a word to Teresa she will arrange it so that he can drop in for a chat after dark. McClement is a man who will help you find some way to get me off your hands. And I am anxious to let him know that I am alive and didn't desert the ship."

"Why not invite the whole crew of the *Tarragona* to parade to my house with a band of music?" shouted the disgusted uncle. "Forget this pest of a chief engineer. It is enough to let that girl into the house. How do I know what mischief it will make? She is the kind that talks in her sleep."

Richard Cary felt wretchedly ashamed of his own futility. Sulkily he surrendered. Teresa could later confide in the chief engineer but it was a sore blow to be deprived of his canny wisdom and aid in this extremity. The Yellow Tiger had ceased to pur. He had not been rescued but kidnaped. He did not propose to spend much more of his life shut up in this madhouse.

He was pacing up and down next day, counting the hours. The clothes made by the handy black woman in the kitchen, white shirt and trousers, were by no means an atrocious fit. He was quite spick-and-span, a young man waiting for his sweetheart. It was late in the afternoon when the wind brought to the open courtyard the distant, vibrant blasts of a steamer's whistle. It was the *Tarragona* blowing for the wharf. He could have told that whistle from a hundred other ships. Never would he forget it, not after hearing her blow the three long blasts of departure when he had tottered up the ramp to the round watch tower on the city wall.

Earlier in the day Ramon Bazán had vanished on one of his shrouded errands, promising to go to the wharf as soon as the steamer should be reported. Cary grew more and more impatient. Soon he looked to see Teresa come flying in, slender, graceful, ardent to respond to his fond greeting. Then she would turn her attention to the wicked old uncle who was making a jail of his house and holding her Ricardo against his will. It would be a lively scene.

A carriage was heard to stop in front of the house. The young man dared not show himself but retreated to his room, as caution had taught him to do. He was chagrined at being found in such a plight. He was like a stranded hulk. But if Teresa still loved him nothing was impossible to attempt and to achieve.

Uncle Ramon came teetering in alone, very much put out and wheezing maledictions. Richard Cary advanced from the threshold of his room, grievously disappointed but expecting to hear that Teresa had been delayed until evening. Her uncle made no effort to break the news gently.

"My trip to the *Tarragona* was for nothing. I lost my breath climbing on board that ship and there was no Teresa at all."

"She was not in the ship?" blurted Cary.

"What's the answer to that? What did the chief steward say?"

"That pig of a Swiss said she had left the ship in New York. He didn't know why. A good stewardess, he called her, when she was not chasing herself about something else."

"And no word to explain why she wanted to quit or where she went?" implored the lover. "No letter to ask what had become of me?"

"Not a letter to anybody," spluttered Uncle Ramon. "It is like that hussy of a girl to go flying off like this."

"I don't agree with you," said Richard Cary. "She had some good reason of her own."

The gloomy perplexity of Teresa's young man appealed to Uncle Ramon's sympathy.

"These girls, Ricardo!" said he, his bald head cocked sagaciously. "These damned girls! They can make a Yellow Tiger look like a sick house cat. But why should I laugh? There were such girls when Ramon Bazán was a gay caballero—good God, how long ago it was—and he was never afraid to see the ears of the wolf if the prize was an embrace and a kiss. Teresa, though, she was never a girl to be a fool with the men. Not a coquette, I will say that much for the jade. She was fond of you, Ricardo. My old eyes told me that."

Richard Cary stood massive and composed. The uncle's tirade was the sound of empty words. They buzzed without biting. He could not believe that Teresa was faithless or forgetful, fleeting though the romance had been. Sad and mystified, he was not one to be dragged adrift by an ill wind. His convictions were stanch. Such was his native temperament. Because Teresa had found some reason for quitting the ship in New York it did not mean that she had forsaken him. He would find her some day and then it could be explained.

"I am badly disappointed, sir," he said to her uncle. The boyish smile was wistful as he added, "I couldn't see beyond today. Never mind. Teresa Fernandez is wise enough to steer her own course. Now, my dear Señor Bazán, I am finished with Cartagena. I am head over heels in debt to you for all your kindness, but I must be on my way. I never fell in a hole that I couldn't pull myself out of somehow. If you will help me, I'll be more grateful than ever."

It was not mere bravado. The time had come to force the hand of the benevolent old despot. The reply to this ultimatum was a sardonic chuckle. The mirth increased until it ended in spasms of coughing. Cary pounded the brittle Uncle Ramon on the back and almost broke him in two. It was exasperating to listen to him. He wiped his eyes, adjusted his false teeth and motioned the young man into the library. There the exhausted Señor Bazán curled up in a chair like a goblin and began to elucidate himself as follows:

"To laugh at a broken-hearted lover is abominable, Ricardo. I reproach myself and implore you to forgive me. It is selfish to feel so pleased, but I hope to make you understand. That girl was in the way. To me she was an obstacle. I could do nothing with you until her ship came in. And then I was afraid of her entangling you against me. With a man and girl everything must be talked over together. Will I do this? Should I do that? What does she say? I tell you, dear Ricardo, the women spoil more bold men than they ever make heroes of. For the present we are happily rid of Teresa. You will be fool enough to follow her later but that is none of the funeral of Ramon Bazán."

Richard Cary thrust his grieved disappointment into the background. Here was promise of reading the riddle of his detention. The old man had never been so ablaze with excitement as now. He caught his breath and volubly continued:

"It filled my mind when I first saw you, Ricardo—you were the man I had been looking for—the man I had to have. When that lame fellow, Palacio, came down from La Popa with your letter, I tell you I rejoiced myself. You were crazy to find that Teresa, but it was the best of fortune for Ramon Bazán. Since you have been in my house, Ricardo, I have watched you, to measure you up, and I was right as could be on that very first night. You are the man I want. Not so many bats in my *cabeza* as the saucy Teresa has told me to my face! When you know what I want you for, you will not sigh and look sad and talk about bursting out of Cartagena. You will be glad of the day when you came to live with Ramon Bazán."

"Show me any road out and I will bless you," exclaimed Cary, immensely diverted. "I knew you had something up your sleeve,

but there I stuck. Now, for the Lord's sake, please get down to brass tacks. Then I can tell you whether I'll take it or leave it."

"Come over to my desk," cried Señor Bazán, as agile as the little brown monkey. "Now sit down and listen. You do that very well. It is a virtue worth its weight in pure gold. I have observed it in you. Have you read much about Spanish treasure? Have the legends fascinated you?"

Richard Cary jumped from his chair. The words had wrenched him out of his solid composure. All he could say was, like a deep-voiced echo:

"Spanish treasure? Has it fascinated me? How did you happen to hit the mark like that?"

This quick vehemence startled Señor Bazán. It was unexpected. This new Richard Cary, aroused and masterful, was, indeed, like having a great yellow tiger in the house.

"Ah, ha, Ricardo, you smell the trail? You have dreamed of finding Spanish treasure? This is better than I hoped for. It might be a captain that sailed with *El Draque* as you stand there with eyes on fire."

"With Drake?" exclaimed Richard Cary, his arms folded across his mighty chest. "Aye, Señor Bazán, there was treasure for the men that sailed these seas with Frankie Drake. Here at Cartagena, though, it was like pulling teeth to make the fat Spanish merchants give up their gold."

Richard Cary's strong voice faltered uncertainly. He brushed a hand across his eyes as if visions had come to disturb and puzzle him, visions that flared and faded like witch fires. A moment's pause and he gained confidence. No longer content to be a listener, his speech was eager, with a flavor not archaic but unlike the careless lingo that he ordinarily used. Señor Bazán was a trifle dazed. This amazing young man whom he had handled so carefully, with such solicitude to gain his good will and gratitude, was fairly running away with him. He did not have to be coaxed or persuaded. This was already obvious.

"Dead stuff," laughed Cary. "You have it in the books on your shelves. But I enjoy talking about it—how Drake and his seamen used their long pikes in carrying the barricados in the streets after they made a breach in the wall. It was merry work while it lasted. Six hundred Englishmen to take the strongest town in the West Indies! There was a swarm of Indian bowmen with poisoned arrows that played the mischief with us. The town had to yield after Master Carlisle, the lieutenant general, slew the chief ensign bearer of the Spaniards with his own hand. They fought as pretty a duel with swords as ever a man saw. And all for what? After Drake and his men took their pleasure in sacking and spoiling the town and setting fire to a great part of it the ransom they obtained was no more than a hundred and ten thousand ducats. A beggarly adventure that laid a hundred and fifty good lads on their backs with wounds and fever."

Señor Bazán sucked in his breath with a greedy sound. He was squirming in his chair. Here was a topic he could never tire of. His obsession was revealed.

"What of that earlier voyage of *El Draque?*" he demanded, "when he took Nombre de Dios and marched across the Isthmus but turned back without an attack on Panama? There is mention of great treasure won and lost, Ricardo. I have read much, but you make it seem familiar, like the things that happened yesterday——"

"A brave expedition it was," loudly resumed Richard Cary. He talked with a glowing impetuosity. "Drake never got to Panama, as you say. It was left for Henry Morgan to gut it to his heart's content. But Drake had no more than forty-eight Englishmen at his back when he struck inland from Nombre de Dios. It was a great day when he and John Oxenham caught sight of the South Sea—the first Englishmen to set eyes on the wide Pacific Ocean. There was the high hill—they climbed it four days out from Nombre de Dios—and the tall tree in which the Cimaroon guides, the Panama Indians, cut steps and made a bower far up in the branches. And there Drake sat and gazed at the two seas, the Atlantic on the one hand, on the other the South Sea that an English keel had never furrowed. It was a bright day, with a fresh breeze and no haze in the air. He called his men to climb the tree and see for themselves. Then he prayed Almighty God of His goodness to give him life and leave once to sail in an English ship on that sea, if it would please God to grant him that happiness."

"But what of the treasure?" shrilled Señor Bazán who was near a violent eruption of impatience.

"The treasure? Oh, there were not enough men to march on Panama, as I say, and so they planned to raid a Spanish treasure train that was bound across the Isthmus to Nombre de Dios. Drake arranged the ambuscade. His seamen were hidden close to the trail when at dawn they heard the bells of the mules of the pack train. There were *three* royal treasure trains, Señor Bazán, plodding along this narrow trail through the jungle, a train of fifty mules, the others of seventy mules each, and every mule laden with three hundred pounds of silver bullion. Nigh thirty tons of silver in all! The escort of forty-five Spanish soldiers loafed along in front and rear. Their muskets were slung on their backs. Their helmets were tied around their necks. The sweat ran off their noses. The Englishmen came storming out of the ambuscade. It was like a holiday lark. They took the Spanish soldiers by surprise and they scampered for their lives. We lost only two men, and there was the plunder. What good was it to these few Englishmen? They couldn't carry it to Nombre de Dios on their backs. So they had to be content with a few bars and quoits of gold for each man, and it was all he wanted to lug in that hellish heat and jungle."

"Ah, gold bars," sighed Señor Bazán, an unholy sparkle in his eye. "And there was that immense treasure of silver bullion. What became of that, Ricardo? I feel drunk and dizzy."

"Oh, it was buried in hopes of returning some day. The pack mules ran away and there was no time to bother with them. Spanish troops, horse and foot, were sure to be sent from Panama as soon as the alarm reached that place. So we hurried to hide the thirty tons of silver, part of it in holes dug by the huge land crabs, part under fallen trees, the rest in the sand and gravel of a shallow river. It was a forced march back to Nombre de Dios, every man burdened and rear-guard skirmishes with Spanish troops to make it lively."

Richard Cary paused reflectively. Something amused him. To Señor Bazán it was tragic to hear:

"There was a Frenchman in the party, a sot who soaked up wine like a sponge. He was missing when Drake began the retreat to Nombe de Dios. It was taken for granted the Spaniards had scuppered this vagabond. Drake had reached the coast and was looking for his pinnaces in the Rio Francisco when the Frenchman appeared on the beach. He had found a skin of wine on a pack mule during the ambuscade and had tucked himself in the bushes to sleep it off. When he awoke, afraid of his life, Spanish soldiers discovered him and he was tortured until he had told where the thirty tons of silver were hid. Then they let him go. He reported that as many as two thousand Spaniards and negroes had gathered to dig and search for the treasure. So that was the end of that, Señor Bazán. Had the guzzling fool of a Frenchman stayed sober you and I might go take a look on the old treasure trail from Panama to Nombre de Dios. Drake made a map to mark the distance and bearings from the coast but he never went back to find the silver. The drunken Frenchman had given the game away."

"Thirty tons of silver! Hell and damnation!" Ramon Bazán could not help repeating over and over like a profane parrot. "If the wretch of a Frenchman hadn't babbled and Drake had been unable to go back there you and I might—but, pshaw, I babble myself, Ricardo. We have no map."

"I have a notion that I could lead you straight to the place," cheerfully observed Richard Cary, "but it would be a wild-goose chase. That trail can still be traced, I am told—some of it paved with stone. The pock-marked rogue of a Frenchman stayed sober after that. Tortured by the Spaniards and then flogged within an inch of his life by a bos'n's mate of the *Swan!* The crew was hot to hang him but Drake interfered. The poor devil swam ashore one night and took refuge with the Cimaroons before the *Swan* and *Pasha* set sail from the Spanish Main, homeward bound to Plymouth."

Richard Cary was pleasantly rambling on, yarning like a sociable Elizabethan mariner in a waterside tap room. The story of Drake's raid was not new to Señor Bazán. He had found it in his books. But this suddenly talkative young man had put flesh on its dry bones. He invested it with the charm of the unfamiliar; there were human touches which Señor Bazán could not recall reading anywhere. It was like something related by one of the actors. In fact Ricardo spoke once or twice as if he had been present, a slip of the tongue. He had been carried away by his own enthusiasm. At any rate the way was cleared for the cherished secret of Ramon Bazán. Ricardo

was in a mood to respond and sympathize. He would not scoff at an old man's dearest ambition that had for long possessed him, body and soul, that had vivified old age and decay with the magic of youth's illusions.

Señor Bazán was careful to lock the library door before seating himself at the desk. From a drawer he withdrew a folded document much crumpled and soiled. His fingers fumbled with it. He was pitifully agitated. Cary stood leaning over the desk. He foresaw the nature of the document. Ramon Bazán delayed unfolding it. The habit of secrecy was not easily broken. He preferred first to explain what was more or less known to the picaresque race of modern treasure seekers. It happened to be new to Ricard Cary's ears. He drank it in with immense gusto while humming in his brain was an old sea chantey:

"Why, I've seen less lucky fellows pay for liquor with doubloons,
And for 'baccy with ozellas, gold mohurs, and ducatoons!
Bring home! Heave and rally, my very famous men!"

Still clutching his precious document old Ramon Bazán chose Lima for the beginning of his long-winded narrative. During the last days of Spanish rule on the West Coast this capital of Peru had been the lordliest city of the vast domains won by the conquistadores and ruled by the viceroys. Founded by Francisco Pizarro it was for centuries the seat of government in South America. The viceregal court was maintained in magnificent state and the Archbishop of Lima was the most powerful prelate of the continent.

Here the religious orders were centered and to Lima the Inquisition was removed from Cartagena. Of the incredible amount of gold and silver taken from the mines of the Incas, much remained in Lima to pile up fortunes for the grandees and officials, or to be fashioned into massive adornments for the palaces, residences, churches and for the great cathedral which stands to-day to proclaim the grandeur that was Spain. "To Cartagena its walls, to Lima its cathedral," runs the saying.

When Bolivar, the Liberator, succeeded in driving the Spanish out of Venezuela and set up the free republic of Colombia the ruling classes of Peru took alarm which increased to panic as soon as it was known that the revolutionary forces were organizing to march south and assault Lima itself. There was great running to and fro among the wealthy Spanish merchants, the holders of political offices under the viceroy, and the gilded aristocracy which had ruffled it with riches won by the swords of their two-fisted ancestors. It was feared that the rebels of Bolivar and San Martin would loot the city and confiscate the treasure, both public and private, which consisted of bullion, plate, jewels, and coined gold.

The people of Lima, hoping to send their private fortunes safe home to Spain before the plundering invaders should make a clean sweep, put their valuables on board all manner of sailing vessels which chanced to be in harbor. A fugitive fleet of merchantmen steered away from the coast of Peru, the holds filled with gold and silver, the cabins crammed with officials of the church and state and other residents of rank and station. In the same manner was sent to sea the treasure of the great cathedral of Lima, all its jeweled chalices, monstrances, and vestments, the weighty gold candlesticks and shrines, the vast store of precious furniture and ornaments which had made this one of the richest religious edifices in the world.

There had not been so much dazzling booty afloat since the galleon fleets were in their heyday. Gone, however, were the dauntless buccaneers and gentlemen adventurers who had singed the beard of the King of Spain in the wake of Francis Drake. The best of them had sailed and fought and plundered for glory as well as gain, as much for revenge as for doubloons. Their successors as sea rovers were pirates of low degree, wretches of a sordid commercialism who preyed on honest merchant skippers of all flags and had little taste for fighting at close quarters. The older race of sea rogues had been wolves; these later pirates were jackals.

Many a one of these gentry got wind of the fabulous treasure that had been sent afloat from Lima and there is no doubt that much of it failed to reach Spain. While in some instances these fleeing ships were boarded and scuttled by pirate craft, in others the lust of gold was too strong for the seamen to whom the rare cargoes had been intrusted. They rose and took the treasure away from their hapless passengers whose bodies fed the fishes.

Among these treacherous mariners and the

most conspicuous of them was one Captain Thompson of the British trading brig *Mary Dear.* He received on board in the harbor of Lima as much as six million dollars' worth of silver and gold. The black-hearted Captain Thompson led his crew in killing the Spanish owners once the brig was out at sea. Instead of sailing south around Cape Horn they steered northward in the Pacific and made a landing at the lonely Cocos Island.

There much of the booty was carried ashore and buried until such time as these villains could safely plan distribution and escape. Wisely preferring to stay at sea, Captain Thompson joined the crew of a well-known pirate, Benito Bonito, who also had bloodied his hands with this Spanish treasure. He had captured a rich galleon off the coast of Peru and two other vessels bearing riches sent from Lima. On Cocos Island, at the advice of Captain Thompson, he buried some of his treasure in a sandstone cave in the face of a cliff. Then he laid kegs of powder upon a ledge close by and blew great fragments of the cliff to cover the cave. In another excavation he placed gold ingots, seven hundred and thirty-three of them. They were ten inches long and four inches wide and three inches thick. With them were twoscore gold-hilted swords inlaid with jewels.

The records of the British admiralty show that Benito Bonito's ship was captured by H. M. S. *Espiegle* which was cruising in the Pacific. Rather than be hanged in chains this affluent pirate gallantly blew out his brains. At this time Captain Thompson was no longer sailing in company with him and so saved his own wicked skin. One rumor had it that he was garroted in Havana, under another name, with eleven of his old crew of the brig *Mary Dear.* Other curious stories indicated that he flitted in obscurity from port to port, in mortal terror of Spanish vengeance and never daring to disclose the secret of Cocos Island.

CHAPTER XII.

RICARDO WRITES A LETTER.

Such was the narrative as old Ramon Bazán poured it forth with various impassioned digressions which included cursing the souls of Captain Thompson and Benito Bonito. Excitement made him pepper it with Spanish phrases which had to be translated. The effort sorely taxed his vitality. As Richard Cary said to himself, it was like a boiling kettle. The lid had blown off. A bully yarn, he called it, better than Drake and the thirty tons of lost bullion because it teased the imagination and sounded the call of adventure.

Artfully the climax had been withheld. With the gloating affection of a miser in a melodrama Señor Bazán spread the creased, soiled document upon the desk. He guarded it with both hands as if Cary might snatch it and bolt for the street. A chart, as the young man had anticipated—a ragged island roughly sketched—the depths of water marked in fathoms—shore elevations shown by fuzzy scratches like caterpillars—sundry crosses and arrows and notations in figures. Here and there the penmanship was almost illegible. Time had faded the ink. Dirt had smudged the sheet of yellowed paper ripped out of some old canvas-backed log book which might have belonged in the doomed *Mary Dear.* Ramon Bazán poised a skinny finger over a symbol inked between two hills and piped exultantly:

"Six million dollars in gold and silver and jewels, Ricardo. And here is the cave where Benito Bonito hid the ingots."

Cary picked up a reading glass and studied the sheet of paper with the eye of a professional navigator. The chart was the handiwork of a seaman, this he speedily concluded. The compass bearings were properly marked, the anchorage for a vessel noted with particular care, and a channel between the reefs indicated by heavier lines of a pen. The rest of the chart was cryptic, impossible to make head or tail of without prolonged examination. It was interesting but not convincing to Richard Cary, who had heard of similar treasure charts. Seafaring men gossiped about them. They turned up every now and again in the possession of credulous dreamers who swore them to be authentic.

There were excellent reasons, however, for avoiding skepticism in discussing this prodigious marvel with Señor Bazán. Here was Richard Cary's chance to put the walls of Cartagena behind him, his one tangible hope of salvation. And he was not a man to hang back from seeking Spanish treasure as his next gamble with destiny.

"Where is this Cocos Island?" he asked.

"Only two hundred miles from the coast of Costa Rica," instantly answered Ramon.

"You see, it is a short voyage through the Canal and into the Pacific. You will not have to climb a tree to look at your great South Sea. You are wondering why I should have so much faith in this chart. I am easily fooled? Well, then, it costs a great deal of money to pay for a ship and a crew to go to Cocos Island and dig up the treasure. Nobody ever saw Ramon Bazán spend a dollar unless he knew what he was doing. They call him the stingiest old tight fist in Cartagena. To get ahead of him you must rise before the cock crows."

"Yes, it will cost you a good many thousands," agreed Cary. "Do you mind telling me why you think you have a sure thing in this treasure chart?"

"It is fair to ask me that question, Ricardo. When did the *Mary Dear* sail away from Lima? One hundred years ago and a little bit more. One hundred and three years ago. This chart was given to me by my father. He lived and died in Cartagena and he was eighty-six years old when he died in this house. It was always mañana with him and he had business that tied him to the grindstone. He had dreams of going to Cocos Island. Figure it for yourself, Ricardo. This chart came to him just one hundred years ago. Will you laugh at me if I say this chart was given to him by Captain Thompson himself?"

"In Cartagena I believe anything and everything," gravely acquiesced Richard Cary. "You couldn't make me bat an eye to save you. The fever downed this Captain Thompson, I presume, while he was dodging under cover, and your father befriended him. That is how it happened."

"Exactly that! Truth is funnier than fiction," cried Ramon Bazán, bobbing up from the desk. "My father had the kindest heart in the world. This stranger was dumped on the beach from a Mexican privateer which came in for fresh water. The man was ill and almost dead. My father took him into this house. He died in the room where you now sleep, Ricardo. A merchant captain, he said, whose ship had been wrecked off the Isle of Pines. Just before he died he told the truth, which is a proper thing to do, Ricardo. One should always make his peace with God. Then it was that my father received the chart and learned the whole story of Captain Thompson and the *Mary Dear* and the partnership with the pirate Benito Bonito."

"I am in no position to pick flaws in it," said Cary. "I could tell you wilder ones than that. And you actually have a ship in mind to sail for Cocos Island and you want me to take her there?"

Ramon Bazán seemed to have some sudden difficulty with his articulation. He opened his mouth. His eyes bulged. His gestures were aimless as he faltered in a high key:

"The ship will be ready—the ship will be—will be—will be——"

His voice died in his throat. His face was contorted in a spasm of agony. He toppled across the desk, his hands drumming against it.

Richard Cary stood dumfounded. This was the devil of a new complication! The possible consequences raced through his mind. Ramon Bazán dead in his library—*El Tigre Amarillo Grande* hiding in the house—a fatal snarl of circumstances from which there could be no possible release! Fantastically it occurred to him that the old man could not die in this tragic manner because the galleon bell had not intoned its ghostly forewarning.

Delaying only an instant, Cary ran to the kitchen shouting for the black woman who might know what should be done. She took it calmly, waddling into the library, making the terrified young man understand that Papa Ramon was subject to such seizures. In a small cabinet she found a vial and shook out two capsules. These she rammed between the suffering man's lips and crushed them against his teeth. Like a miracle, the acute anguish subsided. It was his heart, *mucho malo.*

The corpulent negress picked him up in her arms like a baby and laid him upon the bed in his room. With a menacing finger under Cary's nose she dared to berate him. Topics of conversation more soothing were necessary to the welfare of the fragile old Papa Bazán.

Shunted aside, Richard Cary retired to a wicker divan in a cool corner and smoked his pipe while he took account of stock. He was nervous. Said he to himself:

"Big as I am and hard to jolt, I can stand just about so much. Here is one bet that I did overlook. Why didn't the old boy tell me he had a balky heart? Supposing his clock stops before he gets me out of this? Whew!"

After some time he tiptoed into the

stricken man's room. It was delightful beyond words to find him propped up with pillows and sipping a stiff glass of rum and lime juice. He was a forlorn little object, more shriveled and brittle than ever but his eye was brightening again and he mustered a shadowy grin. Soothingly Cary suggested:

"Thinking it over, sir, you ought to turn this business of the voyage over to me as soon as you can. You don't want to pop off before we even sight Cocos Island. I agree to go, of course. Now where is your ship and what is she like? I am competent to take hold."

"Thank you, Ricardo," murmured Papa Bazán, with a long pull at the rum. "It was too much excitement. Sit down, if you please. We can talk quietly, like two pigeons. I knew you would agree to go with me whether you wanted to or not. I had you by the hair of the head. But unless I have won your confidence, unless you go willingly, you can desert the ship at Colon and then where am I? I am bright enough to see that far."

"I promise to stand by," said Cary. "In the first place, it is a matter of honor. Perhaps you did kidnap me to serve your own ends but that doesn't lighten my obligation. I have no intention of getting out from under it. You have made a pampered guest of me and now you offer me the one chance of oozing out of Cartagena with a whole skin. In the next place, I am crazy to go to Cocos Island with you. We'll see the thing through. And there's that."

"Then I am a well man, as spry as a tarantula," sputtered Ramon Bazán. "Have you a master's license, Ricardo? It will concern the insurance on my steamer. I can't afford to risk heavy loss. All the money I can scrape together will be in this voyage."

"Yes, I hold a master's ticket. And I am fed up with twiddling my thumbs, so let's go to it. What do you say?"

"But I can't turn the ship over to you until she is ready to go to sea, at the very last minute," lamented the owner. "You will have to be sneaked on board at night and hidden until the steamer is ready to sail or the Colombians in the crew will jump over the side. One look at *El Tigre Grande* and—adios! Ten hundred things have I had on my hands to arrange and do you wonder at my bad heart kicking a flip-flop?"

"I'll pray for your health, believe me," devoutly returned the nervous mariner. "Now about this steamer——"

"She is very awful to look at," was the frank admission. "A German tramp that was interned four years at Cartagena. I bought her cheap, Ricardo. Rusty and afflicted with heart disease and other things, she will not sink if the weather is kind. But you yourself could never make the mistake of thinking she was the *Tarragona*. I have found a crew for my shabby *Valkyrie*. Not such men as you will love, Ricardo, for I must take what I find. They must hear not a whisper of Cocos Island. It is a trading voyage to the West Coast. The ship will clear for Buenaventura, a Pacific port of Colombia."

"We'll drive that condemned old crock along somehow," cheerfully responded Richard Cary. "When do we sail?"

"A few days more, my captain. A little coal to put in and boiler tubes to be plugged. Coal is cheaper at Balboa. We can fill the bunkers there. As Heaven hears my voice, Ricardo, unless we find the treasure this voyage will ruin poor old Ramon Bazán."

The interview had taken a turn which was not good for a damaged heart. The owner of the *Valkyrie* was growing excited. Cary thought it best to let the details rest. The old gentleman's health interested him enormously. It was like carrying a basket of eggs along a very rough road.

The breakable Papa Bazán insisted on getting into his clothes next morning and seemed little the worse for wear. Instead of venturing from the house, however, he briskly employed the telephone to expedite his affairs. The telephone as an agent in a Spanish treasure voyage amused Richard Cary. It was absurdly out of key with its background. So was a rusty German tramp steamer, for that matter, and a passage through the locks of the Panama Canal, but the spirit and temper of the enterprise defied these incongruities. Romance may change her garments but her bright face is eternal.

Still compelled to twiddle his thumbs, Cary assembled many odds and ends of useful information. It was quite apparent that Ramon Bazán had not been running around in aimless circles. He was amazingly capable of getting what he wanted and without the eternal delays of his native clime. Those who now did business with him found his pertinacity as vexing as the itch.

The *Valkyric* was a small vessel, of nine hundred tons, which had flown the German flag in the coasting trade of Colombia and Venezuela until gripped by the greedy hand of war. Corroded and blistering, a sad orphan of the sea, she had slumbered at an anchor chain in the lagoon of Cartagena until rashly purchased by Ramon Bazán after a season of dickering and bickering to make a New England horse trader jealous. When he found how much repair work was unavoidable, his heart almost stopped forever. What made it beat again was the stimulus, more potent than capsules, of the six millions of treasure of the brig *Mary Dear,* besides those seven hundred and thirty-three gold ingots piled in the cave by the arithmetical Benito Bonito.

A shipping venture to make his old age something more than dry rot and stagnation, explained Ramon Bazán. As a whim of this erratic old fellow, the Cartagena merchants found it mirthful. A guardian should interpose before he squandered all his money. A few critics argued to the contrary. In his prime Ramon Bazán had been famous for shrewdness. Who could tell? He might have something up his sleeve.

The problem of raking a crew together caused some speculation. Cartagena was a languid seaport. Most of the commerce had been diverted to Porto Colombia. The American beach combers who drifted in from the Canal Zone were more or less of a nuisance. It was one of these that Ramon Bazán had put in charge of his ship as chief officer while fitting for sea.

"What do you know about this chief officer?" asked Richard Cary.

"If I knew more I should like him less," was the peevish reply. "He calls himself Captain Bradley Duff. He commanded ships, to hear him say so, but I think he lost his ticket somewhere. He had a job with the North American Mining Company at Calamar for a little while. A large, important man, Ricardo, with pimples on his nose and a very red face—his stomach is round and his feet are flat. He has a big voice and a whisky breath. But he knows a ship and he can't graft very much because I pay all the bills. He asks me why he is not made captain of the *Valkyrie?* You will understand why when you know him, Ricardo."

"I don't have to know him, thank you. You can find a frowsy Captain Bradley Duff in almost any port. They make a loud noise and throw a chesty front. Is your chief engineer the same kind?"

"No. I was lucky to find him. A long, thin boy, younger than you, Ricardo, and with manners courteous to an old man. He wandered to Colombia from Boston because he had the loose foot. You know. To take a look at the tropics. Nothing wrong with him. He was an assistant engineer in steamers between Boston and Norfolk. Down this way he was in charge of the ice plant at Barranquilla until his foot felt loose again. For two weeks he has been sweating with the engines of the *Valkyrie,* always cheerful, and he says he will hammer seven knots out of the old contraption or blow her to the middle of next week. Contraption? He made me laugh. The *Valkyric* is just that."

For Richard Cary it was a game of blind man's buff, with such random echoes as these to make him call it a choice between being shot in Cartagena or drowned in a coffin of a ship. It was a mad world and daily growing madder. However, he liked it and would not have exchanged lots with the spruce Captain Jordan Sterry and the immaculate *Tarragona* punctually running her lawful schedule.

One thing troubled him and one thing only. He could not bear to go surging off into this uncertain escapade without sending some word to Teresa Fernandez. Wherever she might be a letter would probably be forwarded if addressed in care of the Union Fruit Company's offices in New York. He could not disclose his plans but he could ask her to wait for him. So straitly was he fettered by circumstances that he felt bound to say to Señor Bazán:

"It is your secret, this voyage to Cocos Island. I have no idea of giving it away but I must write Teresa before we sail. There is no harm in telling her that I have found a good berth in a ship in the West Coast trade for two or three months. She knows how dull shipping is at home. I disappeared from the *Tarragona,* you remember, and I want her to understand that it wasn't my fault."

"Write her that much, then," cried her waspish uncle, "but no more, on your honor, Ricardo. Fill that girl with all the beautiful lies you like about love and separations, but not one word about the *Valkyrie* and Ramon Bazán. By my soul and breeches,

we must keep Teresa quiet. Nobody knows what she will do next. Put your letter on the desk with my letters. I will take them to the post office when I go out to-morrow."

For a young man naturally candid and unversed in evasions it was a mortally difficult letter to write. He hated the web of secrecy which had inexorably enmeshed him. Besides this, he was writing his first love letter, and to a girl who had vanished from his ken. The situation was intricate, wretchedly confused. For the time he had given hostages to fortune and was not his own free man. To tell the whole truth, to explain to Teresa that, for love of her, he had sought a hiding place in Cartagena with a price on his head and was now off for a fling at pirate's gold to pour into her lap, this would have satisfied the normal impulses of a young man who desired to stand well in the eyes of his *enamorada*.

With a sigh and a frown and a smile now and then he finished the task. The letter he laid on the desk of Uncle Ramon Bazán, as instructed. It was gone next morning, he was particular to notice, when the owner of the *Valkyrie* had hastily departed in a carriage to pursue his harassing affairs.

What Richard Cary did not know was that his letter was not among those which Señor Bazán had casually tucked in a pocket after observing that all of them bore stamps. He may have inferred that the young man had changed his mind. At any rate it was a detail which soon slipped from an aged and heavily laden mind. All the letters found on the desk were deposited at the post office and this was the end of the transaction.

The perversity of fate had assumed the guise of a little brown monkey of morbidly inquisitive habits. Early in the morning he had strayed in from the patio. The library was forbidden hunting ground and therefore alluring. No doubt he was searching for Cary's brier pipe as the especial quest. From a chair he had easily hopped to the top of the flat desk. The pile of letters ready for mailing arrested his errant fancy. First he shuffled them as though playing solitaire. Then he selected an envelope at random. It crackled as he squeezed it.

The stamp in the corner caught his eye. A paw with sharp nails peeled off a corner of stamp. He tasted it. The flavor was agreeable. Some sound in the hall just then disturbed his pastime. He tucked the one letter under his arm and took it along for leisurely investigation. It might be worth chewing for more of that pleasant flavor.

