BREEZY STORIES OF THE OUT-O'-DOORS

No. 1, Vol. 25 TWICE-A-MONTH 15 CENTS

The Popular Magazine

JULY
MONTH-END EDITION
OUT-JUNE 25 1912

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By

George Randolph Chester

Author of "Get-Rich-Quick Wallingford"

Begins in the FIRST AUGUST NUMBER of The Popular Magazine

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FIRST AUGUST

POPULAR

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READ THIS LETTER!

The Popular *is* the "meatiest" magazine published to-day. It has more good stories by well-known authors than any other magazine in the world.

DEAR SIRS: I wish to relate an incident of recent date, in which a man championed THE POPULAR in my hearing.

It happened on a sleeper between Columbus, Ohio, and Chicago, Ill. There were several men prominent in Chicago political life and law circles. We were in the smoking compartment, discussing the theory of crime waves.

I was ably seconded in what I said by a man who afterward proved to be a reader of THE POPULAR. He said too many people read yellow magazines, and draw their conclusions from them. "Now for myself," he said, "when I have any time to read I read THE POPULAR MAGAZINE, which is undoubtedly the meatiest magazine published in America to-day."

I beg to remain as ever a constant reader. BENJ. F. WAITE.
Chillicothe, Ohio.

ON SALE AT ALL NEWS STANDS JULY 7th

Next Popular begins JACQUES FUTRELLE'S last stories

MONTH-END EDITION

VOLUME XXV NUMBER 1

TWICE-A-MONTH

The Popular Magazine

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JULY 15, 1912

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FIRST AUGUST POPULAR ON SALE JULY 7th

The Importance of Training

Here is a man who was in line for a better job, but, like the great majority, had not been training himself to "fill the shoes" of the man above him; he always thought that if the time ever came he could just bluff it through—special training wasn't necessary. There's where he made *his* mistake, and there's where you will make *your* mistake if you are not a trained man. The boss had only to ask a few questions to find that the man did not know anything about the other fellow's work; that he had been wasting his time instead of improving it—that he was just one of the fellows who get into a rut and stick because he didn't have sense enough to plan for the future.

The time to plan is right now; the opportunity will come when you are ready

Don't think, as this man did, that it is simply a matter of absorbing knowledge and as a matter of course promotion will follow. Don't argue with yourself "There's no opportunity here—no incentive to do better work—I have gone as high as I can in this firm—I know as much as the boss and don't see why I can't get the money."

If the opportunity for advancement is not right ahead of you with your own firm, then it *is* with another. There is always an opportunity—always a chance for a better job, for better pay—yes, just the job you have often wished you had—but mere wishing will never get you anywhere; you *must* get the training.

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THE POPULAR MAGAZINE

VOL. XXV. JULY 15, 1912. No. 1.

The "Old Man" of Eagle Pass

By Frederick R. Bechdolt

Author of "The Pot of Gold," "The Making of Terry," Etc.

Some men, as soon as their sons are out of college, put them to wiping engines by way of a post-graduate course. President King has a different method for completing the education of his son. He gives him the strenuous job of handling men in a construction camp in the Sierras. The long uphill fight of the new "boss" to win recognition from the hard-rock men makes a story as inspiring as it is thrilling. In the thick of the conflict he meets "the one woman" and you have romance as well as stern grappling with the prejudices and passions of elemental men.

(*A Complete Novel*)

CHAPTER I.

THE president's special was making nearly thirty miles an hour, which was pretty good time when one takes into consideration the fact that it was climbing into the Nevada foothills over a new roadbed. The burnished locomotive sang its thunderous song in steady, unbroken monotone, and left a thick black trail of smoke to drift before the morning breeze across the hills of gray and gold.

Far ahead of the locomotive's pilot, looming skyward like a ragged, purple wall, the Sierra stretched straight across its path. Every minute the huge barrier of mountains grew more lofty. From north to south, it extended as far as the eye could see, as if nature, in a grim and stubborn mood, had heaved up the living rock, a mile high, to forbid mankind from marching farther toward the western sea. Mounting this first ascent among the sagebrush hills, the engine roared as if it were bellowing man's defiance at those silent steeps.

In President King's private coach were three compartments. The middle one suggested a Broadway office, with its polished desk, now strewn with blue prints, its typewriter, its swivel chair of comfortable dimensions, and its rich rug. In the foremost division were sleeping quarters. The rear one was a smoking and observation room. The furniture here was heavily upholstered in leather; there were magazines upon the polished table.

Lounging in one of the deep chairs, Bob King gazed through the wide window, and watched the hills slipping swiftly behind. His brows contracted; his eyes became more thoughtful; he allowed his cigarette to burn on between his fingers. And, voicing what was in his mind, he muttered:

"I wonder what he's up to, anyway?"

Bob's cheeks had that freshness of skin which tells of careful grooming and careful attention to out-of-door sports. Only the sons of the rich have such perfect satin skins. There was also —it was chiefly in the straight-looking eyes and the curving lips—a suggestion of intolerance, as if Bob King, satisfied with himself and his position among men, were also thoroughly satisfied that others should keep to their places. A tall young fellow, rather slender, decidedly good-looking. He would like you if he knew you, and otherwise would keep well to himself, expecting you to do the same.

The frown deepened, and then, as if it were no use trying to answer that question which he had put to himself, he shook his head. A moment later the little swinging door from the other compartment opened, and his father came in.

The train was lurching around a curve. President King stood fast, his legs a little apart to steady himself against the abrupt movement. His hair was gray, like his tweed suit; his face had many lines, half keen, half worried. A little man, but wiry, and his eyes were masterful.

"Well, Bob," said he, "pretty good speed for climbing toward the summit. We ought to be able to haul freight over this grade."

"Right, sir." The boy smiled up at him, and straightened in his chair. "We've away the best of the others on grade. Looks as if we ought to get our share of freight."