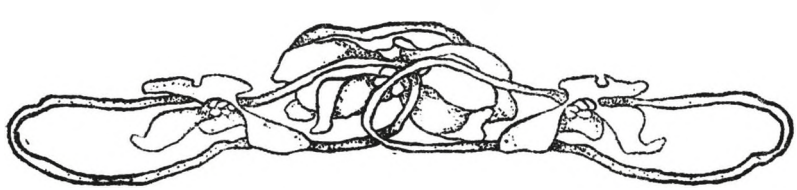
Lightly the little brown monkey frisked from the library and galloped across the patio. In a far corner were two large tubs, painted green, which held young date palms. Behind them was a secluded nook where the astute monkey had often hidden such objects as appealed to his fickle fancy.

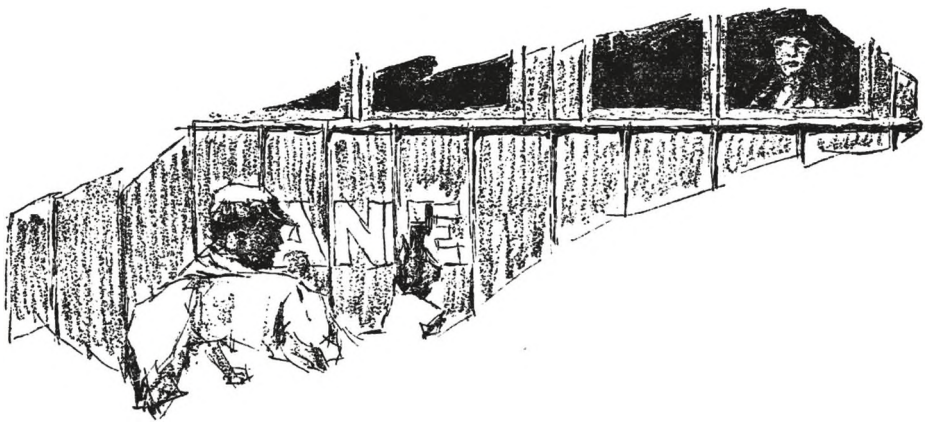
Into this snug retreat he retired with the crackling envelope. Gravely intent, he tore the envelope open. He crammed a piece of it into his cheek. The taste was disappointing. He was angry. He had been hoaxed. He chattered profanely. With a grimace he tore the sheets of paper into strips. Then he tore the strips into very little bits of paper. They fluttered down behind the green tubs.

The brown monkey looked pleased. He raked the bits of paper together and tossed them in air. They floated down like petals of white flowers when he shook a bush in the patio. Some of them stuck to his hairy hide. Very carefully he picked them off. He scooped up another handful of these bits of paper and flung them up.

Soon tiring of this frolic he swept all the bits of paper into a wide crack of the masonry wall behind the tubs. He had learned to be discreet. It was unwise to leave any traces of a foray into that forbidden library. Once it had resulted in a little brown monkey with a very sore head. Papa Bazán had used the flat of a brass paper cutter.

To be continued in the next issue, October 20th.





The Jane—By Act of Providence

By Calvin Johnston

Author of "Pioneer of Dust Storm Station," "The Peak of Presentiment," Etc.

Providence changes the names of a Pullman car and a lady.

'TIS well known that Providence, in the mystery of Him, does not hesitate to astonish mankind by His acts," said the old switchman to the night yard crew; "and that these acts may be pleaded in court where accidents have resulted. One time He broke a sound rail under some flat cars taking a flying switch on the old P. D. and the corner of the Callahan feed mill was smashed. But the astonishment that He should break a sound rail as proven by the claims attorney to Callahan, was increased when it was discovered that He had only been using a mysterious means of dealing a body blow to those men who name the Pullman and parlor cars."

"Sure this is too much," said the night foreman irritably. "I have heard ye tell many tales of the P. D., and thought at the time—and I am naming no names—that if some man present was within the truth it was only by the skin of his teeth. I said nothing at all, being a man of few words and manners, y'understand; but the politeness of me can be pushed so far, and I do not choose to pretend belief in the story of Providence using a wreck at a feed mill to wallop the namers of parlor cars who, as every one knows, have been flying in the face of Him to this day. I have one in the yard to-night whose name takes up half a page of the coach-yard list."

"Peace, you man of few words," replied Danny calmly; "and what you cannot believe of what I tell ye, consider one of the mysteries of Providence."

He lighted his pipe pensively with a coal from the shanty stove, cocking his ear to the wind of the starless autumn night, which shook the window and wailed at the threshold in monitory gusts. Clairvoyant he seemed, and made a gesture to something which young Hogan could not see; so that the latter strung his nerves to hear a beginning of fierce deeds and haunted places. But Danny smiled at him kindly.

This night does not at all remind me of the start of the story of Jane, the parlor car. For that was a sunny May morning in the yards at Barlow, without clouds, without dust. Even the exhaust of the switch engine had the note of a bugle and the dirty skylights of the shops seemed flooded with quicksilver. Just the sort of morning, y'understand, when Grief yawns and stretches where he has been asleep in the bottomless pit and the Fiend sends him out to earn his keep.

But Grief was not yet astir at ten o'clock and young Marty Donovan coming out of the paint shop bareheaded with the hair over his eyes and fondly stroking his brushes like the artist he was, whistled with

gayety between his teeth. Down the yard at the headquarters-building platform Superintendent Rivets stood in the sun with his hands in his pockets, for once idling and forgetting his grouch. The yard crew went about their work so slowly that it seemed they were only stretching with drowsiness around the snoring engine. And every one, idling, whistling, stretching on this, Grief's holiday, was sure to have his eye caught by the beautiful splotch like an ember of crimson at the center of the shop yard which gave class to the whole picture, as Marty Donovan explained afterward.

'Twas, indade, the former parlor car Aurelius which had been rebuilt within as a private car for Superintendent Rivets, and proud he was to see it now shining brassy and red, the first private car of a division superintendent on the P. D. That evening he was to start his first trip in it along of Mrs. Rivets, who had invited her niece, Miss Callahan, as was daughter of the feed man, for her guest.

At the moment Rivets stood there then, swollen with pride of the car, Marty Donovan was approaching it on one side and on the other Miss Callahan with her satchel. Inside she went and busied herself with some decorations which were to be a surprise to her friend, and outside Marty Donovan tousled the long hair of him in puzzlement over some decorating he had been sent out to do by the master mechanic himself.

"Sure the name the M. M. told me to put on the car was O'Relius," he said, "but how is it spelled, and why should an Irishman have such a name, and who is he anyhow that a Donovan should paint it in gold?"

Puzzled he was and in some indignation over the problem when the young lady sat down at the open window just above to trim at her decorations. In the frame of the window her dark eyes and hair and fairness of skin made a picture, as she turned with surprise that a young man should be looking at her.

"'Tis not as a spectator I am admiring you at all, which wouldn't be good manners and me not knowing you yet," explained Marty. "I am an artist and seeing you there hung up in a frame makes me wish I could paint such a picture."

He held up the tubes of paint and the brushes and shook his tousled hair, so that she knew it was true at once.

"I think you had better go find some one else to paint," answered Miss Callahan with a frown.

"No, here is the place I was looking for and my easel is already set up," he explained, and after a moment's reflection Miss Callahan moved to a seat on the other side of the car, where presently she saw the artist below the window.

"Must I move again?" she asked with coldness.

"'Tis not necessary at all—you do not bother me," answered Marty, "and I will be back and forth painting on first one side and then the other."

"You are painting a picture on two sides?" began Miss Callahan, and blushed with displeasure at the interest she had shown.

"I will explain," answered Marty, "because of the interest you take in the arts. By easel I meant the car itself on which I am to paint the name——"

"So that is the art of ye——"

"I paint on canvas too, faces or landscapes, 'tis all one; but divil a bit of good does an artist get out of starving. And I find that a name painted on a railroad coach will get one more to eat than a name signed in a studio—if you know what I mean."

"I understand; everything is quite simple," replied the girl and was about to move again, for Marty had placed his hands behind his back and was tilting back and forth on his toes as if ready to talk all day. But curiosity let fall the question: "And what is the name you are painting on the car?"

"O'Relius," said Marty, tousling his hair; "and who he is and why his name should be painted on cars——"

For the first time the young lady smiled. "He was a Roman emperor of old," she said.

"Glory be—'tis hard to keep an Irishman down," said Marty. "How did he spell it?"

But the young lady was frowning at him, forgetting her work. "'Tis a horrid old name," she said, "and I do not believe Mrs. Rivets will like it at all."

"Sure she will not," agreed Marty with promptness.

"Well, it is spelled 'Aurelius,'" said Miss Callahan with a sigh for Mrs. Rivets.

"Then he did not know how to spell and was a person of no eddycation. Think of

it," he said, "such a name for Mrs. Rivets' car with so many lovely ones to choose from —Norah, Katy, Bridget—and that last might be your own, miss."

"It might be Jane," said Miss Callahan, and Marty bowed, giving his own name.

"Now, I will go on with my job," he said, "and if you please do not move, for 'tis an inspiration for an artist to talk as he works."

"I declare, I give up," laughed Miss Callahan with a flush; "and may as well listen here as on the other side of the car." So they did talk and become more acquainted for Marty was himself pleasant and good looking and the girl was offended by his admiration less and less as it was explained to her.

And by this time Grief, having crawled yawning out of the pit, stood looking over Marty's shoulder and seeing nothing further he could do here for the present crossed the yard and broke a rail under a string of cars making a flying switch. The crash like the first faint gun of battle floated over the yard and the young couple stopped chatting to look, and Rivets took his hands out of his pockets, and the switchman on the cars jumped for his life. Then came the second crash as the cars pitched into the end of the Callahan feed mill and the curses of old Callahan ran like the flash of a train of powder to the yardmen on the engine, and to Rivets, winding up with Miss Callahan who only said: "Gracious me; why are they knocking down father's mill? They will hurt him."

Marty ran with her across the yard where they found her father unhurt and arguing with the yardmen. Divil a man of them could outargue Callahan, who was stout and red faced and strong for his rights; his shoulders and the brim of his old slouch hat were white with meal and bran which he shook off in puffs of dust as he demanded damages for the hole in the corner of his mill.

Now Rivets came up and hearing the engine foreman's explanation, congratulated him. "I congratulate you on doing only a few dollars damage when it was possible for you to do a thousand," he said, for now Grief had spoiled his whole morning and he was bitter.

"What do you mean, a few dollars?" said Callahan. But Rivets, stepping back to the spot where the cars had jumped exclaimed with wonder and pointed to the broken rail.

"'Twas not the fault of the men or the equipment," he said.

"Sure not; it was my fault," said Callahan, but was pushed gently aside by the yard detective who had come up to take the case.

"Any info, chief?" he asked Rivets, who pointed to the broken rail, and the detective got down to sight along the part which was still spiked to the ties. "All sound, chief, as far as it goes," he said.

"As far as it goes," screamed Callahan; "but it don't go far enough. What about that part broken off down there in the ditch?"

"Now, Mr. Callahan," argued the detective, his big derby down over his eyes; "the railroad cannot be responsible beyant the rails which are on the ties. As for those, or parts of them, which are not on the ties at all, how can you expect the cars to run over them?"

Sure Callahan was stunned but Rivets gritted his teeth at the reasoning of his detective and not only the morning but the whole day was spoiled for him. "Lift the rest of that rail and put both pieces on my platform where the claims attorney can examine them," he ordered. "He'll take it up with you, Callahan," and he departed with the detective calling after that he would collect all the info.

"Now," said Marty to Miss Callahan, "we will go back and look at the job which I was just finishing."

A man standing before the car writing in a book, moved on as the two came up. "'Tis the car clerk taking his daily record for the general car accountant at big headquarters," remarked Marty.

Miss Callahan said nothing because of a faintness which made her lean one way and then the other till steadied by Marty. "What has happened?" she asked.

"Oh, Mrs. Rivets would not like O'Relius, and small blame to her," explained Marty, and looked fondly at the big gold lettering on the side of the car which he had finished with an illigant scroll.

"Jane!" exclaimed the girl.

"And a fine name it is, too," said Marty. "Jane Callahan, though I had to wait for the wreck of your father and his mill to learn the last."

The girl had stopped wringing her hands and looked at him queerly. "Now, you have had your joke and must paint it out."

"Even if it was a joke instead of a testimony of esteem to ye," he answered, "'tis too late to change now. For the car clerk has it in his record which will be at big headquarters to-morrow."

And she hissed at him in anger and desperation: "You will be fired when it is found out."

"As an artist," hissed Marty back to her, "I tell ye this; that if they prefer O'Relius to Jane I will go to the head timekeeper and draw my time. Time is fleeting anyway, but art is long," he said, and the girl stared at him more queerly than ever.

"You keep me confused," she complained. "I do not know how to talk to you."

"Then listen——" But she would not and hastening into the car for her satchel and hat started home blindly waving him back with a moan:

"What will Mr. and Mrs. Rivets say to me?"

"Well, you did not paint the name or know it was there," said Marty. "How can they suspect you?"

At this she pulled up short, thinking deeply, in her tracks, and then she began, smiling: "No, they will never suspect I had anything to do with it at all," she said. "Why, they can't; how could they?" and the smile became a laugh.

"I think I am still confused and do not know what I am about," she told him; "and you may carry my satchel as far as the mill."

Which he did and there told her, "Good-by for the present, and a pleasant trip on the Jane," at which she turned away laughing more than ever.

"Such eyes and hair; such a girl, frowning or moaning or laughing," reflected Marty on his way back to the shop. "Oh, Miss Jane Callahan, you have more to answer for this day than forging your name to a private car."

II.

Having paid for his keep so well at Barlow, Grief might have laid off with a clear conscience, but kept on to big headquarters along of the car clerk's report. And there in the course of the morning the part of the report which concerned him came to the hand of that official who names and can pronounce the private and parlor cars of a system. A small department it seems to the eye, being bare of the dictionaries and large learned books you would expect to find there, with all the names anything has ever been christened to its face or called behind its back. They are not needed at all, for this official has the gift, y'understand, of collecting sounds under his tongue and rolling them into a name.

So on this morning while in absence of mind, this official, Mr. Jones, was collecting the roars and hisses of animals to be used in naming a new diner, and, very appropriate it was for the P. D. eating service, he came on Jane in the report. "'Tis an abbreviation of Janetofibulus," he said, enraged with the car clerk for the irreverence of him. But presently he could no longer deceive himself and after a pale and shaken day took the evening train to Barlow for conference.

In the morning he was waiting in the office for Rivets, who had been called back from his inspection trip by another and worse outbreak of Grief.

"Jane!" said Mr. Jones, but Rivets shook his head with impatience.

"I am not," he snarled, "you are crazy or intoxicated by which token you must be an employee on my division——"

However, when the official introduced himself, Rivets shook hands in apology, being ever a diplomat with those from big headquarters, whether crazy or intoxicated or not.

"Jane," began the official, "where is the Jane?" and again Rivets snarled to himself.

"Sure there must have been a time-card meeting," he said and shook his head in resignation for answer.

"But you have been out with her," said Jones. "I have just come from the dispatcher's office——"

"You mean my new car," said Rivets, brightening. "I had forgotten what they labeled her," and pointed up the yard where it had been dropped as he came in.

"Bad scran to him for not saying what he meant," said Rivets, and had seated himself at his desk, piled with pink telegrams which indicated immediate answer, and green telegrams which indicated quicker than immediate, when the claims attorney came in and seated himself and put his heels on the desk and lighted a cigar.

"About this Callahan claim," he said with a yawn, "why don't you answer your pink and green wires and get them off the desk? There is hardly room for my feet!"

"Don't you want to go up the yard and see the Jane?" asked Rivets.

"Yes. Jane who?" replied the claims attorney, looking out of the window. "But I thought we were talking about Callahan. He will be over here in a few minutes; I see him coming now. Which Jane are you talking about?"

Callahan burst in giving himself a shake which raised a sneezing dust of meal and bran and as he began presenting his case his daughter followed and took his arm so that she could shake him and whisper that he must not become excited.

"I am not excited" said Callahan; "but if I must become excited I will. Another thing, Mr. Claims Attorney, if you must knock my mill to pieces, why wait till I get inside of it to begin?"

A solemn and dignified man was this attorney who now came up and shook hands with Callahan. "I congratulate you on escaping the wrath of Providence," he said; "for, whist, 'twas not me or the switchman or the equipment was to blame." Callahan's eyes followed the attorney's finger as he pointed upward with solemnity. "Doubtless, Callahan," he said, "you have done something to anger Him, and taking advantage of the occasion when the flat cars were coming in your direction He broke a perfectly sound rail under the wheels and hurled them on the mill where you were no doubt engaged in sifting meal and bran. 'Tis not for me to condemn," went on the attorney, "yet there is a fitter way of receiving the decree of Providence than cursing about it, and you not even trying in penitence to avert the judgment when it came, but engaged in sifting meal and bran."

He said "meal and bran" with such reproach that Callahan shook himself uneasily and sneezed, and Miss Callahan shook his arm and told him he must not become excited.

Superintendent Rivets, who might have listened to the talk on the ways of Providence with profit to himself, was writing answers passing the buck on the subjects of the green and red wires, when official Jones came in again.

"It is Jane," he exclaimed, and the claims attorney whispered:

"Ye will excuse me a moment, Callahan, while I get a line on this Jane business—a matter of great company interest."

"What of it?" snarled Rivets, and slammed down his pen and then picked it up and nodded politely.

"But Jane is a forgery; it should be Aurelius," explained Jones, and at that the excitement which had only threatened Callahan attacked his daughter in earnest, so that her cheeks paled and teeth chattered out loud.

"Papa—you must not become——" she began again and Callahan, feeling his arm trembling, agreed in alarm:

"Hush daughter; I promise; I will be calm if they make jackstraws out of the mill."

"Listen, Mr. Jones," said Rivets politely, "the name of the car is of no moment to me."

"But it should be," said Jones, pale and shaken. "Jane is of no class or distinction and will lower the tone of the whole parlor-car and Pullman service, and 'twill be a humiliation to you. For suppose you found yourself," he said with triumph, "in a train next to the Abracadabra!"

"True," agreed Rivets, and rather than take the chance of such humiliation he gave Jones a note to the master mechanic, saying he would be guided in the matter of naming the car by the latter's judgment.

"And I will get to the bottom of this mystery of the forgery," said Jones with such resolution that the teeth of Miss Callahan chattered again. But as he hurried out, the claims attorney turned on Callahan with a look of bitterness and bit by bit went over the evidence in the case.

"I have the info on the platform," said the detective who had come in and at a nod from the attorney he dragged in the two parts of the broken rail and dropped them on the floor, Rivets writing on and snarling loudly at each clang of the steel.

And though Callahan disputed with the attorney it was noticed that his arguments became weaker and weaker, being alarmed by the trembling of his arm and cautioned by the whispering of his daughter. Till at last he stood silent gazing at the broken rail while the attorney, borrowing Rivets' pen, wrote a release from damage, suit or claim for fifty dollars.

When Rivets got his pen back again he sat looking at it and not writing or snarling. "And 'twas only day before yesterday morning," he was thinking, "that I stood out on the platform with my hands in my pockets in the sunlight—without Grief." He

rose and walked to the window to look down on the spot where he had stood, as a man visits some shrine where he has known peace of spirit in times gone by. When he turned and caught sight of the pinks and greens on his desk he did not go near them, but again put his hands in his pockets with a sense of despair. And the office boy brought in three more green ones and the Callahan case came to an end, but he did not stir. And like a wooden man he received Jones and the master mechanic and the traitorous employee they brought along to put on the carpet, Marty Donovan.

The evidence against Donovan was brief, consisting of the instructions which he had been given by the master mechanic, in person, as he wanted to have a particular job of it.

"But he forged 'Jane,'" said Jones, pale and shaken.

"Have you any defense?" asked Rivets.

"Certainly," said Marty. "When I went out to paint the name on the car. I had the brushes and the paint and the intention to follow instructions. That is one thing, d'ye mind, sir, but I am an artist and an artist must paint the dreams of him at times, come what will. So on the way I met a young lady of such illigance and beauty——"

"'Tis not relevant to the case at all," objected Jones.

"Let him speak on; do not lead the witness," said the attorney, pricking up the ears of him. "Now as you were testifying, Donovan, about a young lady of beauty and illigance——"

"So as an artist must paint the dream of him——" began the defendant, but Rivets interrupted.

"Were you walking in your sleep that you could dream of her on the spot?" Rivets, though indifferent, y'understand, thought he ought to sustain Jones as a matter of diplomacy.

"Oh, she was a dream herself," explained Marty, "and when I arrived at the car the instructions seemed to have faded out of mind entirely and I must have painted something else. But as I could not without impudence, which I have not, paint the young lady's face on the car for the public to admire and follow from one end of the road to the other, I must have painted her name. I do not think it a matter for grief."

"Grief," said Rivets with a start, and began to think it a pity to sick Grief on so earnest and handsome and modest a young man.

"I demand his discharge," clamored Jones, and the master mechanic agreed with emphasis; Rivets nodded because there was nothing else to do.

"But y'understand it was not my will at all to paint Jane." explained Marty; "'twas an inspiration from beyant," and he tousled his hair and smiled at them.

"Nobody ever heard of such a plea," cried Jones, and then with a fiend's laugh which startled them out of their wits Callahan appeared for the defense.

"The young man is not to blame," he said, "or the brushes or the dream or the lady. Nobody is to blame. 'Twas the act of Providence! Do you dispute it, Mr. Superintendent or Mr. Attorney? Beware!" But the two only blinked at him, the explanation having hit them hard between the eyes.

"What man dare dispute it! I am almost past my first youth," said old Callahan, "but I remember carving a name in the bark of trees and doing things unbeknownst to myself. Some of them were foolish but I would not undo them, because they were inspired and I did not have to take the blame of them. An act of a lover is an act of God," and he smashed his slouch hat down on the desk so that all were covered with bran and meal.

"We are framed up," sneezed the claims attorney in Rivets' ear, and the superintendent nodded, drawing the other officials aside to explain that Callahan had the goods on them. Marty stood acquitted. Ten minutes after none was there but Rivets, who lighted his pipe and dusted the desk and dragged out the broken rail, in meditation. Then turned with a snarl on the pink and green telegrams.

That evening at home Callahan reflected with satisfaction on the plea which the officials had made in his own case and later had to swallow in the case of Donovan. Presently Marty called to thank him and after a while Miss Callahan came in.

"So you are already acquainted," said Callahan after the young people had shaken hands.

"Did I not paint her name on the car while she was sitting by the window talking to me?" laughed Marty, and Callahan took his pipe out of his mouth to stare.

"Ye made a bad——" he began, but Miss Callahan interrupted:

"Do you like music, Mr. Donovan? Most artists do. I have a friend who sings for one constantly ——"

"Ye made a bum guess, young man," went on Callahan, "though I suppose an artist nicknames his picture folk as fancy pleases. Well, I will be going to look in on Rivets a moment to see how he takes defeat." Sure, there was Miss Callahan ready with his hat, and she kisses him good-by, but at the door Callahan turns back.

"Her name is Euxodora," he said pointing to the young lady. "She was christened after the car of an old friend of mine, a Pullman conductor, saints rest him! Well, I will be going on."

And he left them, the young lady with her handkerchief to her eyes and Marty stalking gravely up and down the room.

"Euxodora," he said, but she made no answer then; and when he called her name again only sniffed more loudly in her handkerchief.

"Well, then, by aot of Providence—JANE," exclaimed Marty with inspiration, and the face was lifted from the handkerchief, and the dark eyes thanked him through the tears.

"Jane Donovan," he said, and though she blushed she did not shake her head.

"The Man the Cook Made," another railroad story by Calvin Johnston, in the next issue.

HOW DO YOU GRADE?

THIS is an age of classification. Jotting down percentage marks after human beings' names has become a profitable profession. Without doubt many of the classification systems are of value; yet we wonder if a sensible man takes too seriously a high mark or a low mark obtained in any of the tests that seek to measure human capabilities.

Perhaps the most ambitious of all these grading systems is that of Herbert Eugene Walter, associate professor of biology at Brown University, by which mankind is divided into twenty-seven classes. Professor Walter thinks that there are three contributing factors that go to make up any man or woman: environment, heredity and response—and that the greatest of these is environment. He divides each of these three factors into three grades: Good, Medium, Poor. The man who is born of good stock, is brought up in a pleasant and healthful environment and who makes the most of his exceptional opportunities steps proudly into Class 1. The unlucky individual who is born of poor stock, brought up in an unwholesome environment and who makes no effort to better himself is dropped into Class 27.

Professor Walter differs from our professional smile merchants who say that any man can make of himself what he wants to be. He realizes that man has no control over heredity—that to find a place in Class 1 of his classification one must have been "judicious in the selection of one's grandparents." If every man was capable of filling the highest places the world would be like a comic-opera army where all the privates are officers. Environment is another factor which is beyond the individual's control until he has gained a measure of maturity—and by that time it may have had a bad effect on Professor Walter's third factor, response.

The best thing about life is that it is "a soldier's battle." Generals and staff officers may plan, classify and theorize but often the fight is won by the man in the ranks. According to Professor Walter's classification the man whose inheritance and environment are poor and whose response is good gets a place in Class 25; to our mind he should get a place in Class 1. And in what class shall be placed the fellow who goes down fighting against circumstance? Carpentier's long right wasn't good enough to shake loose the champion's crown from Dempsey's head but it was good enough to win him the respect of every one who saw it land.

Ocean Tramps

By H. de Vere Stacpoole

Author of "The Garden of God," "Me and Slane," Etc.

Billy Harman cunningly acquires twenty thousand dollars' worth of experience—matched, strung, and ready to wear.

VI.—A BUSINESS DEAL.

MAMBAYA is a French island.

Fancy a white French gunboat in a blue, blue bay, surf creaming on a new-moon beach, and a colored town tufted with flame trees and gum trees and rocketing palms. Purple mountains in the dazzling azure and a perfume of cassi red earth and roses mixed with the perfume of the sea.

Paumotuan pearl getters haunt Mambaya, brown-skinned men who have been diving half a year or have captured in half a day the wherewithal for a spree; and on the beach when a ship comes in you will find the Chinese pearl buyers waiting for the pearl men, cigar-colored girls with liquid brown eyes, the keeper of the roulette table in Mossena Street and Fouqui the seller of oranges, pines, bananas and custard fruit.

But Mambaya does not exist entirely on pearls. The island is rich in produce and it is a beauty spot. Great white yachts drop in and anchor, steamers bring tourists and on this same lovely beach where they used to boil local missionaries in the old days you can hear the band playing at night in the Place Canrobert where the two hotels are situated and where at marble-topped tables the tourists are taking their coffee and liqueurs.

From the island of Laut away down south where the bad men live came one day to the beach of Mambaya two men of the sea, ragged and tanned, with their pockets stuffed with gold and hungering for pleasure—"Bud" Davis and Billy Harman, no less.

A big Moonbeam copra boat had given them the lift for the sum of four pounds each, paid in bright Australian sovereigns, but she could not supply them with clothes. However a merchant who came on board as soon as the anchor was dropped saved them the indignity of being fired off the beach by the French authorities, and, landing in spotless white ducks they strung for the nearest bar, swallowed two high balls, lit two cigars and came out wiping their mouths with the backs of their hands.

"By golly," said Billy, "ain't this prime, Bud? Look at the place—why it's half as big as Frisco, innocent lookin' as Mary Ann and only sufferin' to be scooped or painted red."

They were in the Place Canrobert where the flame trees grow, where the Kanaka children play naked in the sun and the shops expose faked island headdresses and curios, imitation jewelry from Paris, canned salmon and Paris hats. The natives of

Mambaya are well to do and spend their money freely; they are paid in dollars—not trade goods—and have a lively fancy and catholic taste.

"If you're starting on the painting business," said Bud, "then give me notice and I'll take myself off to the woods till you're done, but I'll warn you this is no place for painters and decorators. It's a French island and you'll end your jag with a month in the cells or road making."

"What you wants is a tub and a prayer book," said the other, taking his seat at a table in front of the Café Continental and calling for lime juice.

"Who was talkin' of jags, and can't a chap use a figure of speech without your jumpin' down his throat? No, sir, scoopin' is my idea. Here we are with our pockets full and our teeth sharp and if we don't pull a coop in this smilin' town where the folks are only standin' about waitin' to be took in, why we'd better take to knittin' for a livin', that's my opinion."

A pretty native girl, all chocolate and foulard, passed, trailing her eyes over the pair at the table; she wore bangles on her arms and was carrying a delectable basket of fruit.

"There you are," said Harman. "If the native Jinnies can dress like that, what price the top folk? I tell you the place is rotten with money only waitin' to be took. Question is—how?"

Davis did not answer for a moment. He was watching an opulent-looking American tourist in white drill who had just left the island-headdress shop across the way. The tourist opened a white umbrella with a green inside and passed away toward the sea.

"No how," said Davis, "unless you set to work and open a shop or something. You can't skin a town like this same as a pearl lagoon. If you want money here you'll have to work blame hard for it buying and selling against chaps that are bred to the business better than you. That's civilization."

"Damn civilization!" said Harman.

"Unless," continued Davis, "you can fake up some swindle or another——"

"Nuthin'!" said Harman. "I'm agin' that sort of game as you ought to know seein' you know me. No, sir, I don't want no first-class ticket to Noomea. Straight as a gun barrel is what I want to run, but I've no objections to putting a few slugs in the gun. It's just crawlin' into my head that a syndicate is what we want."

"And what the devil do you want a syndicate for?" asked Davis.

"Well, it's this way," said Billy. "A matter of ten years or so ago in the Frisco elections I was in with Hafferman—'Slungshot' Hafferman—the chap that was tried for the killin' of Duffy Stevens at San Leandro which he did but got off owin' to an 'allyby.' Well, I'm tellin' you. My job was fillin' the 'lectors with gin an' gettin' them to the polls before they'd lost the use of their pins and swearin' false evidence and such on, which wasn't what a chap would do only in 'lection times. Well, a month or so after, Hafferman, he got up a syndicate to run a guano island he'd got the location of and which wasn't there, and I put fifty dollars into it and fifty other mugs did ditto and Haff pouched the coin and turned it over to his wife and went bankrupt or somethin'—anyhow he had the coin and we were left blowin' our fingers. Now you listen to me. How about that pearl island Mandelbaum kicked us off? We've got the location. How about sellin' it to a syndicate?"

"Where's your syndicate?"

"I don't know," said Billy, "but it seems to me it's to be found for lookin' in a place like this where you see chaps like that guy with the white umbrella. I saw his Siamese twin on the beach when we landed with a diamond the size of a decanter stopper in his shirt front and that chap that sold us the clothes told me there's no end of Americans come here rotten with money, to say nothing of Britishers."

"Well," said Davis, "even supposing you get your syndicate, what about Mandelbaum? He's got a lease of the island and would hoof you and your syndicate into the sea if you showed a nose in the lagoon."

"He said he had a lease," replied Harman, "but he never showed a line of writin' and I believe he was a liar. But I wasn't proposin' to go there—only to sell the location. If he hoofs the syndicate into the sea—why, it's their lookout. If they ain't fools they'll hoof him in first, lease or no lease, and collar the pearls he's been takin'."

"What I like about you is your consistency," said Davis.

"What's that?" asked Harman.

"The way you stick to your guns. You're always preaching that it's best to run

straight and then you turn up an idea like that. Nice straight sort of business, isn't it?"

"As straight as a gun barrel," said Harman enthusiastically. "You can't be had nohow not by all the lawyers from here to Oshkosh; y'see if chaps are mugs enough to pay coin down for a location you're free to take their coin. That's good United States law. I had it from Lawyer Burstall when we got stung over the Hafferman business. He's the toughs' lawyer, long thin chap, not enough fat on him to grease the hinges of a pair of scissors, and cute enough to skin Jim Satan if he got a fair grip of his tail."

"Maybe," said Davis. "Anyhow, before you start in on any of your games we've got to get lodgings. I'm not going to fling my coin away on one of these hotel sharps and we've got to get some dunnage to show up with. A chap told me where we could get rooms cheap—last house end of town on right-hand side and with a big tree fern in the garden."

II.

Living is cheap in Mambaya, where people mostly subsist on coconut milk and fried bananas, where you can get a hundred eggs for half a dollar and a chicken for a quarter. If you are an æsthete you can almost live on the scenery alone, on the sun, on the unutterably blue sky that roofs you between the rains. But Billy and his companion had little use for scenery and after a week of lounging on the beach, wandering about the town and watching the natives surf bathing off Cape Huane, life began to pall on them noticeably.

They were not fools enough to drink, and if they had been, the bar of the Café Continental, white painted, cold, correct, served by a white-coated bartender who could talk nothing but bêche-de-mer French, would have choked them off. There was not the ghost of a sign of a syndicate to be developed nor of trade of any sort to be done.

They visited the roulette shop where the keeper of the table allowed them to win some forty dollars which they promptly departed with, never to return.

"We've skinned the cream off that," said Davis next morning as they lay smoking and kicking their heels on the sand, "and there's not another pan of milk about. You see we're handicapped not talking French. Like cats in a larder with muzzles on—that's about the size of it."

Harman assented. He took from his pocket the bag that held his money, over a hundred bright brass-yellow Australian sovereigns. They were on a secluded part of the beach with no one within eyeshot and he amused himself by counting the coins and stacking them in ten little piles on the sand.

Then he swept the coins back into the bag and sat up as Davis pointed seaward to where rounding Cape Huane came a white-painted steamer, the mail boat for Papeete and Honolulu and beyond.

The whoop of her siren lashed the sleepy air and brought echoes from the woods and a quarter of a minute later a far-off whoop from the echoes in the hills. Then down from the town and groves the beach began to stream with people. Kanaka children racing for the sea edge and fruit sellers with their baskets, girls fluttering foulard to the breeze and Kanaka bucks, naked but for a loin cloth; then came white folk, Aaronson the merchant, and the keeper of the Hotel Continental, officials and a stray Chinese or two.

Neither Bud nor Billy stirred a limb till the rasp of the anchor chain came over the water. Then getting up, they strolled down to the water's edge and stood hands in pockets watching the shore boats putting out, boats laden with fruit, and fellows holding cages containing bright-colored birds, canoes with Kanaka children ready to dive for coppers.

Then the ship's boat began to come ashore with mails and passengers.

"Ain't much sign of a syndicate here, neither," said Harman as he stood criticizing the latter, mostly male tourists of the heavy globe-trotting type and American women with blue veils and guide books. "It's the old mail-boat crowd that's been savin' up for a holiday for the last seven years an's got so in the habit of savin' it forgot how to spend. I know them. Been on a mail boat once; haven't you ever been on a mail boat, Bud? Then you don't know nuthin' about nuthin'. Half the crew is stewards, and half the officers is dancin' masters to judge by the side of them, and the blessed cargo is duds like them things landin' now."

He turned on his heel and led the way back toward the town.

As they drew along toward it one of the passengers, a young, smart and natty individual carrying an imitation crocodile-skin hand bag overtook them and Harman greatly exercised in his mind by the bag, struck up a conversation.

"Air you goin' to reside in this town, stranger?" asked Mr. Harman.

"Eight hours," replied the stranger. "Boat starts at eight p. m. Smart's my name and smart's my nature, and not being Methuselah, I find time an object in life. What, may I ask, is the population of this town? Are there any commensurate with it on this island and what's the condition, in your experience, of the luxury trades—may I ask?"

"Dunno," said Harman. "Ain't been here long enough to find out."

"I got landed to prospect," went on the other. "I'm trading—trading in pearls. O. K. pearls. Wiseman and Philips is our house and our turnover is a million dollars in a year. Yes, sir. One million dollars. From Ahabaska to Mexico City the females of forty-eight States cough up one million dollars a year for personal adornment and Wiseman and Philips does the adorning. I'm traveling the islands now—well, here's a hotel—and good day to you, gentlemen."

He dived into the Continental and Harman and Davis walked on.

"Well," said the ingenuous Harman, "it sorter makes one feel alive comin' in touch with chaps like that—notice the bag he was carryin', looked as if the hide'd been taken off a cow that'd been skeered to death. I've seen them sort of bags before on passenger ships and they always belonged to nobs. That was a sure-enough Panama he was wearin', and did you notice the di'mond ring on his finger?"

"He's a dam' fish-scale jewelry drummer," said Davis, "out to sell dud pearls and save five dollars a week out of his traveling allowance. Notice he never offered to stand drinks? The earth's crawling with the likes of him, selling servant girls everything from dud watches to dummy gramophones."

But Harman was not listening. The million-dollar turnover, the imitation crocodile-skin bag and the sure-enough Panama had seized on his imagination.

It suddenly seemed to him that he had missed his chance, that here was the nucleus of the syndicate he wanted, a sharp sure-enough American with a big company behind him and lots of money to burn. He said so and Davis laughed.

"Now get it into your head you won't do more than waste your time with chaps like those," said he. "Of course they've got the money, but even if you could get to their offices and deal with them instead of their two-cent drummer, where'd you be? Do you mean to say you'd have any chance with those sharps trying to sell a dud proposition to them? Why, when they'd took out your back teeth to see if there was any gold in them and stripped you to your pants you wouldn't have done with them; you'd be stuck for an atlas of the world, or maybe a piano organ on the installment plan, givin' them sixty per cent on the takings and a mortgage on the monkey. You get me? Sometimes you're sharp enough but once your wits get loose it's away with you. This chap isn't any use—forget him."

But Harman scarcely heard.

If they had turned on their tracks they might have seen Smart, who after a drink at the bar of the hotel had started out to visit the shops, more especially those likely to push the sale of O. K. pearls and north-pole diamonds—a side line.

III.

At half past four that afternoon Harman—Davis having gone fishing—found himself in the Continental bar. The place was empty and Billy was in the act of paying and taking his departure when in came Smart.

"Hullo," said Harman. "Have a drink?"

They drank. High balls first of all and then at the suggestion of Billy, who paid for drinks the whole of that afternoon, hopscotches, which are compounded of bourbon, crushed ice, lemon peel, parfait amour and a crystallized cherry.

At the second hopscotch, the tongue of Smart was loosened and his words began to flow.

"Well, I reckon there's not much to the town," said Smart, "but it's an oleograph for scenery and pictooresqueness. With a pier for landing and a bathing beach where all that fishermen's truck and those canoes are it would beat a good many places on the islands that don't think five cents of themselves. I've been pushing the name of Wiseman and Philips into the ears of all and sundry that has got ears to hear with, but

all such places as these is only seeds by the way. Chicago is our main crop an' Noo York, after that Pittsburgh and we're feeling for London, England. We've agents in Paris and Madrid that aren't asleep and Wiseman says that before he dies he'll put a rope of pearls round Mother Earth, and a north-pole di'mond tiara on her old head. Yes, sir"—third hopscotch—"that's what Wiseman said in his office and my hearing, and Philips, he helps run the luxury and fake-leather sundry department, he said he'd fit her out with o-de-Nile-colored croc leather boots and a vanity bag of stamped lizard skin if the sales went on jumping as they were going, which was more like Klondike stuffed with the 'Arabian Nights' than any sales proposition he had ever heard, seen, dreamed or read of. Sales!—hic—as sure as there's two cherries in this glass I'm holding, my orders booked in Chicago for pearls ending Christmas Day last was over one hundred thousand dollars. One hundred thousand dollars. But you haven't seen our projuce."

He bent, picked up his bag, fumbled in it and produced a box and from the box a gorgeous pearl necklace.

"Feel of those," said Smart. "Weight them, look at 'em, look at the grading, look at the style, look at the luster and brilliancy. Could Tiffany beat them for twenty thousand dollars? No, sir, he couldn't. They leave him way behind."

The dazzled Harman weighed the rope in his hand and returned it.

"Don't be showin' them sort of things in bars," said he as the other closed the box and replaced it in the bag. "But now you've showed me yours, I'll show you mine."

"Pull 'em out," said the other, picking up his hat which he had dropped in stooping.

"They ain't here," said Harman. "It's only the knowledge of them I've got. Stranger, 's sure as I'm lightin' this cigar I know a lagoon in an island down south where you can dredge up pearls same as them by the fistful."

"It must be a dam' funny lagoon," said the other with a cynical laugh.

Harman agreed. It was the funniest place he'd ever struck. He told the story of it at length and at large and how Mandelbaum had kicked him and Davis off the atoll and how it only wanted a few bright chaps to hire a schooner and go down and do the same to Mandelbaum and take his pearls. He assured Smart that he—Harman—was his best friend and wrote the latitude and longitude of the pearl island down on the back of a glossy business card of the drummer's, but it did not much matter as he wrote it all wrong.

Then, all of a sudden, he was out of the bar and walking with Smart among palm trees. Then he was in the native village which lies at the back of the town and they were drinking kava at the house of old Nadub, the kava seller, who was once a cannibal and boasted of the fact—kava after hopscotches!—and Smart was seated with his arm round the waist of Maiala, Nadub's daughter, and they were both smoking the same cigar alternately and laughing. Nadub was laughing; the whole world was laughing.

Then Mr. Harman found himself home trying to explain to Davis that he had sold the pearl location to Smart who was going to marry Nadub's daughter, also the beauty of true love and the fact that he could not unlace his boots.

IV.

"A nice object *you* made of yourself last night," said Davis next morning, standing by the mat bed where Harman was stretched, a jar of water beside him. "You and that two-cent drummer! What were you up to anyway?"

Harman took a pull at the jar, put his hand under his pillow and made sure that his money was safe, and then lay back.

"Up to—where?" asked Harman feebly.

"Where? Why, back in the native town! You left that chap there and the purser of the mail boat had to beat the place for him and get four roustabouts ashore to frog-march him to the ship."

"I dunno," said Harman. "I got along with him in a bar and we sat havin' drinks, them drinks they serve at the Continental—Lord, Bud, I never want to see another cherry again, nor sniff another drop of bourbon. I'm on the water wagon for good and all. It ain't worth it. I'm no boozer, and if I do strike the jag by accident my proper feelin's pay me out. Give's my pants."

He rose, dressed and went out. Down on the beach the sea breeze refreshed Mr. Harman, and life began to take a rosier color. He sat on the sand and taking the

chamois leather bag from his pocket, counted the coins in it.

The fun of the day before had cost him ten pounds!

Ten pounds—fifty dollars—for what? Three or four drinks, it did not seem more, and a tongue like an old brown shoe. He moralized on these matters for a while and then returning the coins to the bag and the bag to his pocket he rose up and strolled back through the town, buying a drinking nut from the old woman at the corner of the Place Canrobert and refreshing himself with its contents.

Then he wandered in the groves near the native village and two hours later Davis, seated under the trees of the Place Canrobert and reading a San Francisco paper which the purser of the mail boat had left behind in the bar of the Continental, saw Harman approaching.

Harman evidently had recovered. His chin was up and his eyes bright. He sat down beside the other, laughed, slapped himself on the right knee and expectorated.

"What's up?" said Davis.

"Nuthin'," said Harman. "Nuthin' I can tell you about at the minit. Say, Bud, ain't you feelin' it's time we took the hook up and pushed? Ain't nuthin' more to be done here, seems to me, and I've got a plan."

"What's your plan?" asked Davis.

"Well, it's more'n a plan. I've been thinkin' quick and come to the conclusion that we've got to get out of here pronto, get me? More'n that we've got to make for Rarotambu—that's the German island between here and Papeete."

"Why the deuce d'you want to go there?" asked Davis.

"There's money waitin' for us there," replied Harman, "and I don't want to touch at no French island."

Davis put his paper behind him and filled a pipe. He knew that when Harman had one of his mysterious fits on there was sure to be something behind it, some rotten scheme or another too precious to be disclosed till ripe. But he was willing enough to leave Mambaya and made no objections.

"How are you going to get down to Rarotambu," he asked, "s'posing we decided to go?"

"I've worked out that," said Harman. "You know that copra schooner that's been filling up in the bay? She's off to Frisco, touching at Papeete, leavin' to-night. Wayzegoose, he's her skipper; I met him ten minits ago when I was workin' out my plans and he'll turn aside for us and drop us at Rarotambu for two hundred dollars, passage money."

"Not me," said Davis. "Him and his old cockroach trap—why, I'd get a passage on the mail boat for a hundred dollars."

"Maybe," said Harman, "but I don't want no mail boats nor no Papeetes neither. What are you kickin' at?—I'll pay."

"Well, I'll come along if you're set on it," said Bud, "but I'm hanged if I see your drift. What's the hurry, anyhow?"

"Never you mind that," replied Harman. "There's hurry enough if you knew. There's a cable from here to Papeete, ain't there?"

"Yep."

"Well, never you mind the hurry till we're clear of this place. Put your trust in your Uncle Billy, and he'll pull you through. You've laughed at me before for messin' deals, said I'd no sort of headpiece to work a traverse by myself, didn't you? Well, wait and you'll see, and if it's not 'God bless you, Billy, and give us a share of the luck' when we get to Rarotambu, my name's not Harman."

"Maybe," said Davis, "and maybe not. I'm not likely to forget that ambergris you fooled me out of with your plans, nor the dozen times you've let me down one way or another. But I tell you this, Billy Harman, it's six cuts with a rope's end I'll hand you if you yank me out of this place on any dam' wild-goose chase."

"I'll take 'em," chuckled Harman, "joyful. But there ain't no geese in this proposition, nuthin' but good German money and when you're down on your knees thankin' me you'll remember your words."

"Oh, get on," said Davis, and taking the newspaper again he began to read, Harman making over for the Continental and a gin and bitters.

V.

The *Manahangi* was a schooner of two hundred tons, built in 1874 for the sandalwood trade and looking her age. Wayzegoose fitted his ship. His scarecrow figure appeared at the port rail as the boat containing Billy and Bud came alongside and he dropped the ladder himself for them.

They had scarcely touched the deck when the Kanakas clapped on to the winch, the

anchor chain was hove short, the sails set and then, as the anchor came home, the *Manahangi* in the gorgeous light of late afternoon, leaned over to the breeze, the blue water widened to the shore and the old schooner, age-worn but tight as a hickory nut, lifted to the swell of the Pacific.

Harman at the after rail gazed on the island scenery as it fell astern, heaved a sigh of relief and turned to Davis.

"Well, there ain't no cables can catch us now," said he. "We're out and clear with money left in our pockets and twenty thousand dollars to pick up right in front of us like corn before chickens."

Wayzegoose, having got his ship out, went down below for a drink, leaving the deck to the Kanaka bos'n and the fellow at the wheel, and Harman finding themselves practically alone, lifted up his voice and chortled. "I'll tell you now," he said. "I'll tell you, now we're out—that chap was robbed by the Kanakas. You remember sayin' that he was shoutin' he was robbed as they was frog-marchin' him to the ship. He spoke the truth.

"Now I'll tell you. Him and me was sittin' drinkin' at that bar most of the afternoon when out he pulls pearls out of that bag of his, pearls maybe worth thirty thousand dollars——"

"Where the blazes did he get them from?" asked Davis.

"Out of that bag, I'm tellin' you, and right in front of the Kanaka bartender. 'Put them things away,' I says, 'and don't be showin' them in bars,' but not he, he was too full of bourbon and buck to listen and then when I left him after, in the native town, they must have robbed him. *For,*" said Mr. Harman, "between you and me and the mizzenmast, them pearls are in my pocket now. No, sir, I didn't pinch them, but that piece Maiala did, as sure as Moses wasn't Aaron, for this morning I met her carryin' stuff for old Nadub to make his drinks with and there round her neck was the pearls. Stole. I follows her home and with sign langwidge and showin' the dollars I made them hand over them pearls—forty dollars I paid for twenty thousand dollars' worth of stuff, and what do you think of that?"

Mr. Harman put his hand in his pocket and produced a handkerchief carefully knotted, and from the handkerchief a gorgeous pearl necklace.

Davis looked at it, took it in his hands and looked at it again.

"Why you double-dashed idiot," cried Davis, "you mean to say you've yanked me off in this swill tub because you've give forty dollars for a dud necklace, and you're afraid of the police? Smart—why that chap's pearls weren't worth forty dollars the whole bag full. Ten dollars a hundredweight's what the factories charge. I told you he was a dud and his stuff junk. And look at you—look at you!"

"You'll be takin' off your shirt next," said Harman. "You're talkin' through the hole in your hat. Them pearls is genuine and if they ain't, I'll eat them."

But Davis, turning over the things, had come upon something that Harman had overlooked, a teeny-weeny docket near the hasp, on which could be made out some figures:

4.50

"Four dollars fifty," said Davis, and Harman looked.

"And what was it you gave for them to that girl, thinking they'd been stolen?" asked Davis.

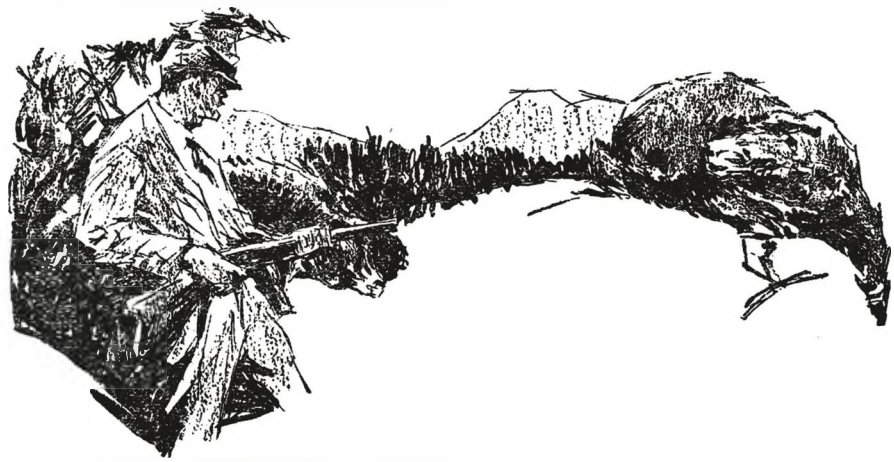
"Dam' petticoats!" cried the other, taking in everything all at once.

"Six cuts of a rope's end it was to be," said Davis, "but a boat stretcher will do." He put the trash in his pocket and seized a boat stretcher that was lying on the deck, and Wayzgoose coming on deck and wiping his mouth, saw Harman meekly receiving six strokes of the birch from Davis without a murmur.

He thought what he saw was an illusion due to gin, and held off from the bottle for the rest of the cruise.

So Billy did some good in his life for once in a way, even though he managed to do it by accident.

Look for more of Mr. Stacpoole's work in future issues.



The Breeze of Memory

By T. von Ziekursch

Author of "The Call of the Running Moon," "The Red Queen," Etc.

The king of the wilderness puts loyalty before love.

DOWN in the bottoms where the alders grew thick sounded the rattling roar of a rifle. Two more shots came in rapid succession, then a fourth. The boy, wandering afar from the straggling homestead, stopped at the edge of a thick clump of pines and listened. A thrill came. The sound of those shots meant only one thing. His father had found the bear, the silvertip grizzly, marauder of the range that had come down out of the high hills where its prey had been the elk herds. The great beast that had long been the bugaboo of his mother must have fallen, for the boy had great pride in the prowess of the strong and kindly father who had hewn a home for them here in these foothills of the West.

In the clump of pines something stirred and the boy bent low to peer in, the memory of those shots fading quickly from mind. Where three of the smallest seedlings formed a tiny pocket he saw movement. It might have been a badger, but badgers did not live here. Long the boy watched, his eyes gradually becoming accustomed to the twilight there among the trees. At last came realization that it was a cub, a tiny thing, a bear.

Immediately those shots returned to mind. His father had killed—this must be the cub. A great pity—the heart of a boy won by the cub's desolation—replaced the thrill in his father's prowess. Long he watched that little furry thing which moved occasionally, then advanced toward it, and the cub, hidden there by its mother until she had satisfied the great hunger of her condition, whimpered and snarled in a small, vicious way at intervals. But the mother bear did not come now in answer to those whimperings.

Four feet away from where the sharp-nosed little fellow huddled back among the seedlings the boy sat down and made advances that were friendly. Perhaps it was extreme youth calling, perhaps this boy living all his few years close to the wild had some power that another of different experience would not possess. An hour and the cub's fear lessened and faded out at last. He suffered himself to be touched and came forward a foot from his retreat, the play instinct aroused.

Then dread came to the boy. His father had killed the big bear and this cub would also be a big bear soon. Perhaps his father would kill the cub, too. The playfulness of the little fellow had broken down any fear the boy might have known of this

fierce family of destroyers. Or, perhaps, it was youth and understanding calling to kind.

The cub became fretful. It was hungry and the boy knew, although it would have been difficult to say how he knew. Also, by some strange method, he knew that the cub would wait there in that clump of pines. He arose and hurried off, looking back once to give parting admonition, and the cub came to the very edge of the pine clump and wrinkled its little muzzle, whimpering once as the boy departed.

A mile away around the base of the hill was the homestead and the boy walked fast. An hour later he returned and in the old pail were two quarts of milk from the sod spring house. The cub was waiting and whimpering more impatiently than ever. Timidly it investigated the pail, buried its nose in the milk, sputtered, then lapped incessantly, unused to this new way of taking food. But it learned fast and the two quarts of milk were soon gone while elation came to the boy holding the pail and watching.

Its hunger stilled, the cub became playful with this new companion, and the boy, too, felt a strange loneliness of his life stilled. Together they rolled among the pine needles until the long shadows sent the boy homeward with many backward glances.

That night his thoughts were troubled as his father told of the big she-bear that had only gone down in her charge after the fourth shot. There was a heaviness about his heart and he was strangely silent. It may have been the weight of the first secret and a fear lest he should inadvertantly let it out. If the big bear had been so dangerous they would certainly kill the cub which would one day grow up.

The sod spring house was hidden from view of the homestead and when the boy left the next morning the pail was on his arm and it was half filled with milk.

The cub was waiting there in the pines and it retreated among the seedlings as the boy neared until that scent it had known the day before came. Like all of its kind its eyes were not good, but its nostrils were infallible. Content came to the boy then and he did not wander but remained there among the pines, and the carpeting of fallen needles was tossed and jumbled where they played together.

The weeks passed and it was always the same. Then came a day when the boy coaxed, and the cub, fully twice the size it had been when he found it, followed from the protection of the pines, an inquisitive little fellow, timid, but trustful of this human it understood. Together they wandered up the slopes and into the dark depths of the hardwood timber.

Growth came more rapidly to the cub now and at last he took to wandering alone at nights. It must have been instinct that made him dig for his first gopher and then he became a hunter and provided for his own needs, and the milk became less tasteful until he refused to drink it when the boy came to the pine clump to which the bear resorted. Only when the previous night's wanderings had failed to bring food would he accept the milk. There were days, too, when the big cub was not at the pine clump, following nights when he had wandered afar in the high hills and slept there in peace and seclusion.

Once the boy's mother asked of his prolonged wanderings but received no definite reply. Later his father said, "Let him go so long as he does the chores. There is nothing to hurt him and it will do him good."

The long summer waned in the hills and there came a day when the boy found the big cub lying in the pine thicket, sadly hurt and sore, a long gash across its shoulder, the mark of a cow elk's fury at fear for her calf.

Patiently the boy brought water and washed that gash and the cub followed more obediently than ever through the days until the wound healed, leaving a wide scar free of hair. It was learning its own lessons of the wild during the starlit nights when it roamed the hills, and while there was no mother to understand its early woes the boy was a capable substitute.

There were times, too, when it would have followed the boy down from the secluded pines toward the homestead and then it learned what authority meant and bowed to the mandates of a small branch as readily as a dog would have bowed to a switch.

At last came the days when the school in the valley beckoned and then there came a parting of the ways. The silvertip cub sought the fastnesses of the high hills with their wild valleys and stretches of open plateau more and more. The urge to hunt became stronger and stronger and there were densely timbered slopes to be roamed, an

ideal isolation for his kind. Far off, miles to the south where the ranch lands ended and in a region of wildly broken heights too rugged for the cattlemen and their herds, he came across the trail of another of his kind, but something bade him leave that region. That, too, must have been a part of his instinct which told him that loneliness and the desire for it is the creed of his species, that it was not for him to invade another's range and hunting grounds. He could not have known that his own range was in reality a heritage from his mother, accorded her inviolate by all others of the tribe except only during the season.

But he came back to his own high hills there far above the homestead where the boy lived. In a diameter of fifteen miles he was an exile princeling ruling a domain in which all were his subjects. The bugling of the elk bulls ceased when the wind carried his scent and the tawny puma crept away, a dun shadow in passing, when he came.

Almost incessantly he hunted for the small rodents and once he pulled down a half-grown blacktail calf, for the hunger of his growth was great. But he was no wanton killer.

His first battle rage came when the snow had deepened in the gullies. There was a peculiar longing that brought him back at nights, traveling many miles to the pine clump where he had first known the boy. There he frequently found tracks in the fresh white, retaining that scent he knew and in it his longing was invariably eased. It was on one such trip when he was returning to the wild recesses of the high hills that his keen nostrils caught the odor of a puma. Directly in front at the edge of an open glade the great cat had launched onto the neck of an elk. Half starved, it was feeding heavily when the bear came. Only too well the puma knew this was a youngling which might be intimidated, but the old dread that all the wild know of the cub accompanied by a mother was in the cat. The puma saw the big silvertip cub coming down the slope directly toward it in deliberate fashion. Silently the cat's lips wreathed back in a snarl and it watched, but the mother bear did not appear. The puma had been days without a kill and its claws sheathed and unsheathed while the dark tip of its tail waved slightly.

The cub's ears were forward and he came straight on. In his kind the knowledge of fear is not born. Perhaps he expected the puma to give way or even to flee but the cat merely crouched with great fangs bared. Twenty-five feet away the silvertip reared, heavy paws dangling, head thrust forward much as some bull-necked ringman—and came on, a low roar his first bidding to battle. Ten feet away he lunged and those long claws swished through the air like keen knives, a blow that the puma dreaded even from this upstart youngster. But the cat was gone, evading that attack, turning at the edge of the forest, snarling, ears flattened, perhaps still expecting the mother bear, perhaps frightened off by the high courage of this fresh cub. Then the cub feasted on the elk and learned that it was good. But his power and craft were far from equal to that of these great deer, one of which had marked him across the shoulder with a scar that would remain until the end. He lived on the rodents that were easily captured or dug out, but it was lean fare for him in that period when he should have been gorging heavily on that which his mother would have brought down. By the end of the winter he was gaunt instead of sleek, but he was big. His range, too, was increased, and he roamed far back in the wild fastnesses of the hills. His was no love for the open lands where his mother had gone before she bore him that she might feast on the more easily caught range cattle. He sought the roughest depths where the hardwood poles grew thick or slept in the deep cañons where an occasional swamp offered opportunity to eat his food under water, a favorite way with the grizzly.

Twice during the waning months of the winter he returned to the low hills and the clump of pines. On each occasion he had been long without food and it may have been that memory told of earlier hungers relieved there. Both times he stood long right at the edge of the pine clump, his great head swaying, long nose wrinkling, facing the base of the hill around which the boy had come so often. At intervals he grunted, rumbling grunts that had in them still a wisp of plaintive appeal. Then he went back far into the depths of the hills where the forest was a matted mass.

Spring came and with it the great flocks in the heavens high over the passes, seeking the lakes and ponds in the lowlands toward the north and east. Now the bugling

of the elk sounded more often and the blacktail bucks were irritable with the itching pads about the pedicels where new antlers sprouted. The high hills were gorgeous, the verdure deep and thick and over all was that rich canopy of blue and gold. In the glades game was plentiful, for here man did not invade. These slopes, mottled with boulders and brush were all but inaccessible and the streams wild torrents that seemed like silvered blades cleaving the hills. Above all loomed the white-capped heights of the mountains, and the young silvertip's range extended even there. Now he fattened and grew more rapidly. Forced to shift for himself earlier than most of his kind, craft came more readily. In all this wild region he was the ruler absolute, his sway unquestioned, for only too well the wild knew that mad courage of his breed.

The seasons passed and he was a monster. The elk herds knew him well but even their timidity and watchfulness were not sufficient and at long intervals he took from their ranks a cow, a calf, or even one of the magnificent bulls. But his was a lonely sway. The advent of man with his high-powered rifle had almost completed its tale and the giant silvertip was one of the few hundred of his kind still wandering in those most inaccessible regions of the West where distance, the mountain barriers and the forbidding ruggedness of the high hills has held back the invading killers. From Lower California to the Alaskan peaks only that scattered remnant of the once all-powerful species remain, brave to an extreme, mightier than the greatest jungle cats of the East, titans of another age.

And he was content in that loneliness excepting only when the season came. Then he wandered, circling each valley until his keen nose had tested every vagrant breeze and the heavy air of the depths, seeking always and vainly the scent that he had never known, the odor of his own kind—a mate. But the seasons passed and he never found her. A full fifteen years he roamed thus alone. Now he knew the secrets of those mountains in the west and the inner reaches of the high hills toward the south.

But it came at last. The fullness of maturity sent him wandering farther with each season, the circling of his quest wider. Toward the north was a more rugged, harsher range where the fare was leaner, the game scarcer. There, beyond the first range of heights was a great swamp valley and there dwelt the female. No other of her kind had ever come here and at first she chased him afar, for this was her range and she brooked no invasion. But he was faster and eluded her. Nor did he leave and when the moon was at its full she suffered him to approach and they sloshed together playfully in the bogan like grotesque infants of a mammoth breed.

But the season had also sent another male rambling down from the mountains far toward the north and he was not to be turned aside. The two of them locked like giants, slashing those long claws in short, hooking blows that would have done credit to the infighting of some master boxer. Back and forth on rear paws that had the appearance of being slow despite the fact of their nimbleness they surged and saplings gave way like match sticks. The earth was uprooted where they found foothold and rocks tumbled down the slope. The female, too, would have fought this invader of her new domestic calm but there was no room for a third in this frightful strife and she stood near by, grunting, perhaps encouraging the one who had found her first. Each sought to crush the other down and the thump of those battering-ram paws sounded afar through the depths while the clash of their fangs was like the metallic play of swords.

Across the hillside was a gully and there at last they fell together over the sheer edge, twenty feet down, a fall that would have killed a steer. The interloper was on the bottom now and was battered terribly. But his, also, was that indomitable courage of the grizzly and he fought on, unaware that he had been conquered by one who was master supreme of the wild. Even when opportunity came for flight he spurned it and renewed the attack and at last he died under the murderous buffetings of this scarred monster.

Then the conqueror and the female shuffled off together, leaving this battleground and seeking seclusion down near the very end of the swamp.

But here there were no elk herds and when hunger came the female wandered forth, back up over the hills and toward the east. There were some few deer and rodents and beyond the last rugged ridge were the lowlands and the open forested slopes where the cattle of the ranches grazed.

This to the female was familiar ground and she led on along the top levels of the hills when the male held back. She knew this ground well for there had been other marauding trips from the recesses of the swamp at intervals when hunger urged and the hunting had been especially poor. These herds of man she had plundered at will on frequent occasions.

The great male silvertip was more and more reluctant but followed down at last and was a few yards in back as the female crushed the spine of a young steer. Together they fled with the prey, the female dragging it easily. Up from the flat lands along the open slope they went and the dawning found them near a great clump of pines. Amid their darkness they halted to feast but something uneasy was on the giant silvertip. Some forgotten thing stirred and he paced about the confines of the thicket, sniffing, smelling, testing the air.

Around the base of the hill came a man, in his hand one of the high-powered rifles that has been the knell of the grizzly tribe. He walked erect, knowing well that the quarry could not see him. The trail was plain and he stooped forward suddenly and halted. There were two of them. This was the direction, right toward that pine clump. The man rubbed his hand over his face. There came a softening of the determined lines, a wistful thing. Then he went on, bending his tall, strong form low now, and his face bore that determined look again. A dozen times the herds had been raided thus—he was nearing the pine clump.

A wisp of a breeze came over the flat lands and up the slope, a mere touch that passed on and the air was still again. Amid the pines the female grizzly became suddenly still and lifted her nose. Then she arose very slowly while the great male stood there immovable as a colossal statue. To the keen nostrils of each the scent of the man had come, a touch merely, quickly gone, but serving its purpose of warning. Now the female saw him, perhaps understood the menace of that wary approach. Otherwise she might have remained still. Had it been a casual wayfarer he could have passed unharmed, but the attitude of this man was that of the hunter, something that attacks. The female breasted aside two small pines and advanced to meet him, slowly.

The stillness of the morning was shattered by the rifle's clatter and the female spun slightly, one shoulder broken by the terrific power of that bullet. Then she roared. On three legs she rushed to the onslaught, terrible, a thing to dread. Four times more in rapid succession the man fired and she crumpled down. A few steps he approached, cautiously, looking down at her, one hand seeking the extra cartridges in his pocket, while in the pine clump a mad battle rage possessed the gigantic male.

The man heard that rumbling roar and tugged at the cartridges. His hand came out with three and two of them fell to the ground as he pushed one in the chamber, while from the protection of the pines a hundred feet away something akin to a mad colossus emerged. The man hesitated, bent to grab for the two cartridges that had fallen and his face was grim.

This bulky whirlwind of hate incarnate that was charging down the hillside from the pine clump was death itself. One touch of those rending claws, a glancing blow of the great paws and the man must surely die, a crushed, mangled weakling. There was something compelling, awe-inspiring in the bear's rage. He was nature's fury let loose in tangible form. In his attack was something of the majesty that is the storm wind's in the wild heights. Inconceivably swift, a living thunderbolt from the high hills, he came, the avenger of the dead mate, last of the race of giants. The man's face was very white beneath the bronze.

Again that curling ground breeze came up from the level reaches of the plain, passing up along the hillside, stirring the grass. Full over the man it passed and into the face of the bear while the man was frantically pushing those extra shells into the breech of the rifle. Through the battle-mad brain of the great silvertip came something that cooled like ice. On that breeze was a message that reached the bear's most highly developed sense—smell. His claws sank deep like the hoofs of a horse reined in sharply at full gallop. Fifty feet from the man he stopped and his massive neck swayed as he sought the air. Then he turned to one side as though to work the breeze and along the sights of the rifle, peering at the unprotected spot where the heavy bullet could smash through great ribs to find the fearless heart, the man saw that old scar. The finger had tightened on the trigger but there was no shot, no crashing

bullet, although the one spot that was surely vulnerable was exposed now.

Here was a place where the great silvertip caught the fullness of the breeze and a sound that might have been a gruff whimper came. Calmly he squatted down, uncouth, almost ludicrous, his long, keen nose stuck straight aloft while the breeze brought its story that found answer in some vague memory, some forgotten thing in the bear.

Motionless the man stood with rifle lowered, a scant fifty feet away, watching. The silvertip's nose came down and his little eyes looked toward the quiet form of the female. He grunted once, then looked at the man. Slowly he arose to all fours and shuffled off up the slope. At its crest he turned and looked back. Again came his heavy grunt, perhaps a plea to the female, perhaps a farewell to the man. A moment and he was gone over the crest toward the rugged inaccessibility of those high hills in the distance, a lonely wanderer, a monarch supreme, but without consort or subjects of kind.

Again there came a softening of the man's face, a wistful thing. He went to the pine clump and sat down, and his face was turned away from the quiet form of the female.

FRANCE SPEEDS UP THE MAILS

AMERICANS are not wont to concede much to their French cousins on the score of progress. It is our national habit to consider ourselves at least one jump ahead of the world in almost every direction, and particularly in the field of mechanical ingenuity. And where France is concerned we are pretty well indoctrinated with the idea that we are three jumps ahead. But every once in a while France takes a leaf out of our own book and "puts one over."

She has just put one over in the domain of communication. In fact she has put two over. A brace of innovations introduced by the French postal department should be of interest to folk who believe the French are a nation of back numbers.