The old man frowned. "It takes more than an easy grade and a short haul to make a railroad," said he. "It's getting to be a complex science." He put his hand on his son's shoulder. "Bob, I suppose you'd like to know why I've brought you out with me?"

"I was puzzling over it just now," said Bob.

King sat down in the leather chair opposite. Between the two was a little table. Looking across this into the eyes of his son, he said:

"We've got the most direct system from the Atlantic to the Pacific now. I've managed to tie some of it together and to build the rest of it. And when I'm done working, who is going to be its head? I want this road to stay 'the King road.' That means you, Bob."

The younger man flushed as he nodded. "Yes, sir."

King's frown remained. "Railroading nowadays means more than stock manipulation, although, Heaven knows, there's enough to do in Wall Street to keep a man busy. But things are changing. From now on, the road that has the power is going to be the one that does the business—gets the freight and carries it. The head of the King road must be *a railroad man.*

"Now, Bob, I've given you a part of your education. But don't think because you know the Street, and because you've taken a prize in civil engineering since you finished college, that you're through school. You're going out here to the mountains to study along a new line.

"You know how Hill educated his sons—put them to wiping engines as soon as they got through college? He sees ahead. I'm going at it differently, however."

King looked keenly into his son's eyes. "Do you think you can handle men?" he asked.

Bob returned the look; his own eyes held plenty of confidence, along with his surprise. "I think so, sir," said he. "I'm pretty sure I can."

"Just so," said King. "And you've a lot to learn about yourself. Bob, it's the men who handle a railroad. They run it. The head of the road has to run them."

King glanced out of the window. Then abruptly, as if something out there had decided him: "Humph! We're stopping for water, I guess. Come on out on the platform."

The two of them found camp stools on the broad observation porch. The roadbed here ran across a river bottom; the track surmounted a deep fill. A gang of men, some fifty in number, were facing the dirt embankment with rock.

They were sweating in the hot Nevada sunshine. They were swarthy men—Greeks and Italians. Their faces were heavy. They worked slowly. Their flimsy shirts and overalls were stained with perspiration.

On the observation platform, King and Bob sat on their camp stools, watching the busy scene.

"Supposing," said the former, after a moment of silence, "you were in charge of this work—what would you say was necessary to know?"

"To know?" Bob smiled. "Oh, quite a lot of details—the depth of the fill, the amount of rock required, the number of men needed to get it done in time."

"How about the men?"

"What of them?" Bob looked puzzled. "A mucker is a mucker, isn't he?"

King nodded, and then, more to himself than to his son: "Just as I thought," said he. "Listen, Bob—you've got to know human nature before you can handle men. And men are the biggest force you've got to drive on this road. Now, I'll tell you where you're going. I'm sending you to Eagle Pass. Everything's arranged. They're waiting for you up there now. We're driving the big tunnel there. It will take nearly two years before it's holed. You will be in charge of the east portal—superintendent.

"You understand engineering. You'll have a civil engineer, two walking bosses, and three shift bosses, all of whom know their work, under you. And you'll have more than two hundred men. We just discharged the last superintendent for grafting. The men liked him. He was a sort of king among them. They're angry because he's gone. They are a hard crowd. Many of them are blacklisted miners; I don't doubt but there are dynamiters among them, and all sorts of thugs. A sweet-scented crowd.

"I'm sending you up there to drive that tunnel. That means you've got to drive those men. They won't like you because you take the other fellow's place. And they won't like you because you're my son. And you've got that job of driving them—mind you, *driving* them. This rockwork must be done on time. I expect you to make good."

King paused. Bob's face was flushed and his eyes were bright. King looked at him.

"It may cost me more money than it would otherwise," he said softly. "But I'm satisfied."

The train was starting. As they drew away from the place where the swarthy toilers were sweating in the sunshine, King was silent. His eyes hung on the men, following their movements as if he comprehended the purpose of every bending back and straining arm. Bob also watched, but his gaze seemed rather to be directed at the stone and the earth, as if the men had no part in his thoughts.

"Come on inside," said King. "We'll look over some profiles."

When they had been in the middle compartment for some time, bending over the blue prints on the polished desk, King said:

"These things are simple enough for you, I know. What do you think of your job?"

"I can't say that I fancy bossing a crowd of muckers," said Bob. "But if it's necessary I'll do it. I guess I can get the work out of them, all right." His face was easy with assurance.

"Before you're done with that bunch," said his father, "you'll know just how necessary it is. I'm making your schooling hard, but you'll learn the more quickly for that."

That noon the train stopped on a siding whose track had been gouged into the rocky flank of a steep mountain. Many feet below, a stream brawled over huge bowlders. The smell of the pines was in the air. Here, after lunch, Bob parted from his father. On the steps of the private car, they shook hands.

"Remember, Bob," said King, "stay with it."

Bob smiled back at him with the serenity of unworried youth. "I'll do that," said he lightly, and leaped to the ground.

A moment later the president's spe-

cial was dropping down the grade. Bob stood and watched his father's face grow smaller until it became a speck.

CHAPTER II.

The special whipped around a curve and out of sight. Bob picked up his grips, and faced toward the west.

Ahead of him the mountains towered to the blue sky. Into the tangle of lofty summits the cañon wound upward toward a jagged, saw-toothed peak. Upon the steep sides of this distant peak, the snow clung in huge white patches. Bob's eyes lingered on it; this was the barrier through which his father had told him the company was now boring the tunnel. At its foot he was to rule over men.

He walked up the track. Near by, the stream bawled loudly, whipping itself into masses of tumbling foam among the rocks. The smell of pines was in the air, and with it a strange, clean perfume, clear, rarified, too dainty to be tangible, yet permeating all the atmosphere as if it were the spirit of the place. It was the wild, exhilarating odor of the mountains. Bob sniffed it. The red leaped into his cheeks. He squared his shoulders.