By the first of these innovations it is possible, for instance, for a banker in Paris to furnish a client in Strasbourg with a letter of credit, signed, sealed and delivered, inside of a half hour. Sounds impossible? But it can be done, and this is how. The banker takes a sheet of paper of specified dimensions and with a special ink, on sale in every French postal telegraph office, he writes the draft on his Strasbourg correspondent to the order of his client. The ink used is of a consistency that leaves a high relief behind the stroke of the pen. The letter achieved, and the necessary signatures inscribed, it is placed on a revolving cylinder. As the cylinder turns a needle passes rapidly over the paper, exactly as a phonograph needle follows a record. The needle is connected with an electric circuit between the sending and receiving points. Wherever it encounters the raised writing on the paper it is lifted and the circuit is interrupted. The interruptions are recorded in ink by the needle on the receiving apparatus at the other pole of the circuit, some hundreds of miles distant, and the letter, written and signed in Paris, is instantly duplicated, to the thousandth of an inch, in Strasbourg. It is said that handwriting experts cannot detect the difference between the originals and the telegraphic copies thus produced, but the French government stands sponsor for the authenticity of the copies and a comparison of signatures is usually sufficient to establish the identity of the sender.

The second innovation which gives the French postal system the jump on ours is also a time saver but of a very different sort. It is, in fact, a mail meter. With the mail meter the stamping of letters and their cancellation are combined in one operation and the whole operation is carried out in the office of the letter writer himself. Business houses doing a large volume of daily correspondence rent these mail meters from the postal service. The device stamps the letter and cancels the stamp with the appropriate postmark at one stroke. It also records the cost of mailing on its own little adding machine. Letters so prepared for transmission go direct from the mail slot to the routing clerks without the customary delay of cancellation. And at the end of each month the postman drops in, reads off the mail meter, collects the bill—and that is that. Simple, elegant, speedy, and as up-to-date as any Yankee might desire!

The Storm Center

By Burton E. Stevenson

Author of "The Buhl Cabinet," "The Fate of Mona Lisa," Etc.

WHAT HAPPENED IN PREVIOUS CHAPTERS.

There were five of them within striking distance of the Marabout Ahmed Ammar, the holy man of Tijdad. Three of them—Landon, the American archæologist, Patricia, Landon's daughter, and O'Neill—were encamped with their Algerian guide, Belayed, on the near-by hillside, beside the Roman ruins that Landon proposed to explore. Two of them—Louis Delage, the French adventurer, and Delage's widowed sister, Madame Albani—dwelt, so to speak, in the maw of the lion. They were the guests of Ahmed himself. O'Neill told himself he should have preferred the crater of Vesuvius to this apparently placid Algerian backwater as a camping ground. Ahmed, thus far, had been kindness and hospitality itself. But O'Neill mistrusted the sincerity of the holy man. If what Landon claimed was true—that Ahmed was the center and head of a world plot to overthrow the sway of Christianity and substitute the power of Mahomet—then the patriarch of Tijdad could be nobody's fool. And he must suspect that Roman ruins were not the reason for Landon's presence. Furthermore, Delage was drawing a long bow on his own account. In the guise of Sidi Abdullah, a devout pilgrim from the East, Delage appeared letter perfect to O'Neill. But could he deceive the piercing eyes of the cunning Marabout? And could Delage's sister, masquerading as his wife, hold up her end of the play without a fatal slip? O'Neill had serious doubts. Five people knew why Landon and Delage were at Tijdad—knew that Delage's object was the ancient treasure of which the Marabout was the ordained custodian, and that Landon's purpose was the destruction of the leader of the Moslem plot, Ahmed himself. Could all five of them, with this guilty knowledge constantly in mind, carry the weight of the double secret without stumbling? To stumble once, O'Neill very well knew, was to be placed beyond the possibility of a second misstep. Ahmed would strike without compunction. O'Neill disliked the look of many things. Ahmed's very hospitality seemed to him suspicious. And the Marabout's ill-concealed infatuation for Patricia filled him with profound misgiving. Worst of all was the incident of the night just past when Landon had returned from the fanatical ceremonies in the mosque of Teniet, his memory gone completely. To-day Landon was better. His memory had returned. But there was something lacking. The life had gone from his eyes. He was vague, uncertain. What had happened to him? What devilish sorcery had Sidi Yada, the priest of the temple, worked on him? And who had ordered the working of the spell? O'Neill believed he could answer this last without hesitation. Ahmed Ammar! He was the answer!

(A Five-Part Story—Part IV.)

CHAPTER XXIV.

REVELATION.

THE day passed without incident. Landon kept his gang hard at work clearing away the debris in one corner of the ruins, and referred to his plans for the excavation with a seriousness which puzzled O'Neill. His theory, it seemed, was that in the rock underneath the ruins he would find a series of underground chambers. What, if anything, he expected to discover in the chambers he did not disclose; but it was evident that for the time being at least he had reverted to an archæologist pure and simple.

The Berber workmen labored away cheerfully once they understood what he wanted done. Undoubtedly he was a madman, but all white people were mad. Instead of staying quietly at home as all sane people did they were continually running about the

world and wasting their money; instead of minding their own affairs and making life as simple as might be they were forever thrusting themselves into the business of other people, and they seemed to delight in piling one useless complication on another until life became for them frightfully intricate and expensive.

A man's needs were simple: a place to sleep, enough to eat, a little clothing, a wife, a few francs for the café. Why, then, desire more than that? Why chain oneself to a distasteful and fatiguing task to earn money to spend for useless things? That was a folly which passed the comprehension of these primitive people; and had they suspected the whole truth—had they known how the white race has piled artificial need upon artificial need and proudly named the tottering, top-heavy edifice "civilization"—they would have been more astounded still. As even some members of the white race are when they stop to think of it!

It was not until they were seated around the table for the evening meal that O'Neill broached the subject of Delage's visit. He did it hesitatingly, for he detected, or fancied he detected, a subtle change in Landon's attitude toward Ahmed Ammar. Not once during the day had he referred to him; not once had he given any indication that he had anything in mind except the excavation of this rude Roman outpost; already he had laid out the work for a week ahead.

"Delage left word that he is coming tonight to see you," O'Neill began.

"He said nothing to me."

"He couldn't very well say anything with Ahmed looking on. He slipped a note to Pat."

"What does he want?" Landon asked in a tone that was plainly hostile.

"I suppose he wants to discuss plans."

"Which plans?" Landon demanded.

O'Neill started to retort impatiently that Landon knew perfectly well which plans, but when he looked at him he saw that the question had been asked seriously and not in mere perversity. He glanced at Pat, who, with a little shake of the head, warned him to go slowly and to be careful.

"You were discussing some plans with him a few nights ago," O'Neill reminded him. "Don't you remember?"

Landon passed his hand across his forehead with the gesture he had used so many times the night before.

"Yes," he said finally, "I remember. But I haven't time to bother with that now. I've got this excavation to finish first, and it will take quite a while."

O'Neill was silent a moment, considering how best to continue. It was evident that Landon had changed, and changed radically. It was almost as though he had stepped from one personality into another.

"You are really going ahead then and finish this excavation?" he queried at last.

"Certainly I am—that is what I came here for."

"Then," said O'Neill deliberately, determined to put the matter to the test, "you have given up the idea of destroying Ahmed Ammar and his *zawia?*"

Landon stared at him with an astonishment which was evidently genuine.

"Destroying Ahmed Ammar?" he echoed. "But why should I do that? I am not a murderer."

"Then what is that box for which you keep under your cot? What is in it?"

"I have some blasting material in it."

"What are you going to use it for?"

"I am going to use it to blast away the rock under these ruins, if it proves too much for me," answered Landon readily; but O'Neill, looking at him steadily, thought he perceived in his eyes the low cunning of a man who had foreseen a troublesome question and prepared an answer in advance.

It was something so foreign to Landon's character that O'Neill's heart sank.

"Have you forgotten," he demanded tensely, "what you said to me the first night we came here—only two nights ago—sitting at this very table?"

"What did I say to you?" Landon asked, the shifty light still in his eyes.

"You said to me that what you had really come to the Aurès for was to wipe out, to obliterate Ahmed Ammar, together with his *zawia*—that it was the only way to save our civilization."

Again Landon rubbed his forehead.

"That was all nonsense!" he declared, with a laugh which had in it such a ring of insincerity that O'Neill almost blushed for him. "I was just trying to find out how much you would believe."

O'Neill looked at him a moment longer, hot anger rising within him; then he glanced at Pat. She was staring at her father, incredulously, as though scarcely able to believe that she had heard aright, and her

face was white as death. The next instant she had risen and flung herself on her knees beside him.

"Oh, dad," she cried, in a voice which was almost a sob, "what *is* the matter?"

"Matter?" he repeated, with another vague laugh. "Nothing is the matter, my dear."

"You are not like yourself."

"Perhaps I have been converted," he said, looking down at her with a leer, with a sort of slackening of the face muscles, a sudden flabbiness, which told of weakened control. And at the sight O'Neill's anger gave place to sadness, for he knew that he was witnessing the disintegration of an intellect.

Pat's eyes were wide with horror.

"Converted?" she repeated. "Converted to what? Do you mean converted to Mohammedanism?"

"Would that be such a disgrace?" asked Landon, with an attempt at banter. "There are many quite respectable Mohammedans."

For a moment longer Pat gazed into his eyes, then she got slowly to her feet and went back to her chair. She looked suddenly frail and broken.

"I don't want to see Delage," Landon went on querulously. "He bores me. In fact I am going over to Tijdad. Belayèd says there is a wonderful dancer there."

"She is not going to appear there any more," O'Neill told him.

"What do you know about her?" Landon demanded.

"Only what Belayèd has told me. Last night, it seems, was her last appearance."

"Well, there will be others," said Landon and rose abruptly, as though anxious to escape, and left the tent. Outside they could hear him calling for Belayèd.

"What are we going to do?" asked Pat.

"What can we do? We can't prevent him from going. Anyway it will give us a chance to talk things over. We've got to decide on something."

"Yes," agreed Pat; "I suppose so."

Ten minutes later they stood together at the door of the tent and watched Landon and Belayèd ride away down the road.

"Come in and sit down," said O'Neill. "Now we can talk."

But it was some time before they could talk, for she flung herself forward across the table and buried her face in her arms and burst into a passion of tears.

"It is too much!" she sobbed. "It is too much! I can't stand it!"

And O'Neill, his heart very tender, stooped and gathered her up in his arms like a child, and held her close against his breast. How slender she was—how fine!

She got back her self-control at last and dried her eyes and looked up at him.

"Now I feel better," she said, with a little wistful smile, and gently released herself. "You know I am very fond of you, Gordon O'Neill."

"And I am very fond of you, Patricia Landon!"

"You are so nice!" she added.

"So are you! I have something to propose."

"What is it?"

"An alliance offensive and defensive!"

"Done!" she cried, and they struck hands on it, and sat down again, feeling very close to each other.

"Now," he went on, "having acquired certain of the privileges of a big brother, I am going to talk to you severely. You must not despair—there is no reason for despair. He has been like this only for a day. Once we get him out of this country and back to civilization he will be all right."

"Yes," she agreed; "we must get him away from here at once."

"But how—if he won't go?"

"We shall have to find a way. Perhaps Monsieur Delage can help us."

"Perhaps he can," nodded O'Neill, and got out his pipe and filled and lighted it, for here was something requiring serious thought.

"We could kidnap him," Pat suggested.

"It wouldn't be easy," said O'Neill; "but I suppose we could do it. If I believed in magic," he added, half to himself; "but I don't—no, not even here in Africa!"

"Neither do I!" said Pat stoutly.

And yet, at the back of their minds they were conscious that they *did* believe—or at least were conscious that some horror had been enacted which transcended reason.

Pat rose at last and dabbed her eyes with cold water and looked at herself in the little square mirror hung against the tent pole. What she saw there seemed to dissatisfy her for she went behind her screen of canvass, emerged presently with a powder puff, and applied some powder to her nose. And O'Neill, watching her, smiled grimly to himself, for he knew of whom she was thinking.

So Delage found them, and his quick glance went from one to the other.

"What is wrong?" he asked quietly as he sat down.

O'Neill told him as well as he could of the astonishing change in Landon, of his unwillingness to meet Delage, of his declaration that his talk about Ahmed Ammar had been only nonsense. Delage listened without a word.

"Something must have happened at the mosque last night after we left," O'Neill concluded. "What was it?"

"It is true," answered Delage slowly, "that Sidi Yada took us apart to show us the secret temple of the Hamadsha and the final mysteries."

"What were they?" O'Neill demanded.

Delage glanced at Pat as though reluctant to go on.

"You must tell us, Monsieur Delage," she said quietly.

"Yes, mademoiselle," he agreed; "I will try to do so. There was, in the first place, an exposition of the philosophy of the Hamadsha and of their art. They believe that man is burdened with too many senses —that they only confuse and divert him from the pursuit of truth and pull him down to a level with the beasts. Therefore they have learned how to relieve him of certain of them—or even of all of them—in order to make life simpler, so that at the end he remains just a mind whose only thought is Allah. He showed us some of his disciples on the road to this effacement, and at last one who had reached the final goal of nothingness. I confess," he added, "that it was rather horrible."

Cold shivers were running up and down O'Neill's spine. There was something indescribably repulsive in the thought of these savage rites, so coldly performed, which destroyed one sense after another until nothing was left but a dumb, deaf, sightless husk, without perception of the external world.

He shook the thought away. It was like a nightmare.

"Landon told us something of the sort," he said; "at least of the visit to the underground chambers. Was that all?"

"No," replied Delage, and paused an instant as though to choose his words. "There was one step more—the evocation of the dead."

O'Neill glanced at Pat.

"Landon denied that there had been anything of that sort," he said.

"It was done in darkness," Delage explained; "and it was, of course, a trick—one would be mad to believe anything else. But it was most impressive—and most unpleasant—and when it was finished Monsieur Landon appeared very much overcome. But I supposed he would quickly recover. Sidi Yada sent a man to make sure he reached here safely. We spoke almost not at all on the way back—I also was not quite myself. But of course it was a trick," he repeated as though to reassure himself. "I have thought about it a great deal to-day; I have wondered why all that was shown to us. I am sure it is very rarely done. I came to the conclusion that Ahmed Ammar suggested it, and I begin now to see why."

"Why?" queried O'Neill.

"There is but one explanation," said Delage. "He suspected Monsieur Landon. Whatever was done to him was done in the darkness."

Again O'Neill felt that shiver of horror. In the darkness—yes.

"But what could have been done?" he demanded impatiently. "I do not understand it."

"Neither do I," said Delage. "There are some things which cannot be understood except by the adepts. Oh, yes, there is magic in Africa—I have known it for a long time."

Again there was a moment's silence. Then O'Neill shook himself.

"There is only one thing to be done," he said. "That is to get away from here as soon as possible."

"I agree with you," said Delage with a grim smile. "For myself also. At any moment suspicion may turn in my direction, then to me also something will happen. So I have arranged to make my trial to-morrow night."

"Your trial for the treasure?"

"Yes; everything is ready—so far as it will ever be ready. It is foolish to wait. Therefore it will be for to-morrow night."

And he shrugged his shoulders as though to say that the issue was upon the knees of the gods.

"But it is to-morrow night," objected O'Neill, "that we are to have dinner with Ahmed."

"And he is to show mademoiselle his secret bower," added Delage with a smile. "Yes, I remember well. I had counted upon

that fact—upon the assistance of Monsieur Landon and of mademoiselle also. Now I see I must do without it. So the task is more difficult, but it is not impossible, and I cannot afford to wait. There is the danger every moment that Monsieur Landon may betray me, perhaps without in the least intending to do so."

"How were dad and I to help you?" inquired Pat, her eyes on his face.

"My plan was a most simple one, mademoiselle," Delage replied. "When Ahmed retired with you to his bower he was not to appear again. His people would suppose that he was passing the night there—as indeed he would do; but he would be dead, and before any one dared disturb him, before his body was found, we should be far away. But that plan is impossible, since your father will not join in it."

"I do not think you ought to go with Ahmed at all, Pat," said O'Neill decidedly. "It is too dangerous. You must make some excuse."

"It will undoubtedly be dangerous," Delage agreed.

"I shall have my pistol," said Pat. "I am not afraid of him."

"Do not underrate him, mademoiselle," Delage warned her earnestly. "He is very subtle, very resourceful, entirely unscrupulous."

The color rose in the girl's cheeks as she met his gaze, but she did not turn her eyes away.

"I am not afraid," she said again. "How can I help you, short of killing the man?"

"If you could detain him for an hour—for one little hour. But no—you would risk too much. I would rather fail!"

"You shall not fail," said Pat quietly. "I agree to detain Ahmed for an hour."

"I cannot accept, mademoiselle," Delage protested. "No, I cannot accept!"

"You do not hesitate to risk your sister," Pat pointed out. "She also has her part, I suppose?"

"Yes," said Delage; "she also has her part—and not an easy one. But that is not the same thing. For you, no! But I thank you—yes, I thank you!"

His lips were trembling, his hands quivering. It was only by a mighty effort that he controlled himself.

"I am not asking you to accept," Pat pointed out. "I am simply telling you that to-morrow evening I shall remain for one hour with Ahmed in his secret bower. It is for you to make use of that hour as you think best."

Delage sprang to his feet, his eyes flaming.

"I will accept on one condition, mademoiselle," he said thickly; "that you come with me when it is over."

"I cannot leave my father."

"But if it were not for that?"

"Ah, if it were not for that," said Pat, and her eyes were shining too, "if it were not for that, I would come gladly!"

He took a quick step toward her as she rose to face him and in another instant she was in his arms.

"Never fear, little one," he whispered, his cheek to hers. "I will find you—I will come to you—yes, from the end of the earth!"

CHAPTER XXV.

DREAMS OF EMPIRE.

They became conscious presently of O'Neill, who had watched the scene with shining eyes. Pat gently freed herself and sat down again. Delage regarded O'Neill with a whimsical smile.

"It was inevitable, Monsieur O'Neill," he said, and seated himself and lighted a cigarette. "I felt it from the moment I first saw her, so straight, so slim, so full of grace. It was my type, my ideal—something I had been searching for and never finding; I knew it instantly. I count myself very fortunate," he added simply.

"So do I," agreed O'Neill.

"I also am very fortunate," said Pat quietly.

She was entirely unembarrassed. Her glance was as fervent as Delage's. She recognized her mate, as he recognized his. And O'Neill, looking at her, marveled at how little he had known her. Never would he have guessed that under that quiet, self-controlled exterior lay such a depth of emotion.

"But since this has happened," said Delage in another tone, "our affair is much more serious. We must reconsider it. The only thing that matters now, is that we should be happy, you and I. Shall we go away now, to-night? My mehari will carry us swiftly down into the desert, to a lovely place I know."

"I cannot leave my father like that," Pat pointed out, "nor you your sister."

"My sister would go with us. Monsieur O'Neill would look after your father."

"And the treasure?"

"It is true," agreed Delage with a shrug; "without the treasure I have only myself to offer you. It is not enough. No—decidedly I must stay!"

"Now you are being silly!" said Pat, with a smile almost maternal. "You know very well that I care nothing for the treasure. But in Ahmed's hands it is a menace to the world. Bury it in the sands of the desert, if you wish—but let us take it away from him or destroy it if we can."

"I will cast it into your lap," said Delage; "you shall do with it what you like—use it for this humanity you are so fond of."

"Do you mean it?" asked Pat, her face aglow.

"Yes, my, dear, I mean it; but there is one condition. When I go you must go with me. You would not be safe here—I would never leave you behind. Your father too—Monsieur O'Neill and I will arrange it somehow."

"Yes," agreed Pat, "if you can do that."

"It is understood then," said Delage, turning to O'Neill. "When you reach the *zawia* to-morrow evening you will instruct Belayèd not to stable the horses, but to keep them ready in the court. You will have to abandon all this equipment. We cannot take the donkeys. They would delay us too much."

"I understand." O'Neill nodded. It amused him to see how unconsciously Delage disposed of other people.

"Do not worry about food," the latter continued. "I will provide what is needed. As soon as the banquet is over and Ahmed has retired you will persuade Monsieur Landon to return to the tent; you can feign illness if necessary. But instead of coming north you will take the road to the south. He will not notice it, most probably, until you have gone some distance. By that time I shall have overtaken you. What is the matter?" he added, for O'Neill's face showed an utter lack of enthusiasm.

"It seems too much like running away," O'Neill objected. "I couldn't leave Pat and your sister in the *zawia*."

"But I charge myself with them."

"Nevertheless," O'Neill persisted, "I'd rather stand by and be ready in case I am needed. You may have to fight your way out."

"It is possible," Delage agreed. "Very well, then; get Monsieur Landon started off with Belayèd, and then do you wait for us under the colonnade of the inner court. You will not be seen there. But remember there is a guard at the gate."

"I shall remember."

"You are armed?"

O'Neill tapped the pocket containing the automatic.

"You will use it only in the last extremity. I hope there will be no fight. Unless we get away quietly there will be little chance of escape."

"I understand," said O'Neill again; "but your plan has one serious flaw. I shall never be able to get Landon to ride away and leave his daughter at the *zawia*."

"You must manage it somehow," said Delage. "Perhaps some pretext may arise. Perhaps he may not be as unwilling as you suppose."

"What do you mean?"

"I mean," Delage explained, "that in what he caused to be done to Monsieur Landon Ahmed had but one object—to convert him from an enemy into a friend. Where is he to-night?"

"He said he was going to the café at Tijdad."

"I would wager that he is with Ahmed. No matter what happens to mademoiselle here, there can be no outcry, no appeal to the authorities, if her father approves."

"But that is impossible!" protested Pat, her eyes wide. "Dad would never do that!"

"Remember, my dear," said Delage earnestly, "that he is not himself. He is not to be blamed, whatever he may do, for it is not he who is doing it. Keep your love for him warm in your heart until he is himself again."

"You are right," said Pat. "I shall try to remember."

"Now I must return," added Delage, rising. "My absence must not be noticed; besides I have many things to arrange. Till to-morrow night, Monsieur O'Neill!"

Pat went with him to the door of the tent and the flap fell behind them. O'Neill knew better than to follow.

Instead he lighted his pipe and settled back in his chair. He had not yet got over his amazement at the simple way in which she had accepted love when it came—going to meet it, indeed, eager and unafraid! Well, she was right; it was life's supreme

experience. And Delage would be a great lover! Life with him, whatever it was, would be neither drab nor tepid. It might be a great joy or a great agony, but it would not be colorless and mediocre. A risk, yes; but worth taking!

Pat came back presently, her eyes like stars, and O'Neill got up and took her hands.

"I wish you all happiness, my dear," he said; "but I don't need to tell you that!"

"I have it now," she said simply. "I never thought there could be such happiness."

"You are right to take it."

"Take it? I didn't take it. It took me —seized me, carried me away. I had no choice. I hope it will come to you some day, Gordon, dear!"

"Ah, Pat," said O'Neill, a little sadly, "I don't know whether I am big enough. I am too ignorant; I feel so young, so juvenile, beside you and Delage."

"Now you are sentimentalizing!" laughed Pat. "And here all the time," she added, with a sly glance at him, "I have been imagining you were in love with his sister. If you are not, you ought to be. She is magnificent."

"Too magnificent for me!" said O'Neill bitterly.

Pat looked at him quickly and he could feel how the clasp of her slim hands tightened.

"Now you are stupid!" she cried. "You make me cross! How can any woman be too magnificent for a man to love? You mean she doesn't love you? Perhaps not —but what has that to do with it? What has that to do with it?" and she put her hands on O'Neill's shoulders and shook him as hard as she could. "Tell me, what has that to do with it? If I were a man I would choose the most magnificent woman in the world to love; and I would just love her and love her till she caught fire. Oh, how little men know!"

"You are right," said O'Neill thickly, and he sat down and looked at her as though he had never seen her before—as indeed he never had. "But you amaze me. Where did you learn so much about love?"

"It was in my heart," said Pat, "just as it is in every woman's heart, needing only the right touch to awaken it; but the right touch seldom comes, or it comes too late, or the woman is afraid——"

She stopped, for there was a clatter of hoofs on the rocks outside.

It was Landon and Belayed, and a moment later the former thrust aside the door-flap and entered. His face was flushed with excitement, his eyes dilated; but he threw his cap into a corner and sat down at the table as though exhausted.

"Tired, dad?" Pat asked and came over and placed her hand caressingly on his shoulder.

"Worn out," Landon answered.

"How were the dancers?" O'Neill inquired.

"We didn't go to the café—at least I didn't. We met a messenger from Ahmed on the road; he was sending me an invitation to join him. So I went."

"Was he alone?" asked O'Neill casually.

"No; Sidi Yada had come over from Teniet."

Fear gripped O'Neill as he looked at him. Had there been a further exhibition of black magic? What was it that Ahmed Ammar, with the priest's assistance, was taking so much trouble to accomplish?

"Did Sidi Yada give another performance?" O'Neill inquired dryly. He was beginning to lose patience with Landon.

"He expounded the doctrines of the Koran," Landon answered curtly. "He wishes me to understand them."

"Why?" queried O'Neill.

"He wishes all people to understand them. The first duty enjoined upon believers is to spread the faith."

"Oh," said O'Neill; "so they are really trying to make a Mohammedan of you! But why?"

"Look here, O'Neill," said Landon, his face reddening with anger, "is it any business of yours what my religion is, or whether I have any?"

"No, I suppose not," O'Neill admitted. "But these people are taking advantage of you. You are not yourself—you haven't been yourself since that accursed performance at Teniet."

"In what way?" Landon demanded stiffly.

"You came here, you told me, to try to save the civilization of Europe. But you seem to have given up that idea entirely."

"It was a fool's idea. There are higher civilizations."

"Perhaps there are—but you won't find them here in the Aurès, where the people live like brutes in dirty hovels and where

the women are treated as if they were lower than the beasts."

Landon chuckled.

"I don't suppose you know it," he broke in, "but there are two words an Arab always apologizes for whenever he finds it necessary to utter them, for they are filthy words which defile the tongue and the ear. One is the word for pig; the other is the word for woman."

"And you laugh at that?" asked O'Neill. "Evidently you have forgotten that you have a daughter."

"No, I have not," said Landon. "On the contrary. I am planning a great future for her."

"For me, dad?" cried Pat, her eyes wide with apprehension. "What sort of future?"

"Never mind," said Landon, with a wave of the arm. "You will see. Believe me, it will be worth while."

A sudden conviction leaped into O'Neill's mind; Delage had been right—this whole plot was somehow centered about Pat.

As his eyes met the girl's, he read the same thought there. But when she opened her lips to protest he shook his head slightly. It was worse than useless to argue with a madman; Landon was undoubtedly mad. To argue would only inflame him. Better wait and see. They were forewarned; they would be on their guard.

And Pat, understanding, chose the wiser way.

"Just tell me all you can, dad," she said gently.

"I will tell you a little history," said her father, his eyes shining queerly. "Forty-eight years before Christ, Julius Cæsar invaded Africa and defeated the Numidians, who were led to battle by their king, Juba I. Juba killed himself, and his son, a mere child, was taken captive to Rome. There he was given into the charge of Octavia, the discarded wife of Antony. He grew into a handsome and learned man, won the favor of Cæsar Augustus, was given the hand of Cleopatra Selene, the daughter of Antony and Cleopatra, and restored to the throne of his ancestors here in Africa. He ruled for fifty years and made his kingdom the most magnificent in the world. His son rebelled against Rome and was disinherited; but his blood still flows in the veins of a certain house here in Algeria. What has happened once may happen again."

"But what has all this to do with me?" questioned Pat, who had listened in confused amazement.

"What has it to do with you?" cried Landon. "Can't you see? Don't you understand? It is Ahmed Ammar——"

He stopped abruptly, bent as though to hide his face, and began to unbuckle his leggings.

"Go on, dad," encouraged Pat gently.

"No," said her father curtly; "that is all I can tell you now. I am too tired to talk any more. I am going to bed." and he arose and disappeared behind the screen.

O'Neill's eyes met Pat's in a long glance. Yes, assuredly the man was mad! Cleopatra, Antony, Augustus—history repeating itself! What wild dreams were floating through his head! An African empire backed by the wealth of the Cæsars!

O'Neill passed his hand across his forehead and drew a deep breath. He was beginning to feel a little mad himself.

Such dreams! Had Landon been drugged? Had they given him hashish? That would be an explanation, certainly!

In any event, there was only one thing to be done—that was to get away. To-morrow night. With or without Landon.

And O'Neill shut his jaw savagely on that resolve.

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE COILS TIGHTEN.

O'Neill had expected that some time during the following day Delage would find an opportunity to visit the camp and give them some final instructions; but he did not appear. Nor did Landon again refer to his grandiose vision of a new African empire. Instead he kept his gang of Berbers hard at it all day long, working with a concentrated fury as though he expected to find among the ruins of this old castellum not only some traces of Julius Martialianus, commander of the Third Augustan Legion, but an answer to the riddle of the universe as well.

O'Neill watched him narrowly all day and tried to make up his mind what he had really meant by his wild talk of the night before, but utterly without success.

O'Neill had never been strong on ancient history. It was the first time he had ever heard that Cleopatra and Marc Antony had a daughter who afterward herself became a famous queen. Romantic surely! And of

course it was possible that even after two thousand years her blood might still be flowing in African veins—but how sadly debased and diluted! Could it be that Ahmed Ammar claimed descent not only from the Prophet but from the Egyptian queen? And that he aimed to be another Juba? But what nonsense—what a pipe dream! Hashish—yes, that might explain it!

During the day he and Pat managed to put their heads together more than once and talk over their plans for the evening. One thing impressed him more and more—that was the danger and the folly of her trusting herself in Ahmed's hands—even with a pistol in her own. He pointed this out to her at considerable length, but she was adamant.

"You must realize," she said, "that I am not a child. I have made up my mind what I am going to do. There is no need for you to worry."

"Well, I'll tell you one thing," he said finally. "I am not going to leave that house until I know that you are safely out of it."

She saw from the set of his jaw that it was no use to argue with him, so they left it at that.

"You will not forget to tell Belayèd that he is to keep the horses ready," she reminded him; and as Belayèd was preparing lunch, O'Neill sat down beside him and told him what he wanted done.

"We may have to leave suddenly," he explained; "you have noticed perhaps that Monsieur Landon is not as he was."

"Yes, monsieur, I have noticed it," nodded Belayèd.

"We must get him away; you must help me."

"The young lady, she wishes it?" Belayèd asked.

"Yes. She told me to come to you. And I promise that you shall lose nothing. If your salary is not paid you by Monsieur Landon as agreed, I will pay it."

"Very good, monsieur," said Belayèd. "I will be waiting for you."

So the day passed and evening came and presently they were in the saddle for the ride to Tijdad.

O'Neill took a last look at the tent as they rode away. He knew that it was, in all probability, the last time he should ever see it. He had taken the precaution of putting in his pockets the few things of value he had with him, and had managed to wrap up a few necessities in his cloak, which he strapped behind his saddle. The things he was leaving could be easily replaced but it was with a real feeling of sadness that he saw the tent fade from sight. He felt as though he had grown to manhood there.

A gay little cavalcade met them halfway to Tijdad. It was Ahmed, clad in a handsome scarlet burnoose and elaborately embroidered clothes, riding a horse whose harness glittered with gold and silver. He was attended by eight members of his *goum* or bodyguard, also in gala attire and with long guns slung across their backs.

The Marabout greeted his guests with great ceremony, then he fell in beside Landon at the head of the column. Pat and O'Neill followed and the natives brought up the rear.

"Why all this ceremony?" O'Neill inquired of Pat. "It looks like a wedding procession."

"You can't have a wedding without a bride," Pat pointed out.

O'Neill glanced at the two riders ahead. They were engaged in earnest conversation but in voices so low that no word was audible.

"I have a sort of feeling that some one intends you to be the bride," he said.

"Then some one is in for an awful shock!" Pat answered with a laugh. "I have told you not to worry. I repeat it once more."

"I am getting nervous just the same. I wonder where Delage is? It is curious he didn't come out with Ahmed."

"Yes, I looked for him, too," said Pat. "He is probably waiting at the *zawia*."

But Delage was not waiting at the *zawia*.

It was evident at once, as they rode into the courtyard, that some unusual festivity was preparing. The place was thronged with men, most of them carrying guns, and in one corner a native orchestra was performing vigorously while a dancer was going through her slow contortions just in front of them. Two lambs, impaled on long poles, were being slowly roasted over beds of live coals in another corner, and near by a huge steaming caldron gave off the odor of kuskus and goat's meat.

The music stopped as the cavalcade clattered into the court and all the natives rose to their feet and stood silently attentive while the party dismounted. O'Neill looked around at the crowd with something like dismay. To escape under these circum-

stances was going to be much more difficult than he had expected.

And again his eyes sought vainly for Delage.

"Have the horses ready," he said to Belayèd in a low tone as he turned away, and Belayèd nodded to show he understood.

Ahmed, a curious smile upon his lips, held out his hand to Pat and led her ceremoniously past the staring crowd to the door of his own apartments.

Suddenly the sickening conviction swept through O'Neill that what he was witnessing was a Mohammedan wedding.

Pat must be warned!

There was no opportunity for the moment as they proceeded along the narrow passage and entered a room more luxurious than any he had imagined the place contained. The floor was soft with rugs, cushions were piled along the walls, especially in a sort of alcove at one end where the floor was slightly raised above the level of the rest of the room and the walls themselves were hung with tapestry. In front of the alcove two jeweled lamps swung from the ceiling and on the wall were three branched candelabra. The air was heavy with a strange and sickening perfume.

Two men met them as they entered the room and again O'Neill looked to see Delage; but it was not he. It was Sidi Yada with an attendant priest. He had stopped Pat and Ahmed just inside the threshold, and, holding a hand of each, was saying something in Arabic; then he saluted Landon and O'Neill with the utmost gravity and led the way to the alcove at the other end of the room.

What with emotion and the difficulty of breathing in the incense-laden air O'Neill felt that he was suffocating. A wave of depression swept over him: a sense of his powerlessness. And for the first time fear seized him. Was he really going to be able to save Pat? Or was he dashing himself uselessly against the wall of Oriental cunning? Was it Kismet?

His eyes met the girl's as they took their places on the cushions and they must have betrayed his uneasiness, for she smiled and shook her head slightly, as though to tell him once again not to worry. She, at least, did not seem disturbed. Was it because she did not understand? Or could it be possible that she still expected to carry through her plan?

As soon as they were seated Ahmed's students filed in through the door, passed before him, and took their places along the wall on either hand. Here surely, O'Neill told himself, Delage must appear; but there was still no sign of him.

A servant brought a great bowl of copper, filled with water, into which they dipped their hands, drying them on a napkin offered by another servant; and the meal began in silence.

Faint and far away the thrumming of the tom-toms told of the festivities going forward in the court. O'Neill's spirit sank lower and lower; he could not eat in spite of the discourtesy which failure to eat implied. His head was beginning to ache dully in the burdened atmosphere. Then just as he began to fear he was going to faint his head suddenly cleared, the feeling of oppression passed and a strange sense of well-being ran through his veins. He looked about at the company with a smile—they were not such a bad sort after all. No doubt he attributed to them motives of which they were quite innocent. Ahmed, once one got accustomed to his dark skin, was distinctly handsome. And his color was not displeasing—a sort of golden brown; probably Cleopatra looked like that. And he had an air of intelligence and power altogether unusual. Perhaps Landon's idea of a new African empire was not just a pipe dream. Perhaps there was something in it!

They got to the coffee at last and with it came the musicians, who filed in and bowed before Ahmed, and took their places and struck a few preliminary notes.

"I have a novelty for you this evening," said Ahmed, looking around at his guests with a smile; "one which I hope will give you pleasure. It is a dancer, new to this country and with a dance not in our manner, but very wonderful."

He nodded to the chief musician, who struck a loud note, and a draped female figure appeared in the doorway. She had over her head a shawl of silver lace which concealed her features; and she was tall and slim and graceful as a lily. She came slowly forward toward them, swaying in time to the music, back and forth like a reed blown upon by the wind. She paused just before the dais, bowed low before Ahmed, and then snapped upright to her full height, whisking away the shawl as she did so.

For an instant O'Neill stared uncomprehendingly at the beautiful, painted, smiling face. Then his heart turned sickeningly within him.

It was Delage's sister.

For the merest breath she stood poised there motionless, like a bird ready for flight; then she whirled away in the dance. It was a wild bacchanal, a symbol of joy, of abandon, of the ecstasy of life, pulsing faster and ever faster and culminating in a fury of movement. And O'Neill watched it like a man hypnotized, scarcely daring to breathe.

When it was over, Ahmed motioned her forward, drew a ring from his finger and gave it to her as she knelt before him, speaking at the same time some words in Arabic. She glanced up at him with a smile that sent O'Neill's pulses racing, bent her head acquiescently and bowed herself from the room.

Almost at once another dancer entered and began the slow movements of a native dance.

It was some minutes before O'Neill could collect his senses. So this was the wonderful dancer of the café at Tijdad. He winced at the degradation of it—to dance before those staring brutes! What possible object could she have? What could Delage be thinking of to give her such a part? And what was it Ahmed had said to her? Why had it brought that smile to her lips? Why had she nodded her head?

He dared not look at Pat. He feared his eyes might betray the torment in his breast. So he kept them fixed upon the new dancer and lay back among the cushions and puffed nervously at his pipe and tried vainly to understand.

There was the usual series of three dances, and then a short intermission while the dancer talked with the musicians, and a box of sweetmeats was passed from hand to hand. Then came a fourth dance which O'Neill had never seen before and which was accompanied by a song. He could not understand the words, of course, but he soon saw what it was. It was a nuptial dance.

O'Neill glanced at his companions. Ahmed and the two priests were watching fascinated, their lips drawn back from their teeth in something which was not so much a smile as a grimace; Landon, lying back among the cushions, was apparently half asleep; Pat, sitting bolt upright, was watching the dancer with expressionless face, as though her thoughts were far away.

The dance whirled to a close in a crescendo of ecstasy, and Ahmed, throwing some money to the dancer and to the musicians, dismissed them with a wave of the hand and rose to his feet.

"Come, my dove," he said, bending above Pat and offering his hands. "I will show you the bower."

She took his hands and drew herself erect.

"I am ready," she said, and then she turned to her father and O'Neill. "I hope you can amuse yourself for an hour," she said lightly.

Her father nodded drowsily.

"Not more than that," said O'Neill, suddenly mindful of all they had planned, and glanced at his watch. It lacked a few minutes to nine.

"No, I promise," said Pat, and permitted Ahmed to lead her to the door. There she turned and waved her hand and was gone.

For a moment O'Neill sat staring after her, trying to think, trying to remember what it was he had to do. But his brain was in a whirl.

"I must get some fresh air," he said. "I can't stand it in here; this place is suffocating," and he struggled to his feet.

"I will show you the way, monsieur," said Sidi Yada, rising too and placing a steadying hand upon his arm.

O'Neill looked down at Landon. He was lying back among the cushions, his eyes closed. A dim recollection came to O'Neill that he must get Landon away and he started to bend over him, but Sidi Yada checked him.

"Do not disturb your friend," said the priest. "He is in the land of delight. His brain is not so active and rebellious as yours—it yields itself more readily. Perhaps you too in time will learn how to yield."

With gentle compulsion he led O'Neill to the door. The corridor outside was in darkness.

"This way," said the priest. "Do not be afraid—there is nothing to trip you."

He seemed to possess the faculty of seeing in the dark, for O'Neill was conscious that they turned at least two corners in the course of what seemed an interminable journey. Surely the courtyard was not so far away!

But at last Sidi Yada stopped.

"Rest here a moment, monsieur," he said, "and I will get a light."

The hand was lifted from O'Neill's arm —and then the floor seemed suddenly to drop away beneath him.

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE TREASURE OF THE CÆSARS.

O'Neill lay for a moment without stirring, staring vacantly up into the darkness which seemed to press down upon him like a pall. Then he became conscious that his right leg was paining him horribly and that he was very cold. He tried to move and finally managed to sit up. But how cold he was!

And then it all came back to him in a flash. He had been dropped through a trap. He had been lying there unconscious.

He staggered to his feet, regardless of the pain in his leg, and tested it cautiously. At least he could use it, so it was not broken, only bruised or sprained. How long had he lain here oblivious? What had happened to Pat?

He snatched his watch from his pocket and looked at it. The radium dial glowed brightly in the darkness, but the crystal had been shattered by the fall. It had stopped at five minutes after nine.

Despair shook him. How foolish he had been to suppose that Ahmed would not guard himself from any chance of failure! What idiots he and Delage had been to imagine they could outwit that wily Oriental! Landon's fate should have warned them. What idiots! No doubt Delage had been put out of the way also; that was why he had not appeared. And Ahmed was free to do as he pleased.

O'Neill's head was whirling and a great weariness dragged at him. There had been a drug mixed with the incense—Sidi Yada had said so. How had it affected Pat? Had she too been weighted down?

He braced himself against the madness of such thoughts. He must not lose his self-control. He must keep his wits about him. Heaven knows, he would need them all. And for a moment he took his spirit in both hands and held it tight.

The giddiness passed. He felt his pocket to make sure that his pistol was still there, then he moved cautiously forward, testing the floor at every step. The first thing to do was to discover what sort of place it was into which he had been catapulted.

He was not long in finding out. Five or six steps brought him up against a stone wall. He felt his way along this and came to another wall at right angles—a corner; along this to another corner; along this to another corner. In the fourth wall he came upon a small door which his fingers told him was made of heavy planks. He ran his fingers along its edges in an effort to get hold of it, but could find no crevice. He threw all his weight against it but it stood firm as the wall itself. For a moment, in a fit of impotent rage, he beat it with his fists.

Then he pulled himself together again. That would not do; he would merely exhaust himself to no purpose. He leaned against the door panting, his face bathed in sweat.

It was evident enough where he was—in a chamber about ten feet square, with walls of stone and floor of earth; the only opening a single heavy door. Ahmed's oubliette! Used many times, no doubt, just as it was being used now! How many unfortunates had died there? Perhaps even now huddled on the floor——

With teeth hard set O'Neill explored the floor on hands and knees. If he could find some implement—a rock—anything—he might batter the door down. But there was nothing. The floor was a smooth stretch of hard clay. Perhaps he could find a loose stone in the walls, and he made another circuit of the chamber, testing them carefully; but the walls were smooth and solid, of large stones closely fitted together, almost like Roman work.

He made his way back to the door and as he ran his hands over its surface came upon a little square opening near the top with a heavy bar of iron across it—a peephole, evidently, through which the prisoners could be inspected. He looked through it, but could see nothing. If he was really gazing into another chamber it was as dark as this one. He ran his fingers through—yes, it was another chamber. He grasped the bar firmly and pulled with all his strength, but the door did not even quiver.

He had an impulse to shout, to fire his pistol, but he fought it back. He must not bring any of Ahmed's people about him—they would come soon enough! He tried the bar again, exerting every ounce of his

force. But it was quite useless. It would take a battering-ram to get that door down.

Leaning against it for a moment's rest, he went over in his mind the events of the evening. It had undoubtedly been the Mohammedan equivalent of a wedding feast, and the dance with which it had concluded indicated its purpose. Ahmed Ammar had fitted up his love bower for his new bride, and he was there with her now.

O'Neill could guess how the slim, white beauty of this American girl would inflame this man accustomed to women fat and brown. O'Neill shivered. That Pat should be exposed to that! Well, she had her pistol; she could use it as a last resort, upon herself if necessary—provided he gave her a chance.

The cunning of the man! He had inoculated Landon with some soul-destroying drug; there was no telling what deviltry he had still in reserve.

O'Neill's control suddenly gave way; he threw himself against the door, tugged at it, shook it, beat at it with his hands until he was exhausted. No use. He leaned against it panting for breath and for the first time the icy conviction shot through him that he had failed—failed in every way. For it was not only Pat who was in danger. What of that other woman? If Delage was made away with, what would be her fate?

With the frenzy of despair he snatched his pistol from his pocket, thrust its barrel through the opening, and fired. Let them come, the whole crew—at least he would kill a few of them before he died himself!

The report echoed along the outer chamber and fell away into silence. He waited, alert, straining his eyes into the darkness. Then, far away, he caught a flash of light. So they were coming! And bracing himself as though to meet the charge of an army, he waited, his pistol ready.

The light had vanished as suddenly as it appeared and he could hear nothing. Then there was another flash, nearer at hand, almost in his eyes, and he realized that it was from an electric torch. When it came again he would fire at it, and he stood in tense readiness, his finger on the trigger.

But it did not come again. Instead, as he strained eyes and ears in the darkness he fancied he caught the sound of a cautious movement on the other side of the door. It seemed to him that a foot slid softly along the floor; he even caught the rustle of a burnoose as it brushed the wall. Then it seemed to him that he could hear some one breathing; a hand slowly explored the door on the other side——

He could stand it no longer.

"Open the door!" he said in French, his voice thick with rage. "Open the door and fight like a man!"

He heard a quick gasp of astonishment.

"Is it you, Monsieur O'Neill?" asked a low voice.

"Yes, yes!" cried O'Neill, his senses reeling. "But who—oh, no, it can't be! I am dreaming!"

"No, no," said the voice. "It is I! Be patient but a moment!"

The light flashed on again; there was a moment's struggle—a heavy bar was lifted, the door swung open, and O'Neill, his knees giving way beneath him, his eyes dazzled, staggered out into the arms of Delage's sister.

He would have fallen if she had not caught him.

"But no, it can't be!" he said again, and looked into her face and ran his hand along her arm to make sure that she was real. "No, it can't be! Let me see you!"

Her face was still painted as it had been for the dance, but she had thrown a long dark cloak over the brilliant costume. And she smiled at him with a tenderness she did not attempt to conceal as she turned the light upon herself for an instant.

"There," she said, still steadying him with her arm. "Are you convinced?"

"You wonder!" he murmured, and bent and kissed her fingers.

"You can walk?"

"Yes."

"Come, then. We must not stay here."

O'Neill drew a deep breath as his heart quieted down a little.

"I came very near shooting you," he said, and slipped his pistol into his pocket.

"But what were you doing in there?" she asked.

"Sidi Yada dropped me through a trap to get me out of the way—ages ago! What time is it?"

She flashed the light upon the watch at her wrist.

"It is half past nine."

"But it must be later than that!" he protested. "I am sure I have been here for hours!"

"No; it is half past nine, I assure you. Come, we must go."

She threw a beam of light about the dungeon, then pushed the door shut.

"You would better replace the bar," she said; "some one may pass."

He lifted the bar and dropped it into its sockets.

"Now hasten," and she started to turn away.

But he put his hand upon her arm and stopped her.

"Wait," he said; "there is something I must know first. Why did you assume this disguise?"

"As a dancer?"

"Yes."

She smiled as she saw the expression of his face.

"I thought you could guess," she said.

"I am not good at guessing."

"Oh, I know it well," she agreed. "You did not guess that I was Louis' sister—you thought—I do not know what you thought. And now, no doubt, you are thinking something of the same sort."

"Tell me why," he persisted.

"How else could I gain admittance to Ahmed's private apartment, stupid?" she demanded impatiently.

"But why should you want to go there?" he asked.

"Come with me and I will show you," she answered.

He followed her across a chamber of considerable size and through a narrow door at the farther end.

Beyond it was a narrow corridor between stone walls and at the end a heavy door of some dark lustrous metal encrusted with ornament. It stood ajar.

"Part of the spoils of Tijdad," remarked his guide and flashed her torch over it. Then she swung it open and stepped through into the room beyond. "I was here when I heard your pistol shot," she added.

O'Neill stared about him as she flashed her torch around the room. He saw that it was almost filled with huge oblong boxes set in ordered rows upon the floor. To his fevered imagination it looked like a burial chamber.

"What is it?" he asked.

"It is Ahmed's strong room," she answered, and then O'Neill saw that the oblong boxes were in reality heavy chests, covered with metal reinforcements. "Now do you understand? The only entrance to this place is from Ahmed's apartment."

O'Neill's heart was pounding in his throat. The treasure of the Cæsars!

"This Ahmed appears to be a great humorist!" she added.

"A humorist?"

She stepped to the nearest chest, caught hold of a corner of the lid, and pulled it open. He caught a glimpse of a heavy lock.

"See there," she said, and flashed her torch inside.

The chest was empty.

"They are all like that—carefully locked but empty. I have been almost an hour opening one after another. The treasure has disappeared. I was certain it had not survived sixteen centuries!"

O'Neill stared down into the empty chest.

"Are they *all* empty?" he asked. "Surely there must be one——"

"That is what I must find out. I have got this far. You must help me—I am almost exhausted. Here, take the keys," and she thrust a bunch of skeleton keys into his hand. "The locks look formidable, but they are really very simple," she added.

Without a word O'Neill stooped before the chest she indicated inserted one of the keys and threw the bolt. Then he laid hold of the lid and pulled it slowly up. The chest was empty.

A second and a third were also empty. The lid of the fourth stuck tight and refused to yield to his tugging.

"Wait," she said. "Don't exhaust yourself. You must get a lever of some sort."

They looked quickly through the room but there was nothing there that would serve—only those great chests which, ages ago, had been overflowing perhaps with gold and jewels, but which held nothing now except mold and rust.

"I have it," said O'Neill; "the bar from the dungeon door back yonder. It would be just the thing."

She nodded without speaking and together they hurried back along the corridor and across the farther chamber to the door. O'Neill caught the bar and lifted it out of its sockets.

"Splendid!" he cried as he hefted it.

And then he stood transfixed to the spot. For the door of the dungeon swung slowly open and two figures appeared upon the threshold. One he recognized instantly as Pat.

But the other——

Then the light from the torch caught the red burnoose, flashed back from the gold embroidery on the jacket underneath.

It was Ahmed Ammar.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE DEN OF THE WOLF.

It was with an inward trembling which she did her best to conceal that Pat had arisen to follow Ahmed. The significance of the banquet and of Sidi Yada's greeting had not escaped her. She had realized as fully as an American girl might the meaning of the nuptial preparations. She had understood the gleam in Ahmed's eyes; she had watched him moistening his red lips with his red tongue and knew the thought that was in his mind. She had seen blue funk in the eyes of O'Neill, and careless indifference in those of her father as he drowsed back among the cushions. She had the chilling conviction that he was Ahmed's accomplice, dazzled perhaps by that dream of an African empire!

But against all this she had steeled herself. She must carry through the task which she had assumed. Delage's absence troubled her but she reassured herself by patting the little pistol which lay snug in her pocket. And when the moment came, when Ahmed Ammar bent above her with flaming eyes and drew her to her feet, she managed to smile at O'Neill and to wave him encouragement from the door.

When the curtain fell behind them she found herself in darkness. An instant later, the groping hot hand of Ahmed found hers, and drew her forward. She went without resistance, but her other hand sought the handle of the pistol. She had promised Delage to detain Ahmed for an hour and she was going to do it if it was humanly possible. But already she was beginning to doubt her power. At all odds, she realized, she must keep free of him. Once in his grasp she would be lost.

The dark passage along which they made their way seemed to her interminable. But at last Ahmed drew back a curtain and stood aside for her to pass. In another instant Pat had stepped into fairyland.

Before her was a tiny court, softly illumined by the light from a dozen jeweled lanterns. It was paved with wonderful mosaic and in the middle of it a little fountain plashed and tinkled. The court was closed in by a graceful colonnade of slender twisted columns carved from the many-colored Numidian marble and supporting a series of arches covered with foliations, from which the lanterns were suspended by golden chains. The whole effect was eerie, wonderful, ineffably lovely.

Ahmed, who had stepped through after her, stood silently enjoying her amazement as she looked about her.

"But it is like a dream!" she said at last.

"Yes, it is a masterpiece," said Ahmed, with something of the satisfaction of an artist who sees his work admired. "It was brought many centuries ago from that very villa by the Batna road which your father has been excavating. Let me show you the rest of it."

Opening from the colonnade was a series of rooms, each one a jewel. The very flower of Roman art was here, overlaid with the luxury of the Orient—mosaic pavements piled deep with Persian rugs, marble benches heaped with downy cushions. Ahmed paused before a superbly carved table covered with tiny boxes and flasks of lacquer and chased silver.

"These are perfumes," he said, indicating the flasks, "the rarest in the world; and these are jewels for your adornment."

He touched a spring in one of the little boxes and the lid flew open, revealing a corruscating heap of brilliants. It was a necklace, and before she could protest, he had flung it over her head.

"Is it not beautiful?" he asked.

"It is wonderful," said Pat, "but——"

"Do not take it off. Wear it to please me. Come."

He led the way into the room beyond. Pat followed, her head a little giddy. Who would have suspected that, hidden in this rude dwelling of rough stone, such a work of beauty lay concealed! It was incredible—and for a moment she had a feeling that she had stepped back through the ages into the world of the Arabian Nights. This was the caliph and she was his queen—Harun-al-Rashid and Scheherazade—Juba and Cleopatra Selene! She felt that she was under a spell; her will seemed to be slipping from her. She shook herself sharply. This would not do! She must keep her head.

The room which they now entered was the largest of them all. Along one side

ran a wide, low divan, heaped with cushions and overshadowed by a canopy of crimson silk embroidered in gold. The walls were covered with arabesques the color of old ivory, touched here and there with red and blue and yellow. No Roman work this, but the masterpiece of some long-dead artist of the East.

"Let us sit here," said Ahmed and led the way to the divan. "Do not be afraid," he added as she hesitated. "There are many things I wish to say to you."

He cast aside his burnoose, drew a cigarette from the pocket of his tunic, lighted it, and sat for a moment regarding her.

"Well," he asked at last, "what think you of this bower of love? My ancestor was an artist, *hein?*"

"It is very beautiful," said Pat. "I have never seen anything so beautiful."

"He was also a great lover, that ancestor," went on Ahmed with a smile. "He built this place as a fitting nest for a princess of Circassia, as I have said. He poured out a vast treasure upon it and upon her —treasure which was not his, which had been placed in his keeping for another purpose. It was sacrilege; but he did not hesitate. And I do not think he ever regretted. You see, he was in love, and men do not regret the things they do for love!"

He drew a deep, convulsive breath and moistened his lips.

"Not often has any woman been found worthy of it," he went on. "I have never in my life admitted any woman to it until to-night."

"I feel very honored," remarked Pat weakly. Was this man, after all, going to prove too much for her?

"You see," he added slowly, "I also am in love. I also am willing to commit sacrilege, if it is necessary. Do you know the hope that is in my heart? It is that after you have heard what I have to say you will consent to take it as a gift from me and to honor me by living here."

"Oh, no!" Pat began, but he stopped her.

"Wait until you have heard," he said. "It is not this alone that I am offering you. First let me explain that I have opened my project to your father and that he approves."

"Dad has not been himself," said Pat quickly, "not since that night at Teniet."

"He has been really himself only since that night," corrected Ahmed. "Before that he was weighted down with foolishness and error. There for the first time he caught a glimpse of the great truths which are commonplace to us but which the stupid people of your race know nothing of. You too shall know those truths—all of them. And you shall be a queen, millions of people shall bow before you. Between us we will recreate that great empire which is still, after two thousand years, the wonder of the world. It is not a dream—everything is ready; I have only to speak the word."

She was staring at him fascinated. She could almost believe that he spoke the truth.

"But I do not want to be a queen," she objected.

"Why not?" he urged. "Why not grasp this great career which I place in your hands —which I cast into your lap?"

"But me!" she protested. "Why me? I am just an ignorant American girl."

"Because you are the woman I love," he broke in. "Because I want you; because I am at your feet!"

And he dropped to the floor before her and caught her knees.

"Do not deny me!" he added thickly. "You are my wife!"

"Oh, no!" cried Pat, and struggled to free herself. "No—that is absurd!"

"It is not absurd—it is true!"

"No!"

"It is true!"

"No!. Please release me!"

But he only held her the tighter. With a desperate effort she managed to wrench the pistol from her pocket and press it against the back of his head as it lay in her lap.

"Release me at once or I will kill you!" she said, between set teeth.

She felt him go rigid as the cold barrel touched his skin; then his arms loosened and he stood erect. She was shaking convulsively with fear and angry humiliation but she managed to keep the pistol pointed at him. She was astonished to see that he was laughing silently to himself.

"So you have a sting!" he chuckled. "The little dove has a sting! Oh, you needed only that! Now you are perfect! I adore you!"

She looked up at him doubtfully.

"I shall not hesitate to use it," she assured him.

"Certainly," he nodded; "I know it quite well; I can see it in your eyes. So it was because of that toy you were willing to come! You thought yourself safe. But no —that does not explain it. There must be

some other reason. You knew why I wanted you to come here to-night? Tell me—why did you consent?"

He was looking at her narrowly, suspicion and puzzlement in his face. Pat, feeling her advantage, began to pick up hope. Perhaps she could detain him, after all. She glanced at her watch and was astonished to see that only twenty minutes had passed.

"Put it down to woman's curiosity," she said lightly. "I wanted to see your bower of love. I have been well repaid."

He regarded her for yet a moment, then he lighted another cigarette and dropped the still-burning match into a little alabaster vase on the tabourette at her side.

"I am happy that you are pleased," he said, his voice edged with irony. "But it is true what I told you a moment ago—in the eyes of our law you are my wife."

"But not in the eyes of our law."

"Perhaps not—but your law does not penetrate to this place."

"Then I shall have to rely upon this," said Pat, and wagged the pistol meaningly.

"A poor reliance."

"I know how to use it," she warned him.

"Prove it," he said, and opened his arms so that his breast was uncovered.

"Only in the last extremity!"

She passed her hand before her eyes, for again she was beginning to feel a little dizzy. She was conscious of a strange perfume in the air.

"The last extremity!" he repeated. "Well, here it is!"

And before she realized that he had moved he snatched the pistol from her hand and tossed it to the other side of the room.

She tried to rise, but his arms were about her, pressing her back. The room whirled before her; she understood now; he had set some drug alight when he had dropped that burning match into the vase. Oh, why had she been so stupid! She should have shot him down! Now it was too late.

She had time for one scream, shrill and agonized, and then his lips were upon hers, and he was crushing her back; she was helpless in his grasp; a great sickness welled up within her, she felt that she was fainting swiftly——

And then the pressure relaxed. Dizzily she opened her eyes—and screamed again. For the face peering into her own was not Ahmed's face, but a horrible face, with goggling eyes and purple protruding tongue.

At sight of that hideous nightmare her heart seemed to stop, and with a long sigh she sank back unconscious among the cushions.

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE EMPTY CHESTS.

Pat, struggling slowly back to consciousness, opened her eyes to see dimly a dark face bending over her; and closed them again, faint and sick with the thought that it was over—that she had lost. Fool that she had been to walk into such a trap! Then she remembered that other face, with its horrible grimace, its protruding tongue.

She opened her eyes again and a great sob burst from her. For the face above her, gazing down at her so anxiously, was that of Delage. For an instant she could not believe; then she flung her arms around him and drew him close and burst into a torrent of tears.

"There, there, little one!" he said, smoothing her hair and pressing his cheek to hers. "It is all right. You are safe. Now I am going to take you away."

"Yes, yes, take me away!" she sobbed. "Oh, I have been such a fool!"

"It was my fault. I had no right to ask it of you!"

"I should have gone while there was time. But I had my pistol—and he stood there so quiet—and I was so proud that I had got the best of him! But he burned something—some drug—some perfume."

"Yes, I know," said Delage gently. "But it is all right now. He will never bother you again."

She sat quiet for a moment at that; then she straightened herself up and looked at him.

"What happened?" she asked. "I don't understand."

"I was searching for you; I had lain concealed all the evening waiting for you to pass. But Ahmed must have taken another way—at any rate I missed you. I thought I knew the way to this place, but I lost myself in that labyrinth out there. It was your scream guided me."

"Yes; but what happened? I saw his face just for an instant. It was horrible!"

"A cord about the neck," said Delage shortly. "It was not a pleasant thing to do—but necessary. Are you able to walk?"

"Yes, I think so," and she rose unsteadily to her feet. "But how much I owe you!"

and she drew his face down to hers and kissed him. "If you had been too late!"

"If I had been too late," he said hoarsely, "Ahmed would not have had a death so easy! But I was not too late! Sit down again. I must leave you for a moment."

"You are not going far?"

"Only into the next room," he said, and caught up Ahmed's burnoose from the floor. "Do not be afraid. There is no danger."

He smiled back at her from the doorway and disappeared. Pat, with a long shiver of mingled ecstasy and horror, rose to her feet and stretched the cramps out of her arms and legs. Her heart was singing, for she had won! She was not safe yet, it is true; but to face danger at the side of the man one loves—that is a joy and a privilege. Oh, she could fight! He would see! And remembering her pistol she crossed the room, picked it up from the floor where Ahmed had tossed it, and slipped it into her pocket.

She looked again about the room. How beautiful it was! How exquisite this whole bower of love. What a place for a honeymoon! And she sighed softly.

She could fancy the Circassian princess sitting at the feet of her lord, or making her toilet with the aid of sedulous slaves, or dreaming beside the fountain in the court. She could see the long procession of beautiful women who had lived in these rooms, their one thought, their only business, to delight and amuse their masters. And quite suddenly, in the light of her own emotion, Pat understood that this was by no means the degrading and narrow existence she had always thought it, but a wise and delightful one—wise because the world with its petty rivalries, its envies, its empty vanities, was shut away and forgotten; delightful because, without worry, without haste, life passed gently by.

"Do not be frightened," called Delage's voice from the door.

But for an instant, as she turned, her heart stood still, for she thought it was Ahmed entering; and then she saw it was Delage, with Ahmed's gold-embroidered tunic and scarlet burnoose.

"I think this will save us," he said, and drew the hood of the burnoose over his head so that his face was in the shadow. "At least we must try it, for it is our only chance. You still have your pistol?"

"Yes," and she tapped her pocket.

"Then we must go. But first——"

He held out his arms and she walked into them, her heart aflame.

He released her at last and held her at arms' length and looked at her.

"I see you have been decorated," he said with a smile. "What is it? The Grand Cordon, the collar of the Golden Fleece? At least it is very beautiful!"

For an instant Pat stared uncomprehendingly; then she remembered the necklace.

"Oh, yes," she said, and hastily removed it with a gesture of repugnance.

"I would keep it, if I were you," said Delage. "He gave it to you, didn't he?"

"Yes."

"It will be a souvenir of a most interesting evening—a souvenir every woman will envy you, for it is a masterpiece. By all means keep it."

"But I could never wear it."

"Why not?"

"It is too gorgeous; it is for a princess or a queen. It is only for very great occasions."

"We are going to have our great occasions, you and I," said Delage. "So keep it."

"Very well," said Pat, and slipped it into her pocket.

"Now let us go," said Delage and led the way out along the colonnade into the little court.

At the door they paused for a last look around.

"It is a pity to leave it," said Delage; "what a nest for love!"

Pat nodded silently, her heart very full.

"Ah, there were men in those days," he went on musingly. "Can you imagine any one now building such a bower to lay at a woman's feet? No—we build bridges and railroads and battleships—but nothing like this. We have lost the urge for the beautiful!" He stopped himself with a grim laugh. "How I grow philosophic!"

He held back the curtain at the doorway and they stepped through into the darkness of the corridor outside.

"Take my hand," he said in a low voice. "I am not altogether sure of the way but I think I can find it. My sister is expecting me; she will be very anxious."

"She danced before Ahmed to-night," said Pat; "wonderfully."

"She is very clever, my sister," Delage commented.

"And very beautiful. I think if I had not been there——"

"He would have taken her to the bower," chuckled Delage. "Perhaps. As it was, he saved her for another night. But we must not talk. Some one may hear."

It seemed to Pat that the corridor twisted and turned like a labyrinth and she soon lost all sense of direction. She could feel the wall at her left and occasionally a strip of drapery masking a door; but there was no gleam of light. Evidently the whole household had sunk to rest, wearied out by the wedding festivities. Yet everywhere there was a sense of brooding danger, crouching ready to strike.

Delage pressed her hand reassuringly.

"It cannot be much farther," he whispered, and then Pat felt him lurch forward, his hand was torn from hers, and the next instant she too was falling through space.

It was only extreme alertness on Delage's part which saved his skull from being crushed by the heavy bar in O'Neill's hands, for at the vision of Ahmed stepping out of the dungeon, he had swung it up ready to strike.

"No, no; it is I, Delage!" he had cried, and O'Neill stopped, petrified.

Of all the astonishing moments of this astonishing night, this was the most amazing. That Delage should be here—with Pat—in Ahmed's clothes! He lowered the bar slowly, still staring, and Delage stepped forward laughing and patted him on the arm.

"There, there!" he said; "I am not a ghost—I will explain when I have more time. How did you get here?"

"By the same route you did, I suppose," O'Neill answered. "That infernal Sidi Yada dropped me through a trap."

"Sidi Yada?" Delage repeated, and his face grew dark. "Then we must not stay here. What have you found?" he added, turning to his sister.

"Nothing," she answered, and held out her open hands.

"But the chests."

"They are empty—at least as far as I have gone. This Ahmed is a great joker."

"Show me," said Delage, and the little party hurried back to the treasure chamber.

"Let us take a look at this one," said O'Neill, and applied the bar to the lid which had proved too much for him.

It creaked slowly open. The chest was empty.

Delage stood for a moment looking at the dust which covered its bottom.

"It has been empty for a long time," he said at last.

"Perhaps this is the treasure Ahmed meant!" cried Pat suddenly. "It was lavished on that bower of love and on the Circassian princess!"

"It might have been put to a worse use!" Delage commented, with a shrug. "I admire that fellow! Well, we must think of our own safety."

O'Neill had applied himself to the next chest, which yielded at once under his vigorous attack. It, too, was empty.

"He couldn't have spent it all!" he protested. "Not even on a princess. It is a shame to go away until we are sure."

"Every moment is precious," Delage pointed out, but he too was plainly reluctant to leave.

O'Neill went to work on a third chest, which proved to be empty like the others. A fourth resisted his efforts stoutly. The key had thrown the bolt but he could not raise the lid.

"This is a tough one," he panted. "The lid is caught on something."

A flame leaped into Delage's eyes.

"Let me see," he said, and snatching the torch from his sister's hand he flashed the light along the edge of the lid. "Yes, there is another lock. See, here is the keyhole at the end. Give me the keys, O'Neill."

O'Neill passed them over to him, and he tried them one after another. But none of them would throw the bolt.

"I must give it up," he said at last. "We cannot stay here all night!"

"Perhaps I can break it in," suggested O'Neill and poised the heavy bar.

"One moment," interrupted Delage, and ran and pulled shut the great bronze door. "We must not alarm the house. Now!"

O'Neill brought the bar crashing against the lock. A second time—a third time. But it held firm.

"Let me try the keys again," said Delage.

He thrust one in; it turned. But the lid stuck. One more blow and it flew open.

Inside the chest was a smaller one, very strongly made. It was all Delage could do to lift it out to the floor. He tried the lid, then bent above it with the torch.

"It is locked too," he said, "and the lock

is too small for my keys. We shall have to leave it."

O'Neill lifted one end of the chest and let it fall.

"What a shame!" he groaned. "What a shame!"

"No matter," said Delage sharply. "We must think of ourselves. We have been here too long. Now listen to me. We will go out the door and up the stairs together. There will be a guard in the court, and another probably at the outer gate, which will also no doubt be closed. However it is secured only by a bar which can easily be raised from the inside. Souffi is waiting at the foot of the hill near the highway. Your man is in the court?" he added, looking at O'Neill.

"Yes," said O'Neill; "at least I suppose so."

"Good; but we will use the camels if we can get to them. I shall try to deceive the guards but if they suspect and an alarm is given I will take care of Mademoiselle Landon and you, Monsieur O'Neill, will charge yourself with my sister. If you reach the camels first do not wait for us, but mount and be off along the road to the south. Take Souffi with you; I do not need him; I know the way. Tell him simply that the route is by the hill road and that the rendezvous is Mechounech. He will guide you. And you can trust him. Do you understand?"

"Yes," said O'Neill. He was thrilled at the thought that the safety of this wonderful woman might perhaps depend upon his coolness and courage.

"Send your man with the horses back along the road to the north. Tell him to press on to Batna."

"I understand," O'Neill nodded.

"Very well, then," said Delage and turned toward the door. But Pat interposed and stopped him.