In front of him, the railroad wound along the cañon's side. Two steel bands and a strip of yellow, it climbed into the mountains, straight toward the lofty, saw-toothed peak. A creation of man, made by muscles, brains, and machinery —a product of industrial civilization, hard, bare, unlovely. It looked like a wound along the mountain's flank.

Beside the track was a small board building which served as depot, section house, and telegraph office. Near this were great heaps of steel rails and materials. Farther on, a freight train stood on the main line. As Bob was hurrying toward it, the locomotive whistled twice. He quickened his pace, and reached the rear steps of the caboose in time to throw his grips upon the platform and swing on board.

The caboose was thick with tobacco smoke. Through the fog, which came from several pipes, Bob distinguished the forms of five or six big men. He closed the door behind him. About him, on lockers and on the floor, were rolls of blankets, tied tightly with ropes. He looked for a seat. The owners of the blankets had preëmpted everything.

None of these big men offered to move aside and give him room. All had glanced up at him, and now they had withdrawn their eyes, paying no heed to him. They were roughly dressed; their overalls were stained with grease and dirt. All wore heavy boots; and their flimsy shirts were for the most part open at their throats. For all their bigness, they were lean men. Their size lay in their huge bones. As they sprawled listlessly on the locker seats, their attitudes revealed their strength —a great, muscular thigh that seemed about to burst through the fabric which inclosed it; an outstretched arm as lumpy as if a thick snake were coiled under the calico sleeve. The faces of these men were coarse; their eyes were hard; from them shone something half reckless, half defiant. Bob felt a loathing, then a sort of diffidence, before this bigness and this wanton, reeking strength.

His eyes wandered to the cupola of the caboose; there was no one in that place. He climbed up and took his seat alone. He opened one of the windows, and got a breath of fresh air. From below him came the strong fumes of the pipes and the heavy reek of perspiration. He shrugged his shoulders; he would have to make the best of it.

"I wish," he said to himself, "that the governor had told me where I was going. I could have taken the right sort of clothes along."

His heavy leather grips and his neat business suit made him feel a little uncomfortable; and at times he caught an eye wandering to them, as if his incongruous appearance had roused the curiosity of these giants with whom he rode. As the half dozen had ignored him, he in his turn at such moments ignored them. On both sides this was unstudied.

Through the window of the cupola, Bob looked along the train ahead of

him. There were many flat cars, and these were piled high with steel rails and machinery. On the roofs of the box cars a number of men were riding. Beside each of these passengers was a dingy roll of blankets.

A red-faced man was coming back along the train. Bob watched him swing down from a box car to the front platform of the caboose; he wore shabby clothes of black, and a battered derby hat was on his head. The caboose door slammed behind him as he entered. A moment later he climbed into the cupola and took an armchair across from Bob's seat. He busied himself with some slips of paper, bills of lading and train orders. Abruptly, when he had finished with this, he turned to Bob, who noticed now a metal badge upon the dented hat.

"Ticket!" said the red-faced man.

Bob reached into his breast pocket and brought out his cardcase. He produced his annual pass. The conductor glanced keenly at the slip of pasteboard.

"Humph!" said he, after reading the name upon it, and looked into Bob's eyes as he handed it back. His expression was that of mere passing curiosity. Without another word, he climbed down, passed among the giants below, and went on about his business.

The incident left Bob half angry. He had always ridden on passenger trains before. In fact, he had never traveled on this part of his father's system. On the Eastern roads, the production of his annual pass for the inspection of blue-uniformed conductors had always brought at least a glance signifying that the official realized the bearer's importance.

But this time the red-faced fellow in the ill-used derby had muttered "Humph!" It was not the lack of attention that affronted Bob; it was the lack of courtesy. It was as if one of the house servants back home had said and done the same thing.

The train banged leisurely up the grade. The roadbed was new, and there was much jolting. Occasionally the locomotive slackened speed, then increased it again. After such an increase there would come a rattling noise along the string of freight cars, culminating in a sharp jolt. Always such a climax brought at least one oath from the group of giants in the lower part of the caboose.

There was something in these oaths that startled Bob. These men swore as if they meant it. Their anathemas smote like blows. He listened to the talk as it drifted upward through the noise of the wheels on the rail joints. It concerned the work at Eagle Pass.

"Say, byes," cried one, in a thin, high-pitched voice peculiar to many who have worked long underground, "they tell me Wild Martin's back."

"He is that," growled another. "A-runnin' a slugger in the headin'. He says he'll tear the head aff yer shoulders, Bill. He tould me back on the Galveston breakwater."

"Ho, ho, ho!" roared five of the giants. A stream of oaths made up the reply of him called Bill. Bob listened to curses and laughter. He had passed his days among gentlemen. Such men as he had seen at work had been toiling quietly under good bosses.

And these ruffians were now his to handle! He shut his teeth.

"They've fired Carney," cried the shrill-voiced man. "Canned him last wake. He *was* a grafter, Carney was. He milked the company of more'n ten thousand."

"Good fer Carney!" shouted another. "And, say, he could drive min, he could! Who would be the new super?"

Bob's ears were tingling. He felt a hot wave come into his face at the reply.

"Who d'ye think, hey?" Then drawlingly: "The prisident's son! Yis, he's sint his little bye out to mind us—frish from back East."

"God hilp him, thin!" cried some one.

"He'll last swift. They ort to of kept Carney, and left him stale. He was worth ut. But—papa's bye! We'll ate him up if he don't be good."

"Ho, ho, ho!" Bob's heart grew sick with rage as he listened to that laughter.