"What of my father?" she asked.

O'Neill could scarcely repress a gesture of impatience. How was it possible to find Landon without imperiling all of them? Where would they look for him? He started to say as much but Delage motioned him to be silent.

"I have not forgotten your father, mademoiselle," said the Frenchman gravely. "If there is an alarm there is nothing to be done. We must save ourselves. But if there is not, you will go on with Monsieur O'Neill and I will stay to look for him. I think I shall find him lying on the cushions in the banquet hall. You will wait for me ten minutes," he added to O'Neill. "Now let us go!"

But as he raised his hand to push open the great door it was pulled open from without.

There, peering in at them by the light of a smoking torch of resin, stood four of Ahmed's guards.

To be concluded in the next issue of THE POPULAR, *October 20th.*

HELPFUL HINTS

FROM Greenwich Village, New York City's vivid Latin quarter, comes a useful recipe which will be welcomed by all careless ink slingers.

In the back of every man's brain lurks a hateful memory of the awful day that he tipped the ink bottle over and ruined the parlor rug. If he had only known how to retrieve the disaster effectively he might have been saved many a retrospective shudder. The Greenwich Village method presents several excellent solutions of the quandary. In order of merit they run as follows:

1. Quickly apply the base of a copious vase or jardinière to the spot The stain will instantly be lost to sight.

2. Lather the spot freely with shaving cream and remove with a safety razor.

3. With a pair of stout scissors cut out the stain and restore the pattern by painting it on the floor.

4. Purchase a gallon of ink, assorted colors—black, blue, red, green and purple. Carefully spill the ink over the entire carpet, alternating the colors. The result will be a floor covering of which any futurist might well be proud.

Cassiar Dixon Pays His Debts

By Robert Russell Strang

Author of "Aloona," "Between Friends," Etc.

In Alaska obligations are matters of life and death -frequently death.

IN Alaska, when a man has grown too old to work, is in poor health and without funds to tide him over the long winter, if he fails to let his friends know of his wants, or these have failed him, he may do one of two things; namely, break into jail or starve to death. The known methods of getting behind the bars are so numerous that the choice is left to himself. In effect the government exclaims, "Become a convict! Food, clothing and lodging provided until you die. We accept your self-respect in exchange. Long live the people!" The alternative is a one-way thoroughfare which cannot be negotiated by proxy.

Maybe Cassiar Dixon harbored quixotic views regarding his self-respect. Maybe he was just a foolish old man. As he hugged the Yukon stove in his miserable shack back of Moosehead City he was in possession of nothing at all to back up his precious pride. And he was sick to boot. And though nothing by way of food had crossed his throat that day, and he was entirely without prospects of a reassuring nature, he wasn't pitying himself any. As a matter of fact he crooned verse after verse of a ballad which seemingly was without end, a lilting jocund thing that had warmed the cockles of his heart times without number, in tune with which he tapped the pole floor with a moccasined foot. The sum total of his attitude was, who's afraid?

The song was not in harmony with the occasion. Indeed, portions even of Cassiar's expurgated version will never receive the sanction of printer's ink. But it was the only song he knew; besides, a man must face things *so*. If, therefore, once in a while he sort of choked over a certain word he made up for this by attacking the next verse with a bravado which at least deceived himself. The manner of this was scarcely calculated to oblige a listener to hold his sides with mirth. The ballad went like this:

"My first strike was in Caribou,
I went upon a bat;
I landed down in Agassiz—
And Dolly she got *that!*
Oh, they's no-o place like ho—ome,
They's no-o place like home.

"I hopped it next to Black Hills
And staked on Golden Flat;
I hoofed it into Deadwood—
And Sweet Marie got *that!*
Oh, they's no-o place like ho—ome,
They's no-o place like home.

"To Cripple Creek I took my way
Along with Kaslo Mat;
We struck it up on Doggy-dog—
(And I'll be daw-gawned if 'Red
Kitty' didn't get both of us!)
Oh, they's no-o place like ho—ome,
They's no-o place like home."

And he proceeded to strike it in Nevada, Idaho, Oregon and California; in the Klondike, in Nome and in Tanana. It was an

exceedingly accommodating ballad, because the addition of a new verse required little skill and involved no waste of poetic frenzy or "toil of spirit." Which means a lot where books are scarce.

It is admitted that Cassiar Dixon had never been particularly careful with money. All his life he had been the victim of a headstrong generosity. More than one frontier lady of touching manners had given him the cabalistic eye and relieved him of his poke. For in his mind woman held a place a little higher than the angels.

Had Cassiar Dixon lived, say, fifteen hundred years ago, the probability is that some one to-day would be clamoring for his canonization. A man, he was, and a fundamentally good one; a man all heart and totally unaware of the fact. Cast in the mold of an artisan, at the end of the day he would have laid away his tools with reluctance. Had he inherited a fortune he would have given it away piecemeal.

Cassiar had spent his long life largely in the solitudes. To him a trading post or two, a couple of saloons and a dance hall were a metropolis. Here was life! In such he had played in his peculiar schoolboy way. In a session of poker in which a white chip was worth five dollars he would stay on a pair of deuces. If he drew a third the probability was that he would shove his pile into the center of the table with a laugh. In a game with hard-shelled gamblers his ingenuousness had invariably been interpreted as guile of the Machiavellian brand and from such he had filched many an ounce of dust. But among players just a little more sophisticated than himself no snowball in a furnace ever melted away half as quickly as his pile of chips.

On arriving in camp after a long pull in the wilderness, the sour doughs of the community incapacitated for further trail breaking invariably received his first attention. In view of the fact that the majority of these were ever eager to resent anything that smacked of the eleemosynary, the success of Cassiar in the rôle of Santa Claus was noteworthy. His simplicity and sympathy were so interwoven with friendliness of a superlative nature that the objects of his consideration were beguiled into the belief that, in accepting a few ounces of his hard-earned dust, they were conferring upon him an especially agreeable favor.

Cassiar Dixon wasn't a saint, but he was hounded by a smaller pack of regrets than the majority of men. Of late years he had grown to believe that when his call came it would find him with a pick, a shovel or a pan in his hands; that he would fall asleep in his moccasins. Yet here he was at the age of four-and-seventy facing a long winter broke and in a community whose inhabitants were for the most part strangers to him. All of which was bad enough. But added to this, he had lost confidence in himself; or, as he phrased it, "My paystreak is plumb worked out."

Just a little over a year before he had fallen upon evil days—this, mind you, at a moment when his star was in the ascendant. Such is not unusual. He had taken in the stampede to Lincoln Creek up in the Circle district, and had been one of the first dozen stampeders up to a point within one day's travel of the new strike. He had, so to speak, a rich claim tucked away in the inner pocket of his own Mackinaw coat—for almost immediately Lincoln became a phenomenal payer—when he encountered beside the trail a very sick man, a man febrile of eye who apostrophized luck as a malignant entity, one who had done him an irreparable injury. All this in the manner of one to whom the words, by frequent repetition, had lost their force and meaning.

By this and by that Cassiar concluded that he was a chechahco or stranger in the land, but did not allow this fact to challenge his solicitude. The stampede, the rich claim were instantly thrust from his mind. Before that day closed twenty-five other stampeders had passed by his camp fire. His patient still raved. He solaced himself with the resolve that if in the morning the sick man showed signs of improvement he would once more hit the trail for Lincoln and make a bid for a piece of ground—for he argued to himself that no one could be more in need of a stake than he was—leaving his patient to the care of other stampeders who would doubtless be along and lend a hand.

In the morning the man was worse. Other stampeders made their way along the old mail trail, commiserated with him in passing and hurried on their way. Once, twice, during the forenoon he shouldered his pack, twice he struggled out of it again. He made a new verse to his song and hummed it dolefully:

"On my way to stake on Lincoln
Where 'Dutch Moe' had struck it fat,
I chanced upon a sick man—
And that was the end o' *that!*
Oh, they's no-o place like ho—ome,
They's no-o place like home."

By noon of that day enough men had passed his way to stake Lincoln from source to mouth and from ridge to ridge. He spent the remainder of the day making a crude carryall of Indian design. On this he disposed his patient comfortably next morning, got into the improvised harness and started with him over the back trail. By dint of frequent rests and his knowledge of the country Cassiar arrived at his shack on Grubstake Bar on Birch Creek six days later. Here in the course of time the fever left the man and by and by he took his leave of his rescuer in this fashion.

"I'm a gambler. I was on my way down the Yukon in a small boat when the man who made the strike on Lincoln came down a side stream on a raft and hailed me. He told me of the strike and how to reach it by way of a short cut. So I gave him my boat to take down to Circle and I took to the woods right there. I sure thought my luck had returned. I was mistaken. I even put yours on the run. I think it was the rotten surface water that got to me.

"I'm lightin' out for Moosehead City again. I'm broke but down there I've got a friend who used to be my side kicker in Nevada. It was him that sent me the price to come to Alaska. Now, because I've been havin' tough luck for six months I've got a hunch that I'm due to make a killin'. See? So if ever you happen to bump into Moosehead City hunt me up and give my game a whirl. And I'll swear you'll never regret havin' saved the life of 'Rawhide Charlie.'"

After which the two shook hands and the gambler struck forth for Circle. Cassiar returned to his rocker and by and by forgot all about the incident. The Moosehead mining district had never been a stamping ground of his.

The winter following, as was his custom, he struck into the hills west-by-north of the Circle diggings. There had leaked a rumor that prospectors were making some good strikes over toward the Tanana. Between the Yukon and that river he prospected without success nearly all winter. It was in March that Slug, the younger of his two dogs, in playful mood got the last little sack of salt in his teeth and mixed the same with several tons of snow. This, while the old miner was doing some work in a prospect hole. Food without salt being nothing short of torture to a white man, next day he hitched up the dogs and headed back for the Yukon.

Crossing a wide creek valley two days later Cassiar had the misfortune—his eyesight was poor—to step into the overflow from one of the hot springs that dot the territory. Before he succeeded in extricating himself from this mess—the water flowed under the snow—he was thoroughly wet to the ankles. The weather being around forty below zero at the time, he arrived at the farther limit and timber on stilts.

Here, two days after the accident, he was discovered by a man who had picked up his trail the day before and who gave his name as Sawny Forbush. A few days before he had made a fair strike to the westward and was on his way to Moosehead City to record his claim, purchase an outfit of supplies and hire a few men to work for him the forthcoming season. Thus Cassiar came to know that he had wandered farther to the northwest than had been his intention. Next day Sawny Forbush added the old-timer's two dogs to his own team and hit the trail for Moosehead City. He arrived there a week later and placed Cassiar for treatment in the little private hospital.

It was July before he was discharged from the institution with a hospital and a doctor's bill hanging about his neck like a ton of lead. Since that time he had made his living and wiped out his debts by sawing up heavy sixteen-foot sticks into stove lengths. Furthermore, while performing this heavy labor—really beyond his strength at this time—to the end that he be relieved of the mental worry the debt caused him, he subjected his body to the torture of starvation.

On the day he paid off the last installment of his bills, when lifting a heavy log onto the sawhorse he caved in. For a full fifteen minutes he lay unnoticed across the stick, then staggered to his shack like a drunken man.

This had happened ten days ago. He was able to be about. And although he couldn't place a finger on any particular part of

his body and declare that here lay the seat of his illness, he was nevertheless a sick man. A man of Cassiar's type is pretty bad when he admits to himself that he is all in.

There wasn't in the cabin one ounce of food. But although he had no particular friends in the little city there wasn't a man in the district who wouldn't have responded to an appeal for assistance; or, having knowledge of his condition, would not have helped him without such—if permitted. For the matter is considered a delicate one. And, of course, there was the government in the persons of the United States commissioner and the deputy marshal. Cassiar Dixon had not the slightest intention of making an appeal to any one. Perish the thought! His philosophy abhorred an obligation.

During the time he was feverishly engaged sawing wood not once did he enter a saloon or other place of amusement. For one thing, in the evenings he was too tired; for another he had no money to spend, and he wasn't taking drinks from anybody when not in a position to respond in kind. Now and again he had seen a man on the street whom he had met up with in other camps, but not one whom he could call a friend. The truth is, the pioneers had dropped off rather rapidly the past few years.

Nevertheless, up around Circle were still a few of the old guard who would have walked barefooted over the ice to render him assistance. And there it had been his intention to proceed on the last upriver boat, which had passed by five days before. But he had lacked the few necessary dollars to defray even the slight cost of his passage.

So here he sat beside his rusty old stove crooning his long-distance song. When he had got as far as the Klondike in this he rose and put on his Mackinaw coat and fur cap. He was feeling rather lonely, and having recalled seeing a notice on the bulletin board announcing the fact that the *Susie*, the last boat of the season, was due to arrive from Dawson and way points that night at seven o'clock, he suddenly resolved to be a witness to her arrival and departure.

"Guess maybe I'll never——"

But that thought he thrust from his mind and started over town, resolutely holding his chin up.

II.

Texas is the largest State in the Union. Mention this fact to a native son of California and he will bombard you with oranges, lemons, raisins and weather reports. Whisper it in the ear of the rangy gentleman from Montana and he will chunk you with ingots of copper, bars of silver and gold and—though this is doubtful—porterhouse steaks. Tree fruits do not flourish in Alaska, but you can set down Texas, California and Montana within its boundaries and have enough land left over out of which to create an archipelago of Rhode Islands.

Even when measured by this standard Moosehead City might have stood for the capital of several European countries. South of the camp stretched the Yukon Flat, which is probably the loneliest place on earth. Here the mother of Alaskan rivers is broken up into hundreds of sloughs and channels; some swift, some slow, some dead. The islands therein, which are the breeding places of most varieties of migratory fowl, will not be catalogued in our time. This vast waste has swallowed up many a prospector with no more effort than an elephant the size of Manhattan would exert in disposing of a peanut.

Below Moosehead City the Yukon makes her way through a bottle neck, the sheer walls of which rise to a height of several hundred feet. Going through this the voyager asks himself how long it took the water to wear a channel through this Gargantuan lizard of hard rock, and for the remainder of that day is likely to be a thoughtful man.

Moosehead City itself was a town of log buildings, the majority of which faced the river. Midway the long one-sided street stood a block of two-story buildings devoted to business and pleasure. Here were the trading posts, restaurants, saloons and dance halls. On the flanks were the pretentious homes of the business people and in the rear the town shacks of the miners. The diggings were distant thirty miles in the interior. The district was a complete democracy in itself.

As Cassiar debouched onto the water front a chill north wind cut him to the bone. In this the wind had an easy job. A glance at the dock apprised him that the *Susie* had not yet arrived. He paused, undecided whether to return to his cabin or to seek the warmth of a saloon.

The entrance to the Monte Carlo was

momentarily flung open to admit two patrons. To his ear came the tinkle of a piano, the blare of a cornet and the crash of drum and cymbals. Opposing this was a raucous phonograph, the cries of the dealers, a maudlin voice raised in song. This had ever been a part of Cassiar's life. Nostalgia gripped him. Drawing the collar of his coat up about his face he entered, hurried through the hilarious crowds at the bar to the gambling room and dance hall beyond and seated himself on a high chair against the wall back of the roulette table. The warmth and the company were meat and drink to him.

On this night a large majority of the miners of the district were in the city. The summer sluicing season had lately closed and the miners who had transmuted their labors into gold dust were bent on exchanging it for fun. Parkaed and moccasined, Cassiar saw them swing painted ladies on the corner, hoopla! to grand right and left; and drink their hooch with relish. Let winter come! was their attitude. We've lived through others, we'll survive this one! Here and there in the ever-changing crowd the old prospector beheld a familiar face, but the majority of the men were strangers to him.

Because it happened to be the game nearest to him Cassiar bestowed his attention on the roulette table. He became interested, fascinated even. He noted several players with small stacks of chips in front of them win many small bets. "Stool pigeons! Boosters!" he muttered with scorn. He saw others come to the table with small fortunes, bet heavily and go broke. Always such went broke, it seemed. He concluded—and rightly—that the game was crooked. He glanced at the profile of the dealer. A pale mask, this was, a face of stone. Still there was a something about the mold of his head that again and again commanded his attention. Try as he might, however, he could not call up a situation into which the man fitted.

He was still searching his mind for a clew to the identity of the dealer when his attention was attracted toward a man who had entered the saloon driving a five-dog team and howling like a wolf. Presently the new arrival vociferously demanded that every man and woman in the house have a drink with him. This man Cassiar recognized at once as Sawny Forbush. It also fixed in his mind the fact that he was the only human being to whom he owed a debt. Sawny, he concluded, was not exactly drunk, yet neither was he in his sober senses.

"Gentlemen!" cried Sawny after his health had been drunk, "I've made a home stake and it's me for a trip down the Yukon to-night on the *Susie* and a farm out in God's country till the cows come home. While waiting for the steamboat I aim to reduce the bank roll of the Monte Carlo by about twenty thousand bucks. How does that strike you, Jake?"

Jake Bruce, the proprietor of the resort, removed the cigar from his red face and gestured toward the roulette table.

"Go to it, Sawny," he laughed. "You'll be paid every dollar you win, and the roof is the limit."

To his horror Cassiar beheld Sawny proceed to exchange several pokes of dust for chips. He climbed down from his seat and intercepted his friend midway between the cashier's desk and the roulette wheel, placing a timid hand on his arm.

"Well, well, well!" cried Sawny. "If it ain't my old friend Cassiar Dixon! How are the feet?"

"Fine and fat," hastily replied Cassiar. "You—you've made your pile?"

"Well, 'tain't no million, old-timer, but it's enough to choke a wolf at that. I cleaned up thirty thousand and sold out to the men that worked for me for ten thousand more." Here he surreptitiously slipped a couple of chips into Cassiar's coat pocket. "They'll make a little money next summer," he said in conclusion.

Cassiar scanned Sawny's face narrowly. "Friend, 'tain't none o' my business what you do with your money, but keep away from the roulette."

Sawny threw back his head and laughed. "I know what you're drivin' at, old-timer. You think my brains are pickled in hooch. They ain't; they're preserved in champagne. I'll tell you how it happened. I'm making the best time over the trail to catch the *Susie*, y'understand, but when I go to pass the Franklin roadhouse a band of huskies headed by 'Frying Pan Pete' holds me up and shoos me into the bar. Nor would they let me go until I had disposed of a quart of wine in honor of Pete's birthday. Then, of course, we had to have another. I guess I'm able to take care of myself just the same, old socks."

At this point the house bouncer—though they didn't know him as such—passed between the two and handed Cassiar a black look, a look which told him as plain as words could that he would do well to mind his own business. Sawny Forbush approached the table with a wolf howl. Cassiar made to walk around the bouncer with the intention of rejoining his friend and dissuading him from playing the wheel. But the bouncer, still scowling, held up a couple of fingers and continued to block his path. Presently he was joined by two boosters. The three arranged themselves about Sawny and shut out Cassiar completely.

Certain now that his friend was due to be fleeced Cassiar circled the table in search of an opening, and for some time in vain. At length a man directly opposite the dealer went broke, and left the table with a curse on his lips. Cassiar slipped into the place. He called Sawny by name. The boosters started up a song. Instantly it was taken up by every other man within sound of their voices. This, added to the wham, bam! of the orchestra and the whooping and shouting of the dancers effectually drowned Cassiar's appeals.

In despair he beheld Sawny lose several large bets. As one cornered looks for a means of escape he threw his eye over the faces of the men about the table. Suddenly he caught himself looking into the eyes of the dealer. The recognition was instant and mutual. The dealer was Rawhide Charlie, minus a beard and dazzlingly appareled. No word passed between them. For one thing, owing to the large number of players, the dealer was obliged to do some lightning calculation to the end that the house come out ahead on every turn of the wheel.

Once more Cassiar turned his attention to Sawny Forbush. A man at his side seemed to be urging him to take larger bets, coincident with which his companions were bellowing forth and shuffling their feet to "Johnny was a skipper on the old Mississippi."

A waiter approached the table with a trayful of drinks. Sawny seized a glass and tossed its contents down his throat as if it had been water. Immediately afterward he placed three tall stacks of blue chips on the red. Cassiar shivered. Each one of those chips he well knew represented a hundred dollars. The dealer started the ball and wheel upon their way. Black won. Impotent with indignation the old man saw his friend lose four such bets in succession; noted furthermore that the chips in front of him represented hundreds where but a short while before the pile had stood for as many thousands of dollars.

Cassiar straightened up with a groan. Aimlessly, fumblingly, his gnarled trembling hands sought his coat pockets, for in the old flush days for the sake of convenience it was in those he was wont to carry his dust. His right hand encountered two round, hard objects. He brought these forth and stared at them. Two blue chips! Here was a miracle! With these he could purchase for himself a winter's supply of provisions, consult a doctor too, and end his worries right there. He passed a hand across his eyes. When he opened them he looked squarely into the eyes of the dealer a second time. Cassiar leaned over the table. For a few moments his whisker was strangely agitated.

"——saved my life last winter," were the words Rawhide Charlie heard him say in conclusion.

"Play the crown," he lipped in reply as he leaned over to start the wheel.

Tremblingly, Cassiar acted on the advice. Those who saw the bet placed tittered. Out of the corner of his eye he beheld Sawny place his remaining chips on the black.

"Ah-h-h-h!" breathed the players and onlookers.

"The crown wins," droned Rawhide Charlie.

Without moving a muscle of his face or otherwise betraying the fact that the house was presenting twenty thousand dollars to an old broken-down prospector, with long, sensitive fingers the dealer passed stack after stack of high-powered chips over to Cassiar.

"Make your bets, gentlemen," he then coolly requested.

Cassiar glanced at the table. To his confusion the colors all ran together and there was a tumult in his ears. As from a great distance he heard some one bet five dogs and a sled and dimly comprehended that the voice belonged to Sawny Forbush. He placed his hands behind his pile of chips and shoved them into the center of what seemed to him a rainbow, then

gripped the edge of the table to stop his hands from shaking.

As Rawhide Charlie bent over to start the wheel a hush fell over the crowd about the table. One of the boosters having informed him of the killing made by Cassiar, Jake Bruce, purple of face and blue of lip, strode up and fixed upon the dealer a vitreous eye. Rawhide remained unmoved.

The ball bumped aimlessly—or seemingly so—from one placement to another. In the moment it settled into a niche there came to the ear of every one in the place the shrill scream of a steamboat's siren.

"The *Susie!*" rang from a hundred throats. There followed a stampede to the door.

Cassiar never knew what color or combination of such and numbers won for him. Like one in a dream he beheld Rawhide Charlie pass across to him stack after stack of blue and yellow chips. In this, too, he saw a big man with a red face approach the dealer. The words "double cross," "thief" and "liar" reached his ear. The two shots that followed on the heels of the last mentioned word were almost, but not quite, as one. The big man dropped his weapon and gripped the table, executed a slow half turn and toppled to the floor.

"I'm through being a crook," he heard Rawhide Charlie fling over his shoulder as he made a race for the door.

Cassiar pulled himself together and raked the chips into his old fur cap. That he held a fortune in his hands never crossed his mind. Alone at the far end of the table with his chin in his cupped hands sat Sawny Forbush. To his side he staggered unsteadily, placed a hand on his shoulder and shook him.

"That's a fine trick we played on you!" he cried. "Haw, haw, haw!"

Sawny raised his bewildered eyes. "Whassamatter?"

"Don't you understand that me and the dealer was just playin' a joke on you?" Cassiar whispered. "We're old tillicums, so I told him to take it away from you and give it to me. Haw, haw, haw!"

Sawny sprang from his seat and shook Cassiar's shoulders. "You old——" But just then words failed him.

There came a second blast of the *Susie's* siren.

"There's the five-minute whistle, pardner!" cried Cassiar. "Hurry up and cash in!" He drew Sawny up to the cashier's desk.

Swiftly, expertly, the man behind the wicket stacked and calculated the value of the chips, and presently passed over sheafs of new one-hundred-dollar bills to the amount of forty-five thousand dollars.

Ten minutes later Cassiar Dixon stood on the shore ice alone. The drift ice and slush with which the channel of the river was laden made eerie swishing sounds. To his ear came the thud and splash of the *Susie's* powerful stern wheel, the rhythmical *choo! choo! choo!* indicative of boilers under forced draft. He watched her searchlight play on one bank, then the other, and was impressed by the manner in which the sleeping trees stood out in their lacy gowns of white. Would she reach St. Michael before the river froze up? he asked himself. Then came the darkness, and out of it the sibilant croon of the river and the mourning of the wind.

He turned and faced the little democracy whose citizens were now shut in for the long winter. There came to his ear the familiar discord of opposing orchestras. He listened, and as he did so the fancy struck him that the music came from a great distance and was of a quality, an impressiveness, that he had never before heard in a dance hall or, for the matter of that, anywhere else.

Cassiar Dixon had never heard an overture. But as he listened and thrilled, standing there on the ice, he came to know that what he heard was not only of itself a revelation in sweetness and restraint, but for a certainty knew that it was but a foretaste of numbers still to come, the subtlety of whose orchestration and nobility of theme would far transcend any composition that had passed through the soul of a human melodist.

A long time he listened enchanted. There was a short struggle, a trying to free himself from something. Suddenly he felt as light as a wisp of down. The music called him and he responded.

Next morning Cassiar Dixon was discovered frozen stiff on the shore ice. The doctor said that he had died of pneumonia, but——

Another story by Mr. Strang in an early issue.

The Land of the Second Chance

By M. A. Metcalfe.

WE are the failures of long ago, and victims of circumstance.
And so we had to come West to find, The Land of the Second Chance;
And the West intrusted us with its work, and asked of us nothing more.
Friend in our need, and a friend indeed, for it showed us an open door.

So we built the cities that hold their own in the world, beyond a doubt,
And shining thoroughfares bear our names, the names that the world threw out;
And behold us—fools of a bygone day, but men that endured the test,
First in the land as we take our stand with the people that built the West.

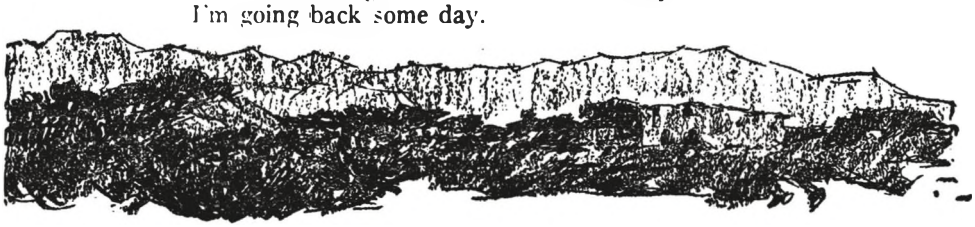
We are the old, old-timers now, seventy years and more;
And still the failures and fools arrive, and still we open the door,
And we bid them enter with right good will, for we look with a kindly glance
Back to the time when we climbed the climb, to The Land of the Second Chance!

Back Home.

By Walter Trumbull.

SOME day I'm going back;
Far past the end of any city street,
Where it is joy to breathe and smells are sweet;
Where I shall find again the old-time thrills;
Where nothing hangs above you but the sky,
And nothing shuts you in except the hills:
I'll see it all again before I die.
Too long I've been a maverick and astray:
I'm going back some day.

Some day I'm going back;
Back where for miles the purple sagebrush gleams,
And where the world is wide enough for dreams:
Where men may catch the silver from the moon,
And use the stars to light them to their bed;
Where winds of heaven sing their slumber tune,
And earth's broad breast is pillow for their head.
The trail is long, but I shall find the way:
I'm going back some day.



Macumber's Madness

By Robert H. Rohde

Author of "The Laughing Lady," "The Vanishing Shower," Etc.

The Great Macumber concedes a lady the last word—but not the last laugh

THERE is a vast difference between the Great Macumber and most other men who are given like himself to extolling the virtues of New York as a summer resort when the dog days are on. The Great One speaks as he truly believes and not as one making the best of a situation. His preference for the city is no pose. Neither is it dictated in any part by expediency, for always his season closes in early June and hot weather finds him footloose. Away from town, though, Macumber will sigh for that special coolness which he alleges to be a sort of ambrosial distillation from urban dust and clamor; and where diverse temperaments enjoy completest relaxation he can succeed only in being completely miserable. Sylvan surroundings, remote cummunings with nature, are not for the Great One. The one place in which he can be both idle and comfortable of mind is -paradoxically- at the center of things.

Thus, although many of ampler fortune and scanter leisure than he might conceivably have been swift to avail themselves of an opportunity to spend a midsummer fortnight at the country home of the first vice president of America's second largest bank, Macumber demurred when the master of Goldacres brought his invitation to us at the Rawley in person.

"There will be many matters in the city arising to engage my attention," he suggested guardedly. "Altogether, I'm afraid that——"

Mr. Wilson Coates checked him with a smile and an upraised hand. His acquaintance with the Great One, most auspiciously begun when a certain small curiosity of Macumber's had served to keep an imminent six-figure entry in red off the books of the Harbor National, had advanced hugely since by way of a mutual addiction to golf. The Great One's all-too-patent lack of enthusiasm neither astonished nor discouraged him.

"Goldacres," said he, "has the sportiest private course in the country. Would the Great Macumber not take the word of the Great MacTavish for it?"

Macumber stirred uneasily.

"The man has spoken in equally high terms of the Fulton Club course," he defended. "And that's no hundred miles from town."

"Neither," said Coates, "is Goldacres. MacTavish himself will be with us over a week-end, by the way. Did I mention it?"

"You did not. But I need no match with an open-championship runner-up to know my shortcomings at the pastime. Besides, I could ill spare the time for two steady weeks of golf."

"There'll be a houseful of good company —including a most charming young widow whom I'm sure you'll find interesting. I rather had you in mind when Mrs. Coates mentioned her; and onto the list went the name of Mrs. Tristram Bent."

Macumber groaned.

"Please!"

"You'll be changing your tune when you've met her," said the banker lightly. "I've known other misogynists. But there's still another attraction calling you to Goldacres. Walter Williams—the chap I've been financing, you know—is putting the finishing touches on his new helicopter."

"You're ponying up for experiments still, after all the failures?"

"Williams has learned something from every failure, Macumber; and with each one of them I've become only more firmly convinced that the man's a genius. Certainly he has had serious enough attention from the technical press. His newest machine——"

"Is warranted by the inventor himself, I presume, to climb straight toward the clouds the moment the engine's running and to return to earth only when and if the pilot decides to descend."

"That is Williams' confident prediction," nodded Wilson Coates. "And he's of no ultrasanguine turn of mind, you know. He has always held doubts until now. We'll be motoring over from Goldacres for the trial. Come—there's an inducement. If Williams' helicopter behaves as he expects it to you'll be eyewitness to history in the making."

The Great One's face grew gloomier.

"Upon my word, Coates," he protested, "I'd rather you did not press me. Really, I hardly——"

He hesitated. The expression of the master of Goldacres had changed. His smile vanished. The Great One eyed him keenly.

"There's something on your mind you've not come out with yet," he challenged. "It's not purely as a social ornament that you'd be dragging me out of the city with you."

Coates plucked at his close-cropped mustache as he returned Macumber's direct gaze. It was not through any habit of temporizing that he had arrived at a place of dominance in the money world while yet in his early forties.

"You do not miss your guess," he said promptly, now altogether serious. "There *is* something else on my mind—something I didn't intend to mention until later. I may as well confess there's an ulterior purpose behind the invitation."

"You've a notion of enlivening your guests with a short season of magic?"

Wilson Coates shook his head emphatically.

"Not that. And yet I've a notion that in more ways than one a man of your unique capabilities would make an excellent addition to our house party. There's need at Goldacres, Macumber, of a person schooled in the business of putting mysteries together—and taking them apart. Frankly, there have been some strange happenings in the old house lately—queer goings-on at night that are beginning to get frightfully on my nerves."

Macumber reached for the tobacco jar.

"Strange happenings in the old house. Queer goings-on at night," he murmured. "Ah, Coates, you know too well my weaker side! It's the first act of some mystery play you're quoting from to inveigle me. Creaking boards and busy rats the old mansion may have, my dear fellow. But it has been my experience that it is your commonplace city apartment which holds monopoly on the intriguing problems of cold fact. One can't look for everything, you know. Away, man, with your enticement of earthbound ancients and clanking chains! Give back your country-house mystery to the Shuberts! They'll be needing it again next season."

Raillery was in the Great One's tone; and yet to me it was obvious, underneath, that Coates had captured his imagination. The banker waved his corpulent board-room cigar in a gesture of general denial.

"I'm not springing any ghost on you, Macumber, nor any borrowed family skeleton. The house has a pleasant past. If in forty years it has sheltered a single uneasy conscience that must have been during the later tenancy of Barry, the last owner, who squeezed me so hard on the price when he saw my heart was set on the place that I was inspired to rechristen it Goldacres. No, it's not a haunted house I'm inviting you to —not a spook mystery I'm hoping you'll be good enough to solve for me."

"What, then?" demanded the Great One.

"It's a matter of burglars," said Wilson Coates.

"Oh," sighed Macumber, slumping back

in his chair. "Have you not notified the local police?"

"Not yet. They're an odd lot, the burglars who have been giving their attention to Goldacres, and——"

"Odd! In what way?"

"We've had three visits from them and thus far we're the loser by no more than one middle-aged and not altogether satisfactory butler."

The Great Macumber sat up straight again. Reconsideration was in his eyes.

"You don't mean to say your burglars stole the butler?" he queried. "Charming!"

A small smile curled under the mustache of the matter-of-fact Coates.

"Hardly. No; Whiteley quit Goldacres in a funk. One of our midnight visitors wandered into his room and woke him by stumbling over a rug. Whiteley didn't wait until morning to give notice, I can tell you. It was delivered in the course of an address to the assembled company after his yells had aroused the house and he left on the first train to look for a berth within shouting distance of a city police station. We've a Jap butler now, a well-trained fellow and very willing. With the servant problem what it is, particularly as regards country places, I consider we were extremely lucky in the change. A dozen big houses around Goldacres are closed this year because it was found simply impossible to staff them satisfactorily."

"Another argument," said the Great One dryly, "in favor of the hotel life. But tell me more about the Goldacres burglars, Coates. They sound as if they might be men after my own heart. Persistence is a quality I highly admire."