"Say"—it was the man with the thin

voice again—"do anny of ye mind the jude they sint out from New Yark to McCarthysville? Wan of thim civil-engineer fellies. He tried some of his new wrinkles on the byes. A wild bunch they was. Well, there was wan bit of throuble, and thin another. And wan night he got into a row wit' a shift boss in the Bucket of Blood. Jim Hansen was the man. Hansen got him to the flure and was a-setting out to put the boots to him. Well, the jude out wit' a gun and shot Hansen tru the arm. Say! The lads had a rope around his neck and had him down to a telegrapht pole inside of five minutes. Only fer the commissary a-hearing of ut and coming down wit' some of the ingineers wit' guns, they would of hung him."

For an instant the thought came to Bob that perhaps these ruffians knew who he was and were trying to badger him. He stole a look in their direction. Their faces were intent; their eyes were upon one another. They were in earnest.

"I'll drive them," he told himself, "if I die doing it!"

It seemed to him enormous that such unkempt thugs, whose oaths dripped from their lips, should be even given employment. Evidently, from their conversation, they were drill workers—exminers some of them, and others old followers of public works. They fell to gossiping of other places. Their talk reeked of violence; they bragged of brutal manhandling.

A feeling of great loneliness came over him. It was as if he were exiled from his own land and his own sort of people. But he was young, and he came from fighting stock. He shut his teeth. He made up his mind to rule. And even in this moment it never occurred to him to doubt that he would rule.

"I'll drive them!" he said, under his breath. "I'll show them who's who in this camp!"

CHAPTER III.

It was dusk when the train pulled into Eagle Pass. And it was cold. They had climbed from the summer heat of the foothills into the winter of the mountains. Already in September, the snow lay on the slopes above the camp.

Incandescent lights glowed through the dusk. Walking beside the freight cars toward the little depot platform, Bob looked about him. The cañon had narrowed to a gorge. Four hundred yards ahead the gorge boxed at the foot of the sheer peak, whose saw-toothed summit he had seen from miles away. The flanking mountains rose two thousand feet. Timber clothed their sides for two-thirds of the distance; then the gray rocks rose into the sky.

Down here in the depths of the defile was the construction camp. Bob made out the gray dump whereon a train of muck cars was now rattling noisily; the bunk house close beside it, and the power house. He breathed a deep sigh; his head went back. This was his little kingdom. He was to be the brains of all this work, to direct its machinery and its men. He forgot some of the unpleasant incidents of the train. He did not hear the voices of the drill runners behind him.

"I got an idee," one of them was saying, "that this here is the new super—the little bye that papa sint to boss us all."

"It must be," said another. "Say, lads, he *is* a dude! I wonder will he wear thim clothes inside the hole?"

The hoarse guffaw that followed reached Bob's ears.

The depot platform was crowded with men from the freight train, for the most part muckers who had never seen the place before. A profane and loud-voiced boarding boss was trying to sort them out and billet them to bunk houses. Standing apart from this confusion of tongues, Bob noticed a man who seemed to be waiting for some one. This one wore oilskins, rubber boots, and a squam hat; he lacked three or four days of having a clean shave. Bob stepped up to him.

"My man," said he, "where will I find the engineers' quarters?"

The other removed an ancient brier pipe from between his teeth, and looked

sharply at Bob. Instead of answering, he said abruptly:

"Is your name King?"

What surprised Bob more than the sharp inquiry was the man's voice. It had the modulation which tells of good breeding. "Yes," said he. "Have you any message for me?"

"I'm your assistant engineer," said the other. "Smith is my name." He extended his hand. "Glad to see you."

Bob answered, not altogether knowing just what he said. He was studying Smith, who was about his own age. Under the stubble of dense black beard, the face was clean-cut; the voice was that of an educated man.

"I only got the telegram that you were coming a little while ago," said Smith. "But I managed to get word to Mother Kelly. She'll have something hot to eat for you. Let me give you a hand with one of those grips. They're heavy for one man to pack."

Bob set down the grips, and glanced at the crowd upon the platform. "I say"—he pointed to the giants—"I'd better turn them over to one of the men to carry."

Smith regarded him curiously. "No," said he, "I don't think you had."

"Why not?" demanded Bob.

"Well," said he, "chiefly because he wouldn't do it."

Bob did not understand him at all. But, rather than argue here, he yielded the point.

They climbed the hill beside the track toward a bare, two-story structure of unpainted boards.

"Mother Kelly's boarding house," said Smith. "One or two of the bosses eat there, and the engineers have quarters, too."

Some one was splitting wood; as they drew near, Bob noticed how vigorous the strokes were. And now he saw beside a large pile a square-built individual swinging a heavy ax. Even in the half light, he marked the breadth of the shoulders and the strong, free movements of the arms. The wood-chopper threw down the ax, bent, and gathered an armful of sticks, and preceded the two men up the steps.

As Bob and Smith were entering, the armful of wood crashed into a box by the kitchen stove. The square-figured toiler turned around. Bob subdued an exclamation of astonishment. This was a woman.

A woman whose iron-gray hair was cut almost as short as a man's, whose arms, bare to the elbows, were brawny, knotted with muscles. Her face was square and resolute. Her lips were firm. The gray eyes scanned him from head to foot; they were masterful. She stood beside the wood box, wide-shouldered, hard-eyed, her booted feet well apart, her hands doubled on her ample hips. And as she surveyed Bob she frowned uncompromisingly.

"Mrs. Kelly," said Smith, "this is Mr. King."

Her eyes widened. "Good Lord!" said she. She did not stir from where she stood; her frown deepened a little; then she laughed aloud. "Ho, ho! I thought ye was one of them whisky drummers!" she exclaimed.

She came up and offered her hand. Bob took it. She gripped his slender fingers in her great, hard palm until he winced.

"So ye're the new super?" The frown came back; she shrugged her big shoulders, and looked him over again, slowly this time. "Smithy," she said, "this is a shame!" Without another word, she turned her back on the pair, and strode over to the stove. From there she called: "Set down. I'll have a bite fer ye directly." She busied herself at a frying pan and two or three pots, and Bob heard her muttering. He glanced at Smith, whose face was as expressionless as the latter could keep it. It began to dawn on him that something was wrong; there was in him something which these people did not expect. He took his seat, and talked aimlessly about the cold at this altitude.

"Young man!" He looked over his shoulder. Mother Kelly was addressing him. "Come over here." She delivered the order as if she were a shift boss and he were a mucker, and, without realizing it, or without questioning

it, he found that he had risen and was obeying.

He stood facing Mother Kelly. She was scrutinizing him keenly. He looked her in the eye, and he felt like a schoolboy. For some reason, he found himself anxious to make a good impression.

"Phwhy," she asked slowly, "did yer father send ye out here?"

He started to answer equivocally. She interrupted him roughly. "Give ut to me straight," she commanded. "I want ut jist the way ut is—no foolin', young man!"

Before he had time for second thought he was obeying her again. He told her just about as his father had told him. "That's the way he looks at it," he ended.

"And ye?" said Mother Kelly. "Phwhat d'ye think of Eagle Pass? Do ye figger ye can handle these men?"

"Of course I can!" he said, half angrily.

Mother Kelly gave him another long look, and her face seemed to soften a little. "Good Lord!" she said once more. Then: "Go back to the table. I'll have the grub on now."

She waited on them without another word. During the meal she did not speak. Smith seemed to be embarrassed; he was taciturn. Bob was puzzled and resentful. He found the food well cooked, though heavy; and his appetite had been sharpened by the mountain air. When they were done, Mother Kelly called from the stove:

"Smithy, if ye be half a man, ye'll talk wit' this bye to-night."

"Yes, ma'am," said Smithy. He smiled, turning to Bob. "Come on into the office; there's a fire there," said he.

"Mr. Smith," Bob said, when they were seated in the office, where a coal fire burned in one of the caboose stoves, a room where blue prints, clay-stained rubber boots, transits, levels, and rods occupied most of the available space, "what is the trouble with that woman?" He had his own bearing again, now that he was away from Mother Kelly.

Smith seemed disturbed, and did not answer for a moment. At length he said, stopping his pipe busily the whole: "Oh, Mother Kelly's always short. She's more or less of an institution out here. You see, she's kept a boarding house on public works for years, and usually for the men. So she's gotten into the habit of bossing."

Bob looked him in the eye. "See here," said he, "I don't mind telling you that I'm new to this sort of thing. I heard enough coming up the line this afternoon to make me know that the men don't like my being here. But I don't give a rap for *that*. But what is it that bothers you people Mrs. Kelly and you?"

"Ever handle men before?" asked Smith.

"No. Why?"

"Well"—Smith laid down his pipe "I'll tell you what it is: These men here—they're the toughest bunch I ever saw on railroad construction. They're not easy for any one to handle. Now they're sore because they lost their old superintendent, Carney. He was one of their own sort—came from their ranks. He was a thief. But he could handle them. Now, added to that soreness, comes the fact that you are—well, you're your father's son. You've come from back East. You've come to camp in good clothes. They'd make it hard for any one in Carney's job now. But you—well, they'll look on you as a dude, and they'll try and run all over you."

"Is that all?" Bob smiled. "Supposing I don't let them?"

Smith shook his head. "Circumstances are unusual up here," said he. "We're out of the world. There's a wild element in that bunch of drill runners. You're in charge. It's a case of you running them or they running you. Sort of like a man being locked into a cage along with a lot of lions."

"You mean," said Bob, "they might try and get rough, eh?"

"Exactly," said Smith. "That's it."

"What sort of ruction do you mean—a strike?"

"On hard-rock work," said Smith, "we don't have ordinary industrial disturbances. We've no unions or that

sort of thing. Now, if we were nearer other work, it might amount to a general quitting at 'drag day.' As it is, we're way out here alone, and the chances are the men will stay and raise a fine, large row just to let off steam and try you out. Lord knows just what they *will* do; they don't know themselves—only that they'll make trouble."

"What is drag day?" asked Bob.

"They get their time checks then if they want to," said Smith; "and, if they don't, the checks go to the general offices, and the pay comes back a week later. These time checks are negotiable, so any one who wants to knock off work or quit takes his and cashes it at a saloon. Drag day is always the day for trouble."

"I see," said Bob. "And drag day comes on the first?"

"Exactly."

The two were silent. Bob was struggling with anger and with the suggestions that Smith's information, coupled with the anecdote of McCarthysville, had brought.

"Well," said he, at length, "I'm obliged to you." He tapped the floor with the toe of his shoe. "I suppose there aren't officers in this part of the country?"

"Officers!" exclaimed Smith. "We're fifty miles from the nearest deputy sheriff, and if he came here those tarriers would eat him up!"

"Confounded scum!" Bob got up and walked the floor.

Smith shook his head. "They're bad ones, all right," said he. "And yet they aren't so bad, either. Now, I rather like them. But I'm used to them. You see——"

"I know this much"—Bob spoke between his teeth—"no crowd of thugs with dirty paws like them are going to run over me! I'll show them their places before I'm through with them!"

"Hope I haven't said anything to hurt you?" said the assistant.

"I'm glad you told me," Bob answered heartily. "Now that I understand the situation, I'm able to act. I'll run this camp before I'm through."

CHAPTER IV.

When Bob awoke the next morning, the heavy strokes of an ax were crashing in ferocious regularity underneath his window. He looked from his bed through the uncurtained pane, and saw the mountainside across the cañon, every tree sharp outlined in the morning sunshine, every rock standing clear against the bright-blue sky. The odor of the high places came to him, the perfume which exhilarates like some potent drug. He breathed it in luxuriously, and leaped out from the covers to dress. The water in the tin basin was stinging cold; the floor boards made his bare feet ache. When he had hurried downstairs, he found the dining room deserted. All others had breakfasted and gone to their work. He stepped outside to look for Mother Kelly.