The banker, perceiving that his point had all but carried, beamed upon us both.

"So far as I know, the burglar who routed Whiteley was the first to visit us. That was about three weeks ago. Since then I have twice had evidence that Goldacres had not lost its attraction for marauders. Once the trace left was no more than a sprinkling of cigarette ashes on a rug. Again I noticed a deep scratch on the secretary in the library, which plainly had been forced open by a—a 'jimmy,' is it? That was only this morning."

"The forcing of the secretary speaks for itself," said Macumber. "But why blame cigarette ashes on a burglar? Most of those with whom I claim acquaintance are hearty and wholesome souls who take their tobacco in the old-fashioned form which makes the match safe an unnecessary burden. A self-respecting cracksman of sufficient professional attainment to tackle a house like Goldacres would rather be caught with his swag in his hands, I am sure, than with a cigarette in his lips."

"We've no cigarette smokers about the place," Coates told him. "I may not have the detective sense in any large degree, but to my mind the ashes could mean only one thing."

"You may be right," conceded the Great One. "And if you are, we cannot call the other two intrusions a coincidence. We must assume, then, that burglars who call upon you repeatedly only to walk empty-handed each time from a house in which plenty of small valuables invite them are in search of one certain thing. Have you any notion, Coates, of what that thing might be?"

"I really have not. Virtually all my wife's jewelry is in a vault at the bank, and we seldom have any great amount of cash at Goldacres. There's the silver, of course."

"Burglars would scarcely expect to find *that* in a secretary, would they, now? What was it they were after, do you suppose? Why *did* they break open the secretary?"

"On speculation, I imagine," replied Wilson Coates. "It's a strong and ruinous instinct that we bankers deprecate but I fancy it survives in all lines of endeavor. Men will speculate, Macumber, honest burglars and dishonest trustees alike, until the end of time. But what say you to coming to Goldacres? Not only do I offer you golf and the peerless MacTavish, a beautiful widow and an epoch-making flying machine, but here and now I nominate you to fathom the motives of our unbidden guests of the night and to deal with them as you will. Can the city offer any such list of attractions in August? Why not say you'll be with us at merry and mysterious Goldacres?"

It was the banker who was grinning now and Macumber the grave one. Somberly he contemplated the shiny black bowl of his venerable brier.

"Why not?" he echoed after a moment. "Aye, Coates, I'll join you—but on a condition."

"Name it!"

"It is that you stop by the Rawley on

your homeward way to-morrow and transport the lad and me to Goldacres in your gr-r-and limousine. I'll ride the Long Island trains again for no man!" said the Great Macumber.

II.

A light rain was falling when Wilson Coates picked us up at the hotel the following afternoon but our host assured the Great One that, even should the downpour continue through the night, morning would find the Goldacres course in shape for play.

"I'm not questioning it." Macumber told him. "I know how the thirsty sand of Long Island drinks up the water. What's in my mind is whether *we'll* be in shape."

We were plunging then along the Montauk Highway at fifty miles an hour or better and a moment before had all but skidded off the wet macadam into the ditch. Coates laughed.

"Franconi is a wonder at the wheel," said he. "He may not loiter but you may depend upon it we're safe behind him."

Macumber's eyes turned again to the front and rested briefly on the straight back and square shoulders of the paragon.

"The man has seen service with the Italian colors, has he not?" he remarked.

"I believe so," said Coates. "Yes; I recollect he made mention of it when I engaged him." He stared at the Great One. "But what suggested the idea to you?"

"His salute as we approached the machine. It was distinctly in the style of the soldier of Italy. Salutes vary with armies, you know. Knowledge of the differences may seem to you an inconsequential matter with which to burden the mind, yet it gave me the key to a most interesting criminal problem a year since."

"What astonishing odds and ends of information you carry about, Macumber!" exclaimed the banker. "Your brain's like a veritable Victorian attic."

"Barring, I hope," smiled Macumber, "the dust."

We had struck a serpentine stretch where the highway wriggled across a marsh. The chauffeur's superb handling of the heavy limousine held us silent in admiration until the road straightened out again. Macumber, indorsing the employer's boast, voiced my thought.

"I've paid larger wages to worse drivers than Franconi," said Coates complacently. "Altogether we're doing very well for service at Goldacres, although the staff is a hodge-podge as regards nationalities—Italian chauffeur, French chef, Japanese butler, German gardener, and so on. The marvel is that they manage to get along without friction. Look down there to the south, Macumber. The tower you see peeping over the treetops is Goldacres. Have I lured you so far, after all?"

A deft turn took the machine through a gate at our right. At scarcely diminished speed we swooped past a splendid ivy-covered lodge as large in itself as many a manor house and rolled the better part of a mile along a shell road bordered with great trees. Within another quarter hour we had been installed in two vast adjoining guest chambers. Either of them would have comfortably contained our whole suite at the Rawley and between them was such a bath as to win from Macumber a groan of envy.

"It is surely the American millionaire," said he, "who has succeeded to what I have always considered the chief glory of the Roman emperor. We'll have creature comfort at Goldacres, at any rate; and for diversion of the mind—I'm hopeful, lad, upon my word I am!"

And when he had met the other guests of Goldacres presently the Great One appeared more than reconciled to the two weeks in prospect. With Edmond Vachell, who had just completed a portrait of Mrs. Wilson Coates, Macumber already was acquainted. John Buell he found decidedly interesting. Doctor Francis Brentwood's achievements in surgery had made his name familiar to both of us; and his wife, it developed, had long been an admirer of the Great One's magic. But it was Mrs. Tristram Bent who from the first claimed the major share of Macumber's attention. At dinner the two seemed to find so many things to say to each other that they took small part in the general conversation.

"A remarkable woman," he confided later, and found no return for my smile.

"English, isn't she?" I asked.

"I'm sure she is not an American. But then she has lived in many countries. Her late husband was an engineer."

"You do not think our host exaggerated her charm?"

The Great One looked at me sharply.

"I did not find it exactly onerous to make myself agreeable to her," said he.

Wilson Coates joined us then. He had in tow a tall slender man in tweeds who had not been with us at dinner.

"I want you to meet Walter Williams, Macumber," said the banker. "He's forsaken his precious machine shop long enough to bring us some news. You are here in the nick of time. The helicopter will be ready for trial to-morrow."

The Great One regarded the inventor with interest.

"Your last model, if my memory serves, climbed a matter of seven feet off the ground and stayed up some three and a half minutes. Did it not, Williams?"

"Three minutes and forty-two seconds. You're interested in aviation?"

"As in a number of things. But I'm thinking that man reaches too far in his striving to perfect the helicopter. Even the birds cannot fly straight up from the earth."

"Birds," said the inventor quietly, "have not the needs or ambitions of man. Or the brain."

"Williams," put in our host, "is certain the new helicopter embodies the correct principles. It's a radical departure from the earlier machines. If it fails to go up, why——"

"There will be no failure. I'd stake my life on that, Mr. Coates"

The inventor, who appeared ill at ease in the great house, did not tarry long. We watched his tall figure striding away through the trees toward the bungalow at the eastern end of the Goldacres estate in which, Coates told us, he had insisted on establishing bachelor quarters; and when next we saw him he was so engrossed in his final inspection of the briefly famous Williams helicopter that he had only an abstracted nod for us.

For the inventor the day of days had dawned then. His long legs were incased in greasy overalls. Grease streaked his face. His hands were black with it. His very spectacles were smudged; through them he looked upon the clumsy-seeming contrivance by which he set such store with the eyes of a lover. Grime became him as a dress uniform becomes a white-haired admiral. His small awkwardness of the night before had vanished. Here he dominated, a poetic figure of a mechanical age.

A half dozen reporters representing metropolitan dailies and a couple of camera men had been on hand when our party from Goldacres arrived at the field beyond Williams' bungalow. From snatches of their conversation which I overheard I judged they were not much impressed by the helicopter. Nor was I. It had taken the united strength of all the men present to bring the machine out of the shed in which it had been built and I could not believe it possible that the big twin blades surmounting the frame could lift the great weight below so much as an inch from the ground.

But they did. They lifted it the inch and another, a foot, two feet, three feet. The roar of the two engines was deafening. Williams, squatting between them, coaxing them with darting fingers, was oblivious to the racket. He nudged a lever. Straining and heaving, the helicopter rose. When the monster was on a level with the roof of the shed a white slash showed momentarily in the operator's blackened face. He was grinning down on us. He waved a soiled paw.

Mrs. Bent was standing between the Great One and me. Her grip on my arm had been tightening from the moment the helicopter left the ground. She turned from Macumber and for an instant her intense black eyes met mine. They were dancing with excitement, opened to their widest.

"Oh!" she cried, her lips close to my ear. "He has accomplished the impossible! Can you imagine what it means to—to all mankind?"

Williams had given the first practical helicopter to the world. Doubt could no longer endure. He had climbed at least five hundred feet. A stiff wind that had sprung up off the Great South Bay, whose waters gleamed across the field, was pushing the machine inland. But still it was rising.

Then, in a fraction of a second, the triumph of Walter Williams became his tragedy. With the helicopter there were none of those convolutions which attend the falling of a stricken plane. No breath of uncertainty followed the halting of its upward progress. It came plummeting down. A perpendicular column of smoke lengthened above it and from the machine itself shot lashing spears of flame.

Not three hundred yards from where it had risen the helicopter crashed.

Mrs. Tristram Bent had covered her eyes; and when the rest were rushing frantically across the field it was Macumber who stayed at her side.

III.

Walter Williams was dead in the wreck of the machine which, twisted and fire swept, was yet to bring to him a world-wide if transitory posthumous fame. Aloof though the inventor had held himself from the lighter side of life at Goldacres it was unthinkable that the program which Wilson Coates had mapped out for his house party should be followed through.

Buell and the Brentwoods announced that afternoon their intention of leaving in the morning. Vachell's plans—as almost always, Macumber sardonically remarked—were in the air; and it was only through the urging of Coates and a reminder delivered sotto voce that the Great One decided against an immediate retreat.

Of the entire party Mrs. Bent, it appeared, was alone for staying on at Goldacres. She made a confidant of Macumber.

"The little woman," he told me, "is cut to the heart by the tragic passing of Williams, yet she cannot well leave."

"Do you mean Mrs. Bent?" I asked. "I'd not describe her as diminutive. She's quite as tall as I."

The Great One shrugged impatiently.

"Indeed? I'd not have thought it. But the point is really unimportant. The fact is that Mrs. Bent has engaged passage for France and all her plans have been laid with a view to remaining at Goldacres until the day of sailing. She has no other friends whom she'd care to run in upon uninvited; and, being alone, she's none too anxious to put up for two weeks or three at a New York hotel. A young and unmarried American woman would not hesitate, perhaps. Mrs. Bent's ideas are Continental—and her's has been a sheltered life."

Wilson Coates, dropping in on us in the informal manner of his habit while Macumber was smoking his last pipe, had a thought too for the widow.

"Our ghastly accident puts Mrs. Bent in rather a boat," he said. "She naturally is reluctant to continue at Goldacres and yet her circumstances are such that she is still more reluctant to leave. Her American acquaintance seems to be limited to Washington. There she has any number of friends, I understand; in fact, it was at the home of her sister there—she's the wife of Senator Neiling, you perhaps know—that Mrs. Coates met Mrs. Bent. But Washington of course is deserted in August."

The Goldacres burglar problem had gone from our host's mind completely. When I brought up the subject after Coates had left us the Great One yawned.

"Oh, *that!*" said he, and it was plain his thoughts had been far away. "Would it be your notion I should busy myself analyzing the cigarette ashes found by Coates on his rug—learning from them, of course, that the smoker was a tall man wearing a size seven-and-three-eighths hat who once had a sweetheart in Singapore? Would you say I should be reading in the jimmy marks on the secretary that our burglar's right arm is two inches shorter than his left? No, lad, I'm addressing myself to this recently overshadowed mystery of Goldacres in a more practical way."

"How?" I was idiot enough to ask.

"By awaiting developments," said Macumber. "To bed with you!"

Our wait was a short one. Developments came with all the promptness the Great One could have wished, even had he found no other interest to ameliorate the rigors of his exile from Times Square. That very night they came, before we had been sleeping more than three hours at most.

A violent crash somewhere in the lower part of the house awakened me. Macumber, already out of bed as I rubbed my eyes and wondered if I had been dreaming, switched on the lights and appeared in my doorway. Below us all was quiet again—as still as death.

"What was it?"

"I'm on my way to find out," said the Great One. "Jump up, lad!"

The whole house began to stir with such a confusion of sounds as a night alarm calls forth. Not far from us a door opened and slammed. A voice I recognized as that of Coates sang out sharply: "Hello, down there! Who is it? What's up?"

Macumber swung on his dressing gown and stepped into his slippers. Snatching up the automatic pistol which I had placed on the table beside my bed before retiring he bolted into the hall. I found a bathrobe and followed.

Other switches had been closed. The main wing of Goldacres, upstairs and down, blazed with light. I bumped into John Buell in the corridor. His big blunt fingers encircled the neck of a heavy silver carafe which he held shoulder high.

Coates and the Great One were at the

foot of the main staircase, stooping over a dark figure sprawled there.

"Here's our burglar!" called Coates, looking up toward us. "He seems to have taken the count—probably tumbled downstairs. Where's Brentwood?"

The surgeon was coming along the upper hall. He answered for himself, preceding Buell and me down the stairs.

"Is he unconscious?" the host asked him. "Or shamming?"

Brentwood spent a moment on his knees.

"Neither," said he. "The man's dead as a doornail. His neck is broken, I think."

Wilson Coates turned a pale face to Macumber.

"Goldacres is proving a devil of a place," he said. "Barry might have it back at his own figure if he were to walk in just now. Well—this is in your line, isn't it?"

"Really, Coates," protested the Great One, "the question comes prematurely. I'd rather not give you an answer offhand."

He stooped again and removed the roughly cut mask of black cloth, which Brentwood had not disturbed; then made a rapid exploration through the pockets of the dead burglar.

"That's probably what opened your secretary," he said, handing a slender strip of steel to our host. "And here's a comfortably filled bill fold. A forehanded chap was your burglar. It looks as if he carried quite enough cash to buy him a decent burial. Interesting, Coates. And not another thing in the pockets. No union card showing him an authorized and properly affiliated housebreaker; nor yet a label in his worn but well-tailored suit, which I perceive must have come from an excellent shop."

Rising, Macumber drew from the small and obviously new leather wallet a single folded hundred-dollar bill and a dozen or so twenties and tens neatly wrapped together. He straightened them and spread them fanwise.

"Why," gasped the banker, "it's seldom I carry as large an amount of cash myself!"

"Exactly. We can set it down the man was in no dire need. It was not starvation or the threat of starvation that drove him. But aside from that I'd venture to say little more about him than that he has not been long in America and never has had to find a living by manual labor. His hands—hullo!"

The Great One lifted one of the limp wrists. A red bruise ran completely around it. A similar bruise was discernible on the other wrist.

"I stood in my own light or I would have noticed that before," said Macumber.

"*I'd* say," spoke up Buell quickly, as the inspiration struck him, "that handcuffs left those marks. Their meaning is that the man's encountered other recent misfortunes besides this crowning one of to-night."

"The thought is not illogical," the Great One assented. His eyes were darting about the floor of the entrance hall. "Ah, there's one thing I was looking for. His flash light has rolled into the corner yonder. Would you be good enough to fetch it, lad? But no revolver; no weapon—unless we could call the jimmy one. A queer customer, Coates, altogether. What manner of burglar is it who travels unarmed and with a pocketful of money? And it's not a bad face he has, discounting the stubble of beard upon it. Rather patrician."

"Yes," said Wilson Coates after a closer look. "Quite. And I get your point about the man having done no manual labor. The hands are well shaped and soft. But you say he has not been long in America? What makes you think that?"

"Couldn't you tell it yourself from the shoes, man?"

"They're odd."

"Of course they are. No American maker turns out such a last. Those shoes were surely bought abroad and they're little worn. You can see with half an eye they've the original heels on them, and the heels have not even begun to run over."

Coates nodded slowly and doubtfully.

"That's clear," he admitted; "and no doubt you're right."

"I'm perfectly sure I am," said Macumber.

"We'll assume you are."

"We shall. Very good."

"Yet, clever as your reasoning may be, I still do not see how it's to aid in disclosing what the fellow was after."

"You *don't?* Then what broader hint would you have?" cried the Great Macumber.

IV.

There was little sleep for any of us at Goldacres the rest of the night. A telephone call to the village near by brought a flustered constable to us on a bicycle; and

later two sheriff's deputies, who looked as if they had not spent any too great a time at their toilets, arrived from the county seat by motor. The window through which the strange intruder had forced his way from the west veranda was duly located, after which several rather longer statements than I thought the circumstances warranted were taken down by the officers in meticulous longhand. It was their idea, too, that the burglar had stumbled on the stairs and suffered mortal injuries in falling.

When the deputies had gone, carrying with them a grisly passenger, Wilson Coates called the Great One and me aside.

"I've raked my brain for an answer to your own little mystery-within-a-mystery, Macumber, and I get none," he said. "What *is* the hint? Tell me what you suspect."

The Great One shook his head.

"No, Coates. I'm sure it's better that I do not. I'll tell you no more than a part of what I suspect."

"Well?"

"That is that you're not through with burglars at Goldacres."

"Good heavens! You can't mean it. How can you know?"

"You're in the midst of a mighty nasty mess, Coates. That I'm bound to let you know."

"Mess? Of what sort?"

"Of a far worse sort than the mess you were in when you asked me to come to Goldacres."

"You speak as if you were trying deliberately to bewilder me."

"That is far from my purpose. But I think that with the situation as it is I'd better keep my own counsel. I've told you so before."

"We're sure to have more burglars down on us, you say?"

"Unless my imagination is running riot."

"Why?"

"Because they think this is where they'll find something they want badly."

"What is that?"

"Something, I dare say, they'd have been glad enough to have a few weeks or a few days ago, but which they're bound to get now. And there's one person among them—a man who will not be out of the immediate vicinity of Goldacres as we stand here talking—who I'm fair positive wouldn't stop at murder to get it. That man I intend to put my hand on, sooner or later. I'll say no more, Coates. Not now, at any rate. In your state of nerves you'd fly off the handle and my purpose would surely be defeated. In a day or two, if nothing happens before then by way of a sequel to the night's performance, I'll unburden fully. You may depend on it."

Coates frowned in perplexity.

"But Goldacres holds no mysterious treasure. There's nothing in the house, absolutely nothing, that would——"

"I sincerely hope there's not," said the Great One. "I'd not soon forgive myself if my failure to reveal to you the whole of my thoughts should have a calamitous aftermath."

Coates, having to look ahead to a trip to the city to attend an unexpectedly called and important board meeting, evidently decided that further questioning of Macumber would be futile and went off to bed. I looked expectantly to the Great One after he had left us but he was in no mood to satisfy my curiosity.

"Poor Mrs. Bent will be in more of a quandary than ever," he said. "I'd like to see her safely out of Goldacres. I wonder whether——"

The perennially smiling little butler, who had appeared in our midst fully liveried and bearing a tray with decanter and glasses within a surprisingly short time after we had found the burglar's body, was flitting past the library door. Macumber hailed him.

"What about the ladies, Ito?" he queried. "They haven't possibly slept through the excitement, have they?"

The Japanese showed his gleaming teeth in a yet more expansive grin.

"Oh, no. They sit awake in with Missy Coa'es. Sleep all gone."

"Mrs. Bent?"

"She, too. Yes-ss!"

Ito stood for a moment at respectful attention. Then he smirked and bowed and started from the room. The Great One called him back.

"It's after six," he said. "Do you suppose you could stay awake long enough to get us together some coffee and toast and eggs?"

"Oh, yes-ss, thank you. Oh, yes-ss. I am excellent cook of eggs."

The butler disappeared with an alacrity belying his tired eyes and in so brief a time as to suggest he had resorted to some native conjury of his own in its preparation

had breakfast before us. All the others had retired again and we ate alone.

Ito hovered about the breakfast room, offering Macumber an opportunity for amusement of which he did not fail to avail himself to the full. Indeed he seemed more interested in the little yellow man's reactions to the tumult of the night than in his food.

It was plain in Ito's responses to the artfully indirect questions of the Great One that he had no thought of following the example of his timid Caucasian predecessor, Whiteley. He accepted what had happened with true Samurai stoicism. It was ordained to be and had been. A burglar had come to Goldacres and had met his death in Goldacres; existence for the household surviving would run on unchanged. Here was a berth to Ito's liking. He believed he had pleased his employer. Should he leave, then, merely because a bad fellow with whom the fates had spared him an acquaintance in life had come to a doubtless well-deserved bad end in the house? The butler shrugged and smiled engagingly.

"Not so," said he.

Breakfast finished and the philosophic reflections of Ito exhausted Macumber announced his intention of going for a walk.

"You'd better turn in, lad," he told me. "I can see you're having a struggle to keep your eyes open and there may be little sleep again for you to-night. I'll have a nap later."

From my window I watched the Great One out of sight. He was following the same path through the trees which Walter Williams had taken the night before the ill-starred helicopter crashed.

It was noon when I awoke. Macumber, I learned, had come back to the house in time to see Wilson Coates off for the city and then had gone out onto the links with Mrs. Tristram Bent. They were walking close together when they returned and the Great One's laugh was ringing. I was aware of a sinking at the heart. To me it was the unhappiest of auguries that the constraint which Macumber ordinarily exhibited in the presence of the fair should have fallen so quickly from him after his meeting with this pretty and captivating widow of Goldacres.

And, worse sign still that the high misogyny of the Great One tottered at the precipice edge, it was she who inspired his unbosoming later in the day. I sat by listening, true, but it was Mrs. Bent to whom Macumber addressed himself. He had begun characteristically with a blunt suggestion that she arrange without delay to leave Goldacres.

Long-lashed lids drooped pensively over the widow's dark and shadowy eyes.

"Your words sound almost like a command," she murmured. "But—do you think it is a good place in which to leave Mrs. Coates alone after——"

"I am thinking of *you*," said Macumber. "I'd be easier in my mind if you weren't here."

"Really? Am I flattered, or——"

"You'd find more peace in a city hotel."

"Is there anything left that hasn't already happened at Goldacres?"

"I'm sure there is."

The black eyes searched the Great One's stubbornly set face.

"Gammon!"

"I mean it. Last night's unlucky burglar was not the first to pay his respects to Goldacres this season."

He repeated what Wilson Coates had told us when he called at the Rawley.

"Then you are here not only as a friend and guest of Mr. Coates, but as a detective? How perfectly thrilling!"

"I'm here to do what I can for Coates."

"I—I rather wondered. Mrs. Coates had told me the Great Macumber was something besides a magician. I've heard much of your exploits in—'crime-ology,' is it?"

The Great One reddened.

"Diversions in criminology would express it better. I'd prefer you didn't give me the character of Hawkshaw, Mrs. Bent. It's no more than a hobby, and one easily explained. By vocation I am an inventor of puzzles, by avocation a student of puzzles. Those puzzles which I put before a public which dearly loves to be mystified are for the most part mechanical; when one sees them from the rear one knows them. But it is the human problems that come up from time to time in which I find my own delight. Like too many of us, I must try the other man's game."

"I think I can understand. And have you been able to formulate a theory accounting for the visits of such peculiar burglars to Goldacres?"

"I have."

She offered him a smiling challenge. The

Great One hesitated. Lines of caution struggled at the corners of his mouth. The provocative look in her eyes touched off a spark in his own. Debating, he was lost.

"I must ask your promise," said he, "not to repeat what I tell you. If I have reasoned the correct answer to the Goldacres burglar mystery it would complicate matters to have my suspicions broadcast."

"To whom would I repeat it?"

Macumber winced before the swift and accusing question. It was not without warrant. We three were the only guests remaining at Goldacres. An hour had passed since the others had been driven off in the motor station wagon, the no longer vacillating Vachell included.

"I wish," explained the Great One hastily, "that you'd say nothing even to Mrs. Coates."

"I shall not. I promise. Now—tell me. What is it you think the burglars are after?"

Eagerness was in her voice but Macumber did not reply immediately; he puffed away thoughtfully at his pipe. A thorough woman was Mrs. Tristram Bent in her knowledge of the ways of men. Early she had told him that she adored pipes and pipe smoke and since then had pluckily endured for hours on end the fumes of the singularly villainous Louisiana perique which the Great One uses up at the rate of close to a pound a week. Now she waited, choking.

"Has it not occurred to you that certain activities at Goldacres must have commanded interest in many quarters?" asked Macumber presently.

"No-o. Unless you mean——"

"I mean the activities of Walter Williams."

"But——"

"Williams was no crank, as he lived to demonstrate," pursued the Great One. "It is true that the first helicopter he built here never got off the ground, but you must know that Wilson Coates is not a man to back a will-o'-the-wisp. Before he undertook to finance the experiments of Williams he had assured himself that in his particular field the man had the recognition of the scientific world."

The widow gasped.

"You believe the man who came here last night—and those who came before him—sought the secret of the helicopter?"

"I do. The first attempt at burglary, as near as Coates has placed the time for me, followed directly the trial of the helicopter preceding the one which crashed with Williams. With that machine the inventor proved he was on the right track practically as well as theoretically. His idea was worth stealing then."

Mrs. Tristram Bent demonstrated that there can be beauty in a frown.

"I don't see what use burglars could make of it," she said seriously.

"Ah, but it's not ordinary burglars with whom we've had to deal. There is a possibility, of course, that it was the caller of last night who paid all three visits to Goldacres. But I'm inclined to doubt it. No, I'd say that several persons who are more or less amateurs at housebreaking and who represent as many nations have reason to believe they'll find the plans for the helicopter in this house. Williams' headquarters were here, after all."

The widow could find no words. She sat looking blankly at the Great One.

"I mean," continued Macumber, "that I'm convinced the people who've been finding their way into Goldacres are staff intelligence agents of divers rival governments—'international spies,' to use the trite term for them. You must realize, Mrs. Bent, that the world to-day is inspired by the one adage: 'In time of peace prepare for war.' What are the potentialities for destruction of a practical helicopter I can only surmise. I know, at any rate, that the inventors of the nations have been racing to perfect a helicopter since the armistice as their prospectors raced to find helium while the conflict was on."

"And you're sure we'll have more midnight visitors?" whispered the widow.

The Great One hastily lifted a warning finger.

Wilson Coates' commuting limousine had come dashing up the green-roofed road and had halted under the Goldacres porte-cochère. The information was passed from Franconi to Ito, whom a blast of the siren had brought onto the veranda, that Coates had decided to spend the night in town. Then the machine rolled off toward the garage.

"I'm sure, rather," qualified Macumber, "that there'll be other attempts to locate and steal the plans of the Williams helicopter. That they will be made by outsiders I'd not say."

Again Mrs. Tristram Bent caught her breath.

"You suspect somebody in the house?"

"I don't suppose you've paid particular attention to the servants. They're a weird assortment and in these days references are not looked up by employers as carefully as once upon a time. It would be a comparatively simple matter for an enterprising secret agent to join the below-stairs company in an establishment of this size. I'd not be surprised if Coates had a couple of the gentry on his pay roll."

"And you think you know who they are?"

"I've indulged in speculations. For instance, although I may do the man an injustice, I'll have a watchful eye on the chauffeur Franconi."

The Great One did not miss the shadow of apprehension which passed across the face of Mrs. Tristram Bent.

"Even should I be right," he said, "*you* need have no fear of the fellow. But it's sheer guesswork on my part. I happen to know that Franconi has seen service with a foreign army. That in itself means nothing; but to my eye he has something of the officer cut. He is not the chauffeur type, certainly. Coates tells me Franconi is a quite recent acquisition, and it simply has occurred to me he might have sought his present position for more reasons than one."

"Oh," sighed the widow with a downward glance. "I see. It is theory, only. You gave me a start. I—I think I might have been a little frightened if you had said you had real evidence against the man. Suspecting and knowing *are* different, aren't they? But these plans. That is what I do not understand. Surely no one would think it likely that Mr. Coates would leave them lying carelessly about his house."

Macumber smiled at her.

"You do not take into consideration, Mrs. Bent," said he, "the fact that Wilson Coates would not set the same valuation on the helicopter as would, say, a general staff. His motives in financing Williams were purely altruistic. It was not as a potential engine of war he saw the machine, but as an instrument of peace—a great stride forward, as the newspapers would phrase it, in man's conquest of the air. That he would find interest in examining the inventor's drawings is conceivable; that he would take pains to hide them or secure them against theft doubtful. At all events, the stake from a war-office point of view is a vast one, we can safely say. The inside of Goldacres manor surely would be worth while looking over, especially if they'd learned Williams kept no plans."

"Then the plans actually are here? Mr. Coates has told you? But of course they would not be *here* after your warning. I am silly."

Macumber's reply came in an unexpected and astonishing form. He drew from an inside pocket a long Manila envelope. It was sealed over some bulky contents and bore no writing.

"If one of the burglars had bothered to open an unlocked drawer in the library table," said he, "he might have gone from Goldacres well pleased with his night's work. In this packet, which Coates intrusted to my care before he left, are the drawings that represent his investment in Walter Williams."

Something akin to a shudder swept the slender figure at the Great One's side. The wonderfully expressive eyes of Mrs. Tristram Bent clung to his. They were eloquent with appeal.

"Surely you do not intend to keep them on your person!" she protested. "Oh, my friend—*must* you?"

"I don't intend," said the Great Macumber grimly, "to let them get out of my possession."

V.

The Great One, who can keep on the alert mentally with unbelievably little sleep if need be, forewent his promised nap in favor of a long stroll with the fascinating widow. His evening he also devoted to her. The two sat late on a rustic bench overlooking the beautiful private lake of Goldacres while I gloomed alone in Wilson Coates' library trying desperately to interest myself in a magazine and keep my mind off the growing madness of Macumber. Devoutly I wished for the speeding of the day when Mrs. Tristram Bent should sail away from America; and a dozen times I caught myself offering up a silent prayer that once she had gone she might never return. I didn't in the least like the way things were shaping.

All had retired but Ito the butler and myself when the Great One followed Mrs. Bent into the house. The widow had gone directly to her chamber, calling a laughing

good night to me in a tone which I thought held a shade of mockery.

Macumber, grinning rather sheepishly, I thought, came into the library. He said nothing but walked about absently studying the rows of books in the shoulder-high cases lining all four walls. Presently he selected a tall volume and stood with it open in his hands.

"You don't intend to read?" I asked him, marveling at his wakefulness.

"That is not my idea," said the Great One. "We'll both sleep soundly this night and I was thinking the book would make an excellent repository for the helicopter plans."

I shot a glance of warning at him, for I had caught the sound of light footsteps in the hall and his voice was unguarded. He had no more than closed the book on the envelope which he whisked from his pocket and replaced it in the case when the smiling face of Ito was framed in the door.

"You prefer good-night cap, sirs?" he asked hopefully.

"No; you run along to bed, Ito," replied Macumber. "We'll be turning in ourselves directly. And mind you don't dream of burglars."

The little butler showed his appreciation of the admonition with his teeth.

"Oh, no," he grinned. "I'm not worry. Burglars find this very sad place, I think."

Ito lost no time in following the suggestion of the Great One and five or ten minutes later we went to our own rooms.

"Don't get ready for bed just yet," advised Macumber in a low voice. He threw off his coat and exchanged his shoes for his felt-soled slippers. I did likewise, wondering.

After a few minutes the Great One switched off the lights. For what seemed an eternity and was perhaps a half hour we sat in darkness and in silence. Then Macumber whispered:

"Lad, have you a notion of how our late burglar came to his death?"

"Not unless he fell downstairs."

"Rubbish. I happened to be awake. There was but the one thump."

"How, then?"

"In a manner of speaking, he was murdered!"

"Murdered?"

"Just so. You'll have the explanation later. It's time we made a change of base."

A brilliant circle of light flared on the opposite wall with such suddenness that I almost cried out. In time I saw the shaft was shooting from a flash lamp in the Great One's hand—the same flash the burglar had used.

Lamp in one hand, pistol in the other, Macumber led on. In the deep-piled carpet covering the upper hall and stairs we made no sound as we tiptoed. Goldacres was not a house of creaking boards, at any rate.

It was for the library we were heading. The Great One, entering, placed two chairs in a position close to the switch controlling the big central chandelier and made himself comfortable in one of them. I seated myself in the other and was glad to know him near, for the flash lamp had gone off duty and now our only light was from stars seen through a broad window.

I sank my voice to little more than a breath and asked:

"How was the man murdered and why, do you think?"

"It would not have been a premeditated killing. Rather a case of a meeting of men who served two masters and sought the same end. If my deduction is right we'll be knowing soon."

"Your deduction from what, maestro?"

"From those bruises on the burglar's wrists, of course. And now not another word, lad. We can ill afford after our trouble already taken to risk stampeding our quarry."

The minutes dragged. We had come soundlessly ourselves from above and so came one who followed us. While I still was straining my ears to hear what could not be heard he was at the library door.

A stab of light that was not from Macumber's flash darted into the room and danced about the walls. It missed us by a foot; we sat undiscovered, scarce breathing.

The newcomer walked lightly into the room, and brushed against my chair.

There was a sharp click as the Great One's finger found the switch. As the dozen tungstens of the chandelier flamed our man wheeled. He was crouching with his face toward us and his arms crooked and swinging like an angry ground ape's. His white teeth were showing in his yellow face but the squared border which the lips made about them did not shape the familiar smile of the butler striving to please. This was a grin of frozen death.

Macumber's voice sounded at my side, even and reassuring. It was something of a monologue he delivered, for the yellow man stood mute.

"Hold where you are, Ito! Steady! Right-o! Even with a pistol in my hand I'd not care to have you nearer. I've some slight knowledge of jujutsu myself, you see, and I recognize a master. And no longer ago than last night and no farther away than the hall yonder I had an object lesson. It was a man who'd run afoul of the jujutsu art at the cost of a broken neck. Do you know how they're going to land when you throw 'em, Ito, or is it just luck?

"But this man gave you a splendid opportunity to show the best that was in you, I fancy. I judge he came for you with both arms conveniently outstretched. You left the prints of those cold steel fingers of yours on them, Ito. I thought of you when I saw the bruises—indeed I did—and admired your skill.

"What? You aren't going to chat with me? Well, I really didn't anticipate you would when I came down to wait for you. I dare say there's a jolly little department chief in the land of the cherry blossom with a smile just like your own who'd be horrified if you did. Perhaps he'd even rather do without the helicopter plans. Do you think he would, Ito?

"Oh, well, it's no use I see. Lad, it would be kind of you to phone again for those gentlemen who were here some hours since. Tell them we've a story for them and a guest in whom the government will not unlikely be interested. And see can you attend to the matter, will you not, without arousing the house?"

Within an hour the sheriff's men had taken Ito off our hands and had departed with him, holding acrimonious debate between themselves on the question of the proper charge to be laid against their prisoner—a question, Macumber had advised them, they would better let the Federal authorities settle.

The Great One, with the pressing business of the butler off his hands, gave way to weariness. He had thrown himself onto his bed when I reminded him he had left the plans below and was for permitting them to stay where they were overnight.

"I'm quite sure we need not worry about them," he said sleepily.

Before I went to sleep myself I was sure I heard the purring of a motor in front of the house. I called to Macumber.

"A motor?" he burst out. "I'd not get up now for an entire auto parade!"

And that was the last word I had from him until I woke to find him stepping clean-shaved and shining from the bath.

"You may or may not have served the ends of justice," said I, "but don't you think that so far as Coates is concerned you've put your foot in it. How is Goldacres going to run without Ito? Isn't the butler a sort of mainspring in a house like this?"

"Coates gave me carte blanche before he started for the city. He'd calmed down and I told him exactly what I suspected—and whom. It was amazing the way Ito fell into my little trap, wasn't it? I tried to pitch my voice just right to reach him as he came along the hall and to give him just the barest glimpse of the book in which I'd concealed the drawings as I restored it to the shelf. It's my thought——"

An interrupting rap sounded at the door. It was one of the maids.

"Do you know what's happened to Mrs. Bent, sir?" she asked the Great One.

"Happened to her? What do you mean?"

"She's not in her room this morning, sir, and most of her luggage is gone. There was this note on her dressing table. I think it's meant for you, sir."

Macumber glanced at the superscription on the square blue envelope and ripped it open without a word. I watched his face closely as he read but not a ripple of expression of any sort did it betray. When he glanced up it was to ask:

"Didn't you wake me up early this morning to tell me something about a motor standing in front of the house?"

"I did."

"Mrs. Tristram Bent left Goldacres in it."

"At three a. m.?"

The Great One crumpled the blue note sheet in his hand and made a motion as if to toss it into the basket. It was only by his action I knew he had changed his mind. His face still told nothing as he handed the note to me.

"Read it, lad. You are entitled to your smile."

The handwriting was a reflection of the beauty of the woman. I read:

CHER CAVALIER SERVENTE: Even in my great haste I cannot leave Goldacres without this farewell to you, my droll detective. You truly alarmed me with your suspicions of the gentleman you know as Franconi. That is only natural. He is my husband. We leave together.

As a detective, good friend, you take my breath away—sometimes. I wonder if you can be as good a magician. Or perhaps it is that there is subtler magic than yours in the woman's touch. Will you already know as you read this, I wonder, that you no longer have the drawings for the helicopter? They went from you in that moment when for the first and last time my arms went about you, mon ami. I substituted a similar envelope. The style of legerdemain is one in which *I* am skilled.

May I correct one surmise of yours before saying farewell? My husband and I are in no government's employ. We are free agents. But I will tell you the government that will have the Williams helicopter. Ah, do I not see your eyes opening? It will be the one which most appreciates its worth! Good-by.

MRS. TRISTRAM BENT
(née Sonya Stapoff).

When I had finished the letter I hesitated to meet the Great One's eyes, fearing to surprise the pain that he would want to hide from me. But his expression, so far as I could read it, was no more than serious.

"The name Sonya Stapoff would have told the story in itself," said he. "Madame is undoubtedly one of the greatest privateerswomen of diplomacy the world has known. By reputation she was well known to me when I met her as Mrs. Tristram Bent."

"But how," I asked, "could she have got in with Wilson Coates and his wife?"

"Did their acquaintance not begin in Washington, lad? Like all capitals the city is infested with people of the ilk of madame and her Franconi. They move in all circles. That point is not worthy of discussion. In fact, it was the circumstance of the Washington meeting which leaped to my mind when it dawned upon me as we sat by the lake last night that madame was intent on lifting the Williams plans. That was where I got my shock, lad; the letter she leaves is nothing. Until then I had not suspected her for so much as a second. I had—well——"

He broke off with a sigh, and the Great One of the midsummer madness was gone. It was the old Macumber who smiled at me.

"Well, lad," said he, "against the score of the Goldacres burglars our host will have to chalk up the loss of one more butler, a chauffeur of extraordinary parts, an indubitably charming guest and—was it the limousine madame left in, I wonder?"

"But the plans, maestro! You knew what she was at and let her get them? I can't understand you."

He met my stare with equanimity.

"Williams made only one set of drawings. They were for his first machine. All the work on that one and the others he did himself, single-handed. He designed and fabricated the parts virtually at the same time while building the later models."

A light dawned.

"Then Mrs. Bent—madame—has——"

"She has for sale to the highest bidder the plans for a helicopter that won't get off the ground," smiled the Great Macumber.

Mr. Rohde will have another Great Macumber story in the next issue.

A USEFUL LUXURY

IF you look upon the airplane with a Missouri complex in your eye and want to know "what the durn contraptions are good for, anyway," let the business men of aviation show you. The Aëronautical Chamber of Commerce of America has compiled a list of useful and lucrative missions which the airplane can fulfill, exclusive of its military function.

Here are some of the fields in which airplanes can and have played distinctly utilitarian parts: Transportation of the mails, forest-fire patrols, coast-guard and revenue patrols, agricultural surveys, coast and geodetic surveys, relief operations in disaster, city-planning projects, road and rail surveys, fire and police zoning, park improvement, passenger and freight transportation, bank-messenger service, collection and dissemination of news, advertising and publicity, private commutation transport.

For a vehicle of war, sport and luxury, as the airplane is commonly considered, this sounds like a fairly good score. Even a Ford can't do all those things, and who ever claimed that a Ford was a vehicle of luxury?

A Chat With You

WE read somewhere lately that every boy at some time or another has had the ambition to be a railroad engineer. All generalizations are dangerous and those about boys or men or women especially so. There is, of course, a typical sort of professional small boy who self-consciously runs true to form as his elders have imagined him, but he is few in number. Most boys are profoundly individualistic and follow their own fancies with an originality of purpose and execution generally lost in later life. We remember wishing to be a West Point cadet, a Yale football player with a pipe and a dog, an astronomer with long gray whiskers who sat up all night peering at the starry skies—and finally we wished to be a traveler.

* * * *

WE do not mean a commercial traveler, or a tourist for pleasure, or any other sort of traveler for pleasure or profit that one meets in the ordinary course of life. The traveler we wanted to be was quite different. He was the kind of fellow who was always appearing in dangerous and unexpected places where something exciting was afoot. In how many books have we not read something like this:

"The traveler drew his coat closer around him as he looked back at the gathering storm. He spurred his horse forward as the shades of night darkened over the Alpine pass."

You could always depend on that sort of traveler taking you into some sort of a good story. He was sitting in a dark corner of the inn, his slouch hat pulled low over his brows, pretending to sip his wine, while the conspirators plotted the revolution that was to put the old king back on his throne. He was sitting in a corner of the castle while the feast went on. He was spurring his horse down the Calais road and slipping aboard the boat that was to take him across the Channel with the news that was to change the course of history. He was appearing unexpectedly at all times and he always knew his way about.

In short he was a traveler such as never followed a Cook's tour, never listened to a travelogue, and never needed a guide. He had various names. You will find them in the pages of Scott, Dumas, and others.

* * * *

IT is a curious fate that we never in our own case have realized any of our boyhood hopes, but we have met many who have done the things we wished to do and so we feel sometimes that we have realized our ambitions vicariously. We are well acquainted with West Point graduates and with famous Yale football players. We know one astronomer and have seen him in his observatory high up on the side of the mountain studying the stars through his tremendous lenses. For a long time we thought we would never meet our other hero, the traveler, but at last we came to know him. His name is James Francis Dwyer.

* * * *

DWYER travels without a guide. He has no train schedules to make. He has nothing to offer for sale, no samples to carry, no itinerary to follow. He travels in the old romantic sense, wherever his fancy calls him, to the most interesting places out of the beaten track. He writes a weekly letter about his travels to those who care to subscribe to it. As well as a traveler, he

happens to be a great short-story writer. It is more than likely that you have already started to read the new series by him, "The Unusual Adventures of The Texan Wasp." Each story is laid in a different city. These tales are a novelty in the way of fiction.

* * * *

SPEAKING of travel, there is a chance for you to take the trip through Kentucky in the next issue with Charles Neville Buck as a companion. The story is a full-length book, published complete and unabridged in the single issue of THE POPULAR.

Ever since Daniel Boone climbed the trail across the Blue Ridge and looked down over the wonderful sweep of Kain-tuck-kee, "the dark and bloody ground," there has been romance in the high, rough mountains and in the smiling Blue Grass valley.

In the mountains there still lives a people who have aptly been called "our contemporary ancestors." They are like what the original white man was centuries ago. They are hardy, pious, most honest and honorable, but they have that ancient quality of never forgetting an injury. A mountain feud is a thing that is handed down for generations. They live the simplest, the sparest, the roughest of lives in log cabins that are barely shelters from the wind. They are all poor.

In the Blue Grass country down below where the fine horses are raised lives a different sort of Kentuckian. His house is no log cabin but one of those mansions with tall columns in front of it that we have grown to associate with the old South. His is an easy, courteous, cultivated life, with horse racing and the raising of fine stock its most attractive preoccupations. There could be no greater contrast among white people of good stock than that between the folk of the hills and the people of the valley. For a long time we have been hoping to get a novel about a boy who came down from the hills and made his way among the quality of the Blue Grass. We have it at last. It is a rousing novel, a tale of horses and the track, of love and fighting, and of real people. One of the best of THE POPULAR novels.

* * * *

THERE are other notable things in the next issue. For instance, William Hamilton Osborne, who is a well-known lawyer, has written for it a story of everyday life that shows the wonder and romance that can be found in any family history. There is no crime in the story. Not a shot is fired, not a blow is struck. No one is in danger of sudden death at any time and there are no crooks or gunmen. And yet incident follows incident with a dramatic piling up of feeling and the surprise at the end is complete and satisfying. "At a Critical Juncture" comes pretty near being a great short story. The other things in the magazine are by Ralph D. Paine, Theodore Seixas Solomons, Burton E. Stevenson, Calvin Johnston, Alan Sullivan, Willis Brindley and Robert H. Rohde.

Write that Prize-winning Letter NOW!

"Nothing Takes the Place of Leather"

Rules of the Contest

1—Letters must be written in the English language, and on only one side of the paper.
2—The competitor's name and address must be written at the top of the first page of the letter.
3—The letter must be mailed in a sealed, stamped envelope. *No post cards will be considered.*
4—There shall be no limits to the length a letter may be; and any competitor may send in as many letters as desired.
5—This Contest shall be freely open to anyone, anywhere.
6—The first prize will be awarded to the contestant whose letter on the subject, "Nothing Takes the Place of Leather," is the best in the opinion of the judges.
7—The Contest opens officially June 30, 1923, and closes October 31, 1923.
8—In case of tie, both or all tying contestants will receive the full amount of the prize tied for.

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for Letters about Leather,

but your letter must be written by October 31, 1923

ALL letters must be written not later than October 31. Sit down and write your letter now.

What could be simpler—or more profitable—than writing a Letter about Leather. Start with what you have found out about good leather in your every-day life.

Comfort! How easy your feet feel with sturdy, damp-proof, slip-proof leather soles and heels to trudge solidly upon!

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Does fashion in footwear appeal most to you? Consider how the lightest leather sole holds the upper in shape, provides the foundation which, alone, keeps handsome shoes good-looking and style-fresh.

The healthful qualities inherent in sole leather would make an ideal theme for a prize-winning Letter about Leather. Your feet breathe through leather soles. Leather is porous. It allows the excess heat to escape. That is not the case with other materials, often used for soles.

Durability under trying conditions? Postmen, policemen, soldiers and all the workers of all the world know "nothing takes the place of leather" for honest, downright endurance. Its millions of tough, springy fibres defy the grind as nothing else will do.

What is true of leather soles and heels is just as true, and more spectacular, of leather belting. Through thousands of hours, leather belts speed on in factories and shops. Men who work at many a trade know this value of leather. Some of these men are writing Letters about Leather that will be richly rewarded. Why not you?

JUDGES

MARTHA E. DODSON, *Associate Editor, The Ladies' Home Journal*
PRESIDENT FREDERICK C. HICKS *of the University of Cincinnati*
PRESIDENT FRASER M. MOFFAT *of the Tanners' Council*

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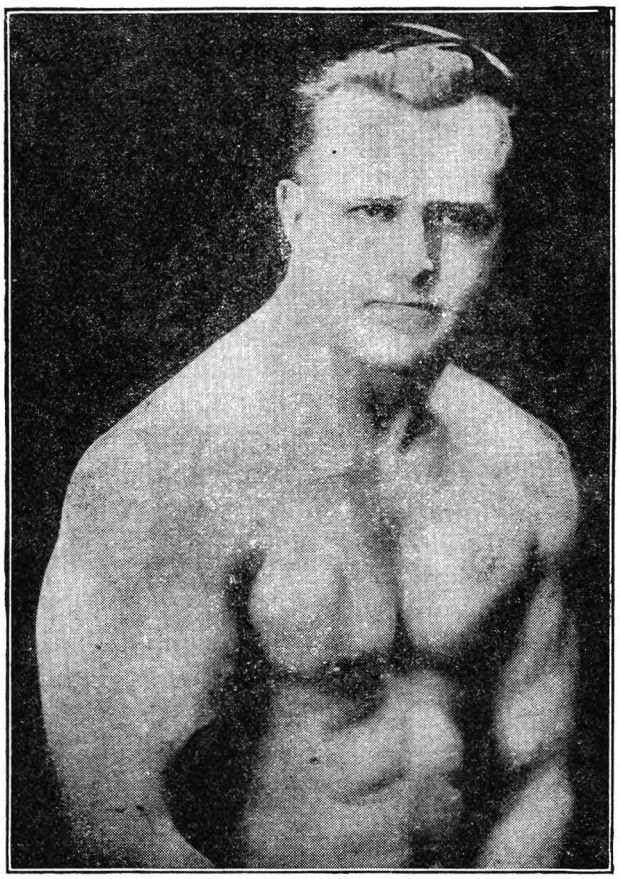
If You Were Dying To-night

and I offered you something that would give you ten years more to live, would you take it? You'd grab it. Well fellows, I've got it, but don't wait till you're dying or it won't do you a bit of good. It will then be too late. Right now is the time. To-morrow or any day, some disease will get you and if you have not equipped yourself to fight it off, you're gone. I don't claim to cure disease. I am not a medical doctor, but I'll put you in such condition that the doctor will starve to death waiting for you to take sick. Can you imagine a mosquito trying to bite a brick wall? A fine chance.



Earle E. Liederman as he is to-day

A Re-built Man

I like to get the weak ones. I delight in getting hold of a man who has been turned down as hopeless by others. It's easy enough to finish a task that's more than half done. But give me the weak, sickly chap and watch him grow stronger. That's what I like. It's fun to me because I know I can do it and I like to give the other fellow the laugh. I don't just give you a veneer of muscle that looks good to others. I work on you both inside and out. I not only put big, massive arms and legs on you, but I build up those inner muscles that surround your vital organs. The kind that give you real pep and energy, the kind that fire you with ambition and the courage to tackle anything set before you.

All I Ask Is Ninety Days

Who says it takes years to get in shape? Show me the man who makes any such claims and I'll make him eat his words. I'll put one full inch on your arm in just 30 days. Yes, and two full inches on your chest in the same length of time. Meanwhile, I'm putting life and pep into your old back-bone. And from then on, just watch 'em grow. At the end of thirty days you won't know yourself. Your whole body will take on an entirely different appearance. But you've only started. Now comes the real works. I've only built my foundation. I want just 60 days more (90 in all) and you'll make those friends of yours who think they're strong look like something the cat dragged in.

A Real Man

When I'm through with you, you're a real man. The kind that can prove it. You will be able to do things that you had thought impossible. And the beauty of it is you keep on going. Your deep full chest breathes in rich pure air, stimulating your blood and making you just bubble over with vim and vitality. Your huge square shoulders and your massive muscular arms have that craving for the exercise of a regular he man. You have the flash to your eye and the pep to your step that will make you admired and sought after in both the business and social world.

This is no idle prattle, fellows. If you doubt me, make me prove it. Go ahead. I like it. I have already done this for thousands of others and my records are unchallenged. What I have done for them, I will do for you. Come then, for time flies and every day counts. Let this very day be the beginning of new life to you.

Send for my New 64-page book

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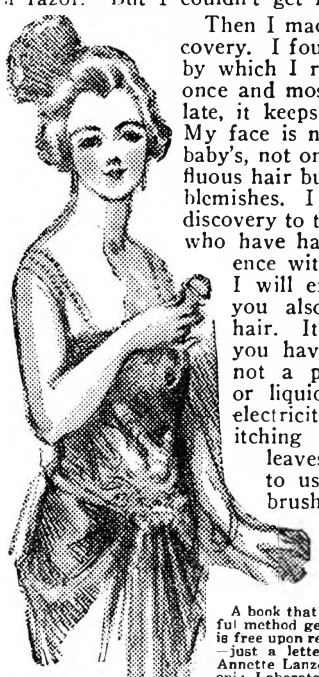
Here's the Secret

I had become utterly discouraged with a heavy growth of hair on my face and lip. I had tried every sort of depilatory and electrolysis and even a razor. But I couldn't get rid of it.



Then I made a wonderful discovery. I found a simple method by which I removed the hair at once and most wonderful to relate, it keeps the hair removed. My face is now as smooth as a baby's, not only free from superfluous hair but from pimples and blemishes. I have explained this discovery to thousands of women who have had the same experience with it that I had and I will explain it to you if you also have superfluous hair. It isn't like anything you have ever used. It is not a powder, paste, wax or liquid, not a razor, not electricity. It causes no itching or burning and leaves no scars. As easy to use as your comb or brush.

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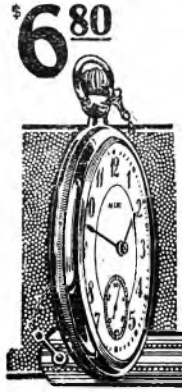
$6.80



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32x4	3.00	1.40	36x4½	4.25	1.65
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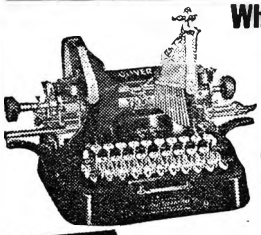

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Wear it 10 days and if you don't agree it is an amazing bargain, return it and we will refund your money. If satisfied, pay $1.50 a week until $52.50 is paid.

FREE Write for catalog. Diamonds, Watches, Jewelry —$10 to $1,000 all on long credit.

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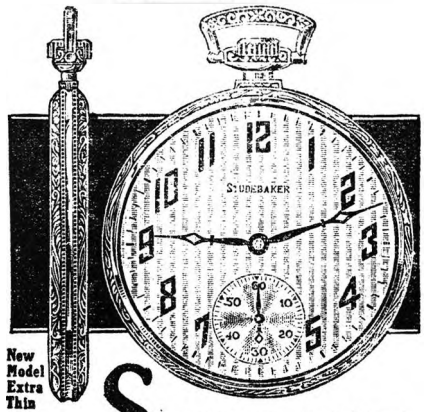
21 Jewel ~ Extra thin
STUDEBAKER
The *Insured* Watch



New Model Extra Thin

SENT FOR $1.00 DOWN!

Only $1.00! The balance in easy monthly payments. You get the famous Studebaker 21 Jewel Watch—Insured for a lifetime; a choice of 54 new Art Beauty Cases; 8 adjustments, including heat, cold, isochronism and 5 positions—direct from the maker at lowest prices ever named on equal quality. Write today for FREE BOOK of Advance Watch Styles.

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For a limited time we are giving away FREE with every Studebaker Watch a beautiful pattern Studebaker Watch Chain. Write now while offer lasts.

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Send at once and get a copy of this book—FREE! See the newest, beautiful, advance styles in Studebaker Art Beauty Cases and Dials. Read how you can buy a 21 Jewel Studebaker Insured Watch direct from the maker—save big money—and pay for it on easy monthly payments.

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Please send me your Free Book of Advance Watch Styles and particulars of your $1.00 down offer.

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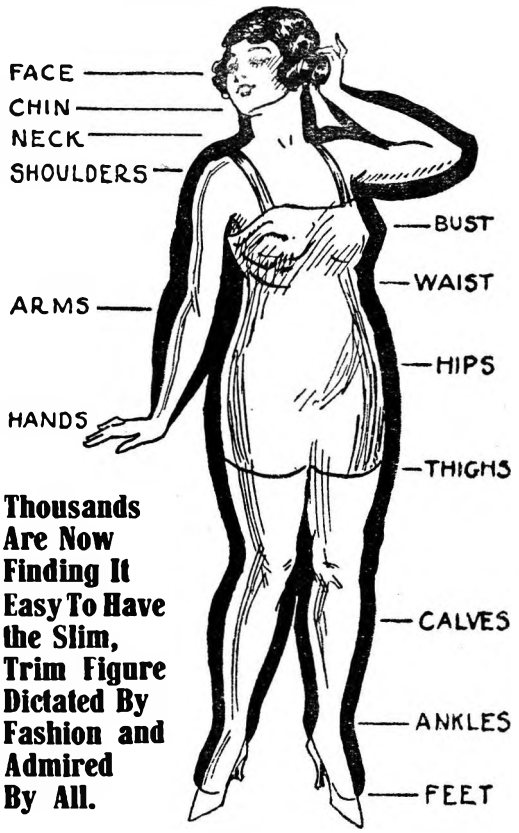
Would You Like To Lose a Pound a Day? Then Try This Delightfully Simple Way---



Thousands Are Now Finding It Easy To Have the Slim, Trim Figure Dictated By Fashion and Admired By All.

ARE you fat? You shouldn't be. Without rigorous dieting or exercise—by a simple natural process—you should quickly and easily be able to have the slender fashionable figure that is so attractive.

Scientists have discovered that excess fat is often caused by the subnormal action of a small gland. Once this gland is healthy and functioning properly, your weight should reduce naturally and without effort on your part, to the normal amount for your height.

And science has discovered a simple extract which tends to regulate the gland that controls fat. Without lifting a hand in unnecessary and violent exercise, you should find it a delightfully simple matter to have the ideal, slender figure admired by everyone.

The wonderful thing about the scientific formula known as Rid-O-Fat is that in losing your superfluous fat you should gain added vigor, health and energy of mind and body.

Feel Young—Look Young

There is nothing which adds to a person's age so much as fat. A few extra pounds makes any man or woman look from five to ten years older. Not only that, the excess weight and increased heart action saps vitality and energy.

Once the gland which controls your fat is functioning properly your food should be turned into firm, solid flesh and muscle. As your weight comes down to normal you should experience a delightful and amazing improvement in your appearance. You should not only feel and look younger—you should actually be younger. You should also be in better health—a real health of energy—not the fictitious and deceiving health of fat that insurance companies say shortens the life ten years.

Complexion, health and figure are improved at the same time. The result is new vitality, magnetism and personal charm that makes for success. Tasks once hard become easy and life worth while.

Science Discloses Method of Quickly Reducing Excess Weight—Many Losing a Pound a Day Without Starvation Dieting or Exercise —Greatly Improves Appearance. Generous Sample Sent Free.

Quick Results —Rid-O-Fat, the scientific compound, comes in convenient tablet form, and
No Exercise —is practically tasteless. You simply take one at each meal and bedtime.
No Starvation Dieting. Results often surprising in their rapidity.

Within a few days you should be conscious of a new feeling of energy and lightness, taking the place of that tired, worn-out feeling.

Quickly as the fat gland resumes normal functioning you should lose weight in a healthy, normal manner. Many fat, ungainly figures are in this scientific manner helped to regain their normal and idealistic proportions, giving that fashionable slenderness and athletic poise.

And all this time you live as you please.

Nature is doing the work. No more irksome exercise—no more denying yourself of all the things you like. Take just one small, pleasant Rid-O-Fat tablet after each meal. Could anything be more simple?

Rid-O-Fat Used By 100,000 People

Since the announcement of the wonderful Rid-O-Fat formula it has been used by more than 100,000 people. Twenty to thirty thousand more people are writing for it every month. The following letters show what users think of the scientific Rid-O-Fat system of fat reduction:

Lost Forty-One Pounds In Thirty Days

"When I wrote for your Rid-O-Fat sample I weighed 245 pounds. Today, which is 30 days later, I weighed only 204 pounds. A reduction of 41 pounds in a month. I am delighted. Please send me another 30-day treatment, as I want to reduce to 145 pounds, which is the correct weight for my height. I am sure that I will realize my ambition with Rid-O-Fat and I feel better than I have in years."

Lost Twenty Pounds In Three Weeks

"According to weight tables I weighed exactly 20 pounds too much. Rid-O-Fat reduced me to normal in just a little more than three weeks. I feel better, don't get tired, and my friends say I look like a new person."

Generous Sample FREE

I want every fat person to have a chance to try Rid-O-Fat in their own homes at my expense. I don't want them to take my word or that of the thousands who have used it. I want them to see for themselves that the results are more pleasing than anything I can say. To introduce Rid-O-Fat in a million more homes I will send a free sample to anyone who will write for it. In fact it is really more than a sample, as it is sufficient to reduce the average person several pounds. I will also send with the sample an interesting booklet that explains the scientific reason for fat, and why Rid-O-Fat meets with the highest approval.

Costs Nothing! Don't send a penny—I will send the sample and the booklet under plain wrapper and fully postpaid. This does not obligate you in any way and is never to cost you a cent. It is simply a limited offer I am making to more generally introduce Rid-O-Fat.

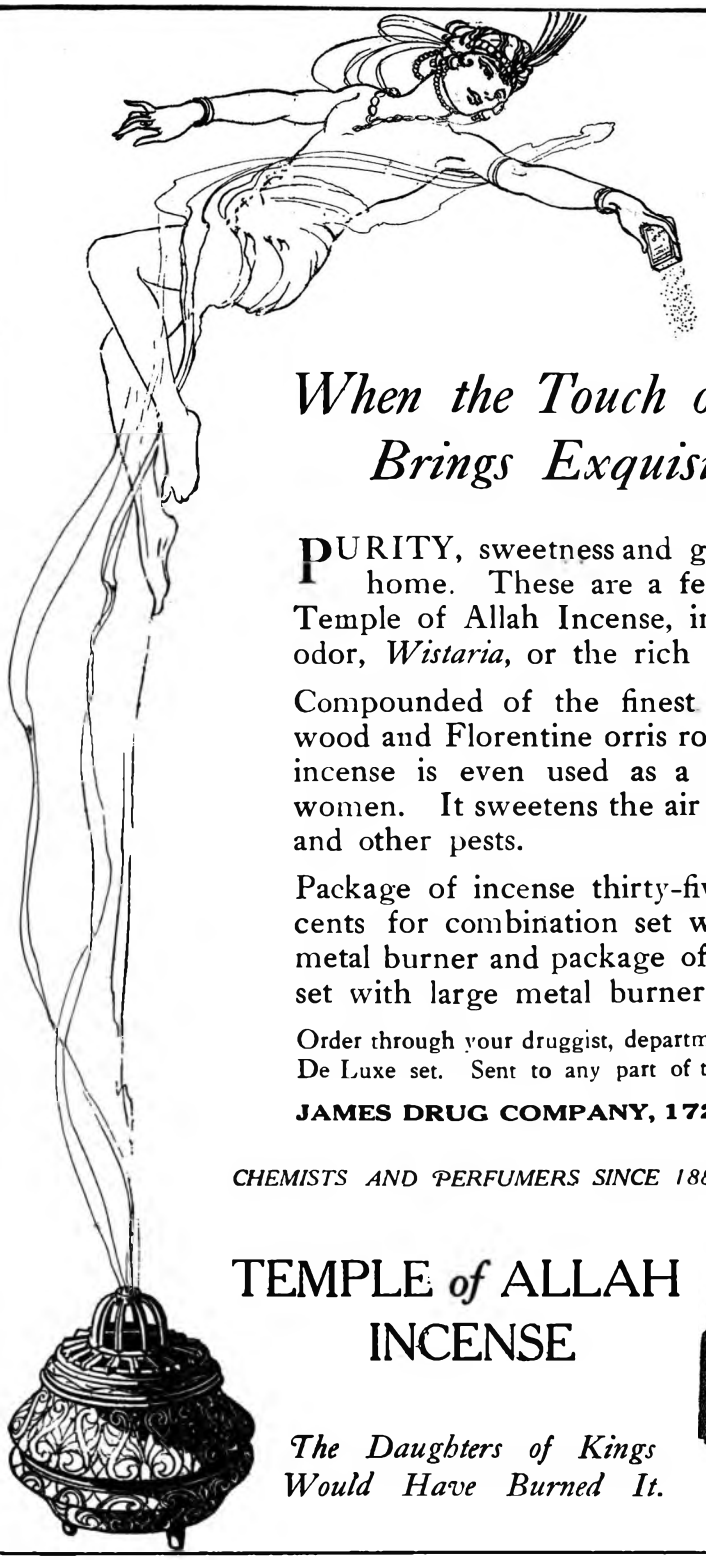
This free offer is good for only a short time, so send me your name and address on the coupon below or a post card, and I will see that the generous sample and booklet are mailed immediately under plain wrapper postpaid. Do not try to get Rid-O-Fat at drug stores as it is distributed only direct from my laboratory to you—remember this is a short time offer and send your name at once. H. C. HAIST, Whinton Laboratories, 1518 Coca Cola Bldg., Kansas City, Mo.

H. C. HAIST, Whinton Laboratories,
1518 Coca Cola Bldg., Kansas City, Mo.

Without obligation in any way and with the understanding it is not to cost me a cent at any time, please send me your generous free sample of Rid-O-Fat and free booklet under plain wrapper.

Name.....

Address.....



When the Touch of a Match Brings Exquisite Fragrance

PURITY, sweetness and greater luxury for the home. These are a few of the benefits of Temple of Allah Incense, in the new Oriental odor, *Wistaria*, or the rich *Sandalwood* scent.

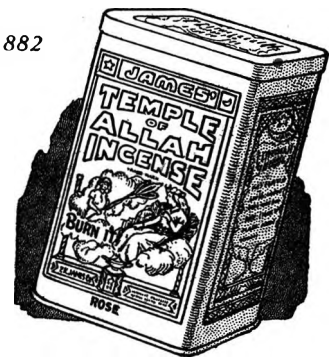
Compounded of the finest East Indian sandalwood and Florentine orris root, this rarely choice incense is even used as a sachet by fastidious women. It sweetens the air and keeps away flies and other pests.

Package of incense thirty-five cents. Only sixty cents for combination set with richly embossed metal burner and package of incense. De Luxe set with large metal burner and incense, $1.

Order through your druggist, department store or send $1.00 for De Luxe set. Sent to any part of the United States post paid.

JAMES DRUG COMPANY, 172 Fifth Ave., New York

CHEMISTS AND PERFUMERS SINCE 1882



TEMPLE *of* ALLAH INCENSE

The Daughters of Kings Would Have Burned It.

FAIRY SOAP

Change today to the Fairy way!

IT'S all in the way you begin the day! Refresh and invigorate the skin with Fairy Soap and you start with the confidence that ultimate cleanliness gives.

Fragrant lather of shimmering white! Joy-lather, in a minute, that gently probes the pores and expels impurities.

Just soap! Pure—wholesome soap. White all through—the age-old symbol of purity.

And the oval cake! The handy cake! Wears to a wafer without a break. Economical, of course!

It's white! It's pure! It floats!

THE N.K. FAIRBANK COMPANY

THE IDEAL BASE FOR POWDER. Hinds Honey and Almond Cream is an excellent base for face powder. Apply just enough cream to the skin to moisten it. Allow it to nearly dry and then dust on the powder which is sure to cling. All unpleasant, sore conditions caused by wind and dust, especially while motoring, will be avoided by the combination of Hinds Cream and Hinds Cre-mis Face Powder. This powder comes in four tints—white, flesh, pink and brunette. Samples 2 cents, trial box 15 cents, large box 60 cents.

HINDS HONEY AND ALMOND CREAM is a soothing, refining cream that by daily use prevents any tendency to roughness or irritation. An invigorating cream that tones and freshens and protects the complexion from injury by dusty winds or chilly atmosphere. A cream that softens the skin to a velvety texture. And withal a cream so simple to apply, so sure in its improving results that it readily becomes the favored complexion cream of all who try it. Its economy is due to the small amount required—only enough to moisten the skin. Let the use of Hinds Honey and Almond Cream become a part of your daily program. It will enhance your pleasure.

FOR HOSPITAL AND THE SICK ROOM. Hinds Honey and Almond Cream is in constant use by surgeons and nurses who not only use it to keep their own skin soft and smooth but use it on their patients. The skin is apt to become dry and sore after long and severe illness and Hinds Honey and Almond Cream quickly restores the natural texture of the skin without making it oily, greasy or sticky.

FOR MANICURING—WITHOUT SORENESS. Hinds Honey and Almond Cream is now highly recommended as an aid in manicuring because it so agreeably softens the cuticle for removal and prevents soreness; also, as it adds to the lustre of the nails. Altogether, it is a success for the entire manicuring process.

All drug and department stores sell Hinds Honey and Almond Cream. We will mail a sample for 2 cents or a trial bottle for 6 cents. A try-out box of 5 samples, assorted, 10 cents. Booklet *Free.*

A. S. HINDS CO. Dept. 50 PORTLAND, MAINE