She had finished her wood splitting, and now she was getting breath. With one hand on the ax handle, she stood. Bob saw her great bosom and shoulders heave as she drank in the air. Her short gray hair was bare; her arms were naked to the elbows; he marveled at those muscles, corded like a laborer's. She stooped now to pick up her first load of sticks.

From deep inside of Bob, where birth and breeding had placed it beyond erasure of forgetting, sprang a command which forbade him to stand by idle and see a woman do this. He stepped quickly over to the pile; he bent to take the wood away from her hand.

"Let me do that for you." His voice was pleasantly impersonal; he was uttering the words mechanically; they were a convention to be complied with as a matter of course. That was all.

Mother Kelly cast a look of astonishment at him; she straightened her back; it was to give her a chance to deliver her mind.

"Young man," said she, "I can pack more wood than three like you. Let them sticks be!"

Her tone was severe, commanding. Bob stood up; his cheeks were scarlet.

She bent and picked up the wood without more words. And now there

came into her manlike face—it flashed across her features for an instant like some old memory—a sudden softness; and a fainter pink crept over the hard, red sunburn on her cheeks. Her straight lips curved ever so slightly about the corners, as if femininity had crept outward from the hidden depths of her soul. Then she loaded on the wood, and marched up the steps bearing a burden that reached above her head. She droped it crashing into the box. She was once more the amazon, more masculine than any man.

But she said nothing back there at the stove. She cooked the eggs and bacon in silence; she brought them to the table and poured the coffee; she returned to bake the hot cakes. At last, when Bob was devouring these, she walked heavily down the room, pulled out a chair, and sat facing him.

"Lad," said she, "did Smithy talk wit' ye last night?"

There still remained in her voice a trace of that softness which had leaped to her face and vanished again. A bare trace, but it tempered the steellike tone. Had Mother Kelly yielded to her feelings then, she might have been maternal. Bob looked up at her. He did not know why; he did not recognize that alteration of demeanor; but he liked her better than he had the night before. He nodded his head.

"So?" said Mother Kelly. "Phwhat did he say?"

Bob frowned, and moved uneasily in his chair. He did not relish the subject.

"Well?" persisted Mother Kelly. The little softness had left her altogether now. She was a general interrogating a private soldier. But the old resentment did not return to Bob.

"Well," said he, "he told me about the men. They're angry because this fellow Carney, the old superintendent, is gone; and they don't like my looks. That's about the size of it. And they're going to make trouble on drag day."

"Jist so," said Mother Kelly. "He told ye right. They call ye the jude on the works already. Phwhat are ye goin' to do?"

Her eyes were bent on his. Bob answered what was in his heart:

"My father sent me here to drive tunnel and to run the camp. I'm going to do both." A deep, angry red was in his cheeks. His eyes were intolerant.

Mother Kelly doubled her fists, and planted them on her hips. She smiled grimly. "I'm glad to hear ye say that. On public works, wan man is boss, and that is all. Niver fergit ut, young man. But there is more. Ye have niver handled men?"

"I know engineering, and I understand construction work," said Bob.

"Listen," said Mother Kelly. "I have seen bosses come and bosses go. I've seen good men chased out of camps. I've seen smaller men than you be make bullies hard to catch. There is jist two things to l'arn: The men, and phwhat the men has to do. When ye tell thim to do a thing, ye must be sure of ut. If they see ye puzzled they'll know that they know more than ye do. L'arn the work.

"And l'arn thim hobos. Thim roughnecks down there in the hole is not machinery. They are a-working on the same job as ye be. They have their place, and ye have yours. If ye cannot hold your job, they will know ut; and they will break ye in two or make a fool of ye. If ye *can* run things, they will go through fire and brimstone fer ye."

Mother Kelly took her fists from her hips and leaned forward. "I tell ye because I want to see ye make good, young man. Now, hark: The men is sore because Carney was canned. They are a wild bunch. There is wan big hobo that is harder than anny of thim. Wild Martin, they call him. And well named he is. It is him or ye. If ye can show ye are the better man, ye will drive thim. If ye do not, Wild Martin will own the place. And he will drive ye aff the works. He will that."

"Wild Martin?" said Bob. "Ah, yes. I heard of him when I was coming on the freight train."

"A drill runner," said Mother Kelly. "As good a man as ever cranked a slugger. Ayther ye have him a-pulling rock

fer ye or he takes this bunch and pulls the camp up by the roots next drag day."

"Confounded swine!" Bob said, more to himself than Mother Kelly. She shook her head.

"Young man, they may be wild and all that. But their ways is not your ways. They was raised different. And don't forget that they can pull the rock."

She went back to the sink, where a pile of dishes awaited her. Bob finished his breakfast in silence. As he was rising to leave, Mother Kelly said, over her shoulder: "Go to the commissary and get gum boots and oilskins, and take aff that there white collar."

When he had gone, she shook her head over the dishes. "He's got a pannin' a-coming to him," she muttered. "But 'twill do him good—if they l'ave anny of him together after drag day."

Bob halted on the steps. He was anxious to get down to the work. And he was struggling with a desire to get away by himself and think things over. He wanted a definite plan of action. In the end, he obeyed the latter desire. Instead of taking Mother Kelly's advice at once, he turned and climbed up the mountainside.

The railroad traversed the divide between Napoleon and Eagle Pass by a switchback, over which it carried construction freight. The tracks zigzagged along the mountainside to the narrow ravine at the summit; stretched through this, and dropped down the opposite slope by a series of sharp angles.

Between these different "legs," a trail found a straighter line. Bob was walking slowly up this path. Nearly one thousand feet above him the switchback stretched on the third angle of its climb.

Far overhead the snowfields hung. They were newly white; they glistened in the morning sunshine. They were so huge and silent that as he raised his eyes toward them Bob felt as if he were in the presence of celestial things. Between him and these blanched expanses there showed a wall of rock, newly broken, sharp outlined, ugly, like a scar. This was the cut through which the railroad ran. He had made up his mind to go up there and think the situation over. Pausing now to rest and get his breath, Bob leaned against a ragged granite rock. His eyes went upward toward the railroad cut. Some one was moving up there.

Bob looked more sharply. It was the figure of a woman. From this distance it seemed to him as if she were crouching in the cut. He wondered what a woman would be doing in that place. Her attitude was peculiar. In it there was something—what it was he could not tell—suggesting danger or a struggle, something tense.

He took a long, deep breath, and climbed slowly on. He hoped that, whoever this was, the person would be gone before he arrived. He wanted to be by himself. He held his eyes to the trail; it was hard climbing, in his light shoes. Once he turned and looked back. He was surprised to see how far he had come. Eagle Pass lay remote beneath his feet; buildings were diminutive; men were moving puppets. He began his climb again.

Suddenly he paused. A sound had reached his ears. Was that a scream? He stared upward. The figure of the woman was crouching still. But, though it held the same position, he could see it moving violently. He distinguished the flutter of skirts. Down the mountainside came again—high-keyed, shrill—her scream for help.

CHAPTER V.

Bob sprang upward, and he uttered a single loud shout. With all the voice that he possessed, he called. Then he closed his lips tight. He shortened his steps; he clambered silently, doggedly.

Into the clear mountain air came a deep, throbbing pur. A low bass song, loud, resonant. It filled the wide spaces between the peaks; it made the living rock tremble. The beat of steel on steel, of wheels on rail joints; the battering of steam on metal, the bellow of a locomotive's exhaust. Far away, but drawing nearer. Even as Bob heard it, the train's roar grew louder.

Bob looked up, measuring the distance. More than three hundred feet to climb. He had spent a summer in Switzerland, enjoying Alpine climbing. He knew how slowly he had to go on this sheer slope.

Up and on upward. He held his eyes on the rocky trail, watching where each foot went; he saved his energies; he gulped in the rare air as a thirsty man gulps water.

The woman's scream came once more. "Hurry! Oh, *please* hurry!" He noticed, with a sickening hate and fear, how much louder the train's thunder was already. Evidently it was dropping down the grade from the summit. And she must be caught in some manner there on the track.

He was at the foot of the railroad embankment now. It was composed of loose rock, thrown here from the cut which they had made into the flank of the mountain. Fifty feet of it. The trail traveled upward on a slant. Bob left the path and leaped savagely by a straight line. The sharp fragments cut his shoes; they clogged at his spurning feet; they fell away in avalanches.

He reached the track. His knees were half doubling under him. His breath was coming in deep, painful gasps; the blood was pounding through his head. He had counted well on his energies; he had just made it. He staggered as he ran toward her.

She was prostrate now, and very still, huddled directly across the rail. She had fainted. He noticed in that moment —so oddly do details come in times of crisis—that she wore an outing costume of corduroy, whose color was a rich bronze tan. And mingled with that knowledge was another sight, caught through the side of his eye—a drifting cloud of black smoke where the track curved out of sight around the mountainside, four hundred yards away. And then, springing forward, he saw how one of her laced boots was firmly fixed between the guard rail and the rail.

The swift coughing of the locomotive beat upon Bob's ears. He swore aloud. The oath came from his lips like a sob. He plunged his hand into his pocket for his knife. He drew it out, scattering a little shower of coins and keys about him. He fought with the blade. It seemed to take him minutes to open that bit of steel. And into those minutes—making hours of them—came the tremble of the roadbed to the impact of the train.

Bob slashed at the boot laces. They parted; he cut again, and severed them down to the toe. The woman lay almost at right angles to the rail. Her ankle was twisted in its trap. Seizing her roughly, he fought with that ankle as if it were an enemy. He could not free it.

Bob felt the tears of rage and helplessness on his cheeks as he loosened his grasp. He would have to employ some other method. He used all his will to concentrate his mind upon this problem. Even as the solution came, and he was springing to his feet to execute it, he beheld the locomotive peering down upon them as it swept around the curve, four hundred yards away.

He bent and gripped her by the shoulders. He rose and he straightened her until she was upright, in his arms. He lifted her on higher. He forgot that he was panting from his climb and this exertion; he summoned new strength from the depths of his very soul. He held her limp body until her head was above his own; then on upward, nearly at arm's length. The tugging of that shoe between the rails resisted him. He heaved, leaping from his own feet. The tug had yielded.

As he pulled her close to himself, he saw the front of the locomotive looming wider and wider—the mass of metal, blind, insensate, driven by its scalding steam clouds—hurtling down upon the two of them. He dragged her with him from its path.

The train roared past them as they half fell together down the steep bank. A spatter of hot fog from the piston cocks, a bellow of drivers, then the clank of one box car after another. Bob sank down against the broken stone of the embankment. He knew that he was weak and out of breath.

He lay there for a moment, gasping.

It was done, and that was enough. The clanking box cars rushed by. With a shriek of brake shoes on wheels, they passed. And now it seemed strangely silent. The warm burden moved in his arms. He felt her breath upon his cheek. He relaxed his grasp, and now he saw her eyes open.

Brown eyes, so deep that they seemed like two black pools. A tinge of pink came back into the whitened cheeks. This was a girl; and now he saw that she was rarely beautiful.

Conventionalities came back to Bob. He was on his feet, bending over her, holding out his hand to help her rise.

"I hope you're not hurt badly." His voice sounded strangely stiff to him.

"Thank you," she said. "I fainted, didn't I? I can't tell you how much you have——"

"Please don't say anything. Were you hurt?" he asked again.

She shook her head. She was standing, now, beside him. The train, returning from the spur just beyond to go on down the switchback, thundered above their heads. They saw the engineer staring anxiously down at the two of them. The man's keen face relaxed; he waved his hand.

"It *was* a close call," said Bob. "How did it happen?"

She cast a sidelong glance at him. Her head was down.

"I was walking the rail," she said, like an ashamed child.

"But the boot? Couldn't you unlace it?" Bob looked puzzled.

"I broke the laces yesterday," said she, "and had to tie them. They wouldn't pull through the eyelets. I heard the train, and that frightened me. I tried to pull them by main force; and then I was so confused—and I had that locomotive in my ears all the time. After I called to you the second time, I didn't know anything." She shuddered, and put her hands before her face.

Bob stared at her, wondering. This girl, educated, gently bred, beyond all doubt one of those whose feet are designed to find the finer places of this earth—what could she be doing here in Eagle Pass?

"You must let me help you back to camp," said he.

"Oh," she exclaimed, "I must be hurrying. I'd forgotten." She started to take the first step down the hill, and stopped abruptly, looking at her stockinged foot. Bob turned quickly and ran up the embankment.

"I'd forgotten, too," said he, "about the boot."

He found it crumpled between the guard rail and the rail. In its trap it lay, torn and mangled. The sole was intact, and the counter. Only the upper was damaged by the wheels; they had torn it to ribbons.

When he had handed it to her, she turned pale. Then he saw her close her lips tightly, as if she were driving away the thought of what might have happened. But she said, in a low voice: "You were very brave."

She brushed the dust from the boot and bent down to try it on her foot. "I can wear it down to camp," she said. "Now," she added briskly, when she had made it fast as well as possible, "I'm all right, and I can go on down alone. No! Don't think of coming with me. Good-by. And thank you." And she hurried down the mountainside.

CHAPTER VI.

Mike Moran was the day walking boss at Eagle Pass, a little man, bent; and he had a shrewd, quick face. His voice was harsh, like one piece of metal grating on another. The hard-rock men called him a mole; he spent nearly all of his waking hours underground.

"We're fifteen hundred foot, and a little better," said he. "Napoleon has got to the thousand-foot station. They're pullin' more than we do now. Rock's a-runnin' even, too. But the men is not on the work. The half of them is bumming downtown; and the others is not a-jumping into their collars at all."

He voiced the dissatisfaction to Bob almost listlessly, as if it were a detail like Bob's arrival, a part of the job, something which he had to encounter.

Bob, in his new oilskins and rubber

boots—and wearing a flannel shirt in place of the white-collared one—listened to these things in the walker's office. He had come, in accordance with Mother Kelly's advice, to learn those two things—the work and the men.

"We'll take a look inside," said Moran.

On their way to get the muck train they stopped at the timber sheds. A dozen men were busy with adzes and crosscut saws; in the air was the odor of fresh chips.

Bob noted how the men cast sidelong glances at him, as if he were a curiosity; they bent again to their toil, ignoring his presence. They paid no attention to Moran unless he spoke to one of them. Then his words brought some immediate action or reply.

The walker had a manner which was new to Bob. He was with these men familiar, and, at the same time, he held a certain dignity. The familiarity came when he called them by their first names; asked questions or talked over what they were doing. Sometimes he even passed a jest with one of them. The dignity was ever present—partly in his tone, but chiefly in his bearing. When he said a thing it was as a certainty; he spoke it as a fact. Because he said it, it was so.

The muck train came along; they boarded it at the blacksmith-shop platform, hard by the portal of the tunnel. It roared on into the darkness. Damp winds smote their cheeks; at rare intervals an incandescent lamp on a roof segment overhead flashed behind. The train dropped swiftly down the grade and stopped abruptly under the jumbo at the foot of the bench.

They were driving Eagle Pass tunnel with a heading and bench. The latter rose some fifty feet nearer the portal than the former. It was a shelf of rock extending halfway from the floor to the roof. Near the edge of this bench, upon its summit, the tripod machines hammered their holes almost straight downward.

Bob and Moran climbed to the top of the jumbo, the huge movable platform standing between the bench and the tunnel mouth. From this a plank gangway stretched across the interval to the summit of the bench whereon the tripod machines were roaring like rapid-fire guns. A line of muckers were wheeling rock-laden barrows across this bridge.

Bent-shouldered, their bodies drooping to the weight of the wheelbarrows, these toilers came on in a seemingly never-ending procession. As fast as they reached the jumbo they dumped the loads down a chute; the broken rock roared into the muck car beneath.

Bob watched the line of toilers, black in their oilskins. His eyes went to the line of drills that bellowed on the summit of the bench. Above them the roof timbers ended; the ceiling here was of the living rock. Electric lamps hung from it. Moisture dripped through seams. In the yellow rays of the incandescents the drill runners stood upon their rocking tripods; about them rose the fog of condensed air from the exhausts. Huge men, wearing the inevitable black oilskins; their faces were dark with lubricating oil and spattered muck. And the very mountain seemed to shake with the bellowing of the steel upon its granite bosom.

The line of wheelbarrows was returning, emptied, across the gangplank. Moran and Bob followed in its wake. They passed among the cannonading of the tripod machines. They were in a rock-girt chamber—a cavern. And men in black oilskins—big-boned men, wide-shouldered, gigantic—were toiling before them at the heading's breast.

These were the heading runners. Their burleys, made fast to upright columns, pointed horizontally, like cannon, against the rock, thundered deep salvos as they bit their way into the granite. The runners stood at the cranks, immobile, impassive, until some bit of work demanded other attention. Then they threw themselves upon the steel or the rock, and fought rather than labored.

There was in all these men something which impressed Bob. At their work here, among these bellowing machines in the bowels of this mountain, that hardness of theirs, and that wantonness of reckless speech had been

transformed. It was no longer the hardness of the thug; it had become—in this spot where it was demanded—a sort of dignity. The spirit of their work was in them.

The shift boss, who had been helping one of the heading runners point his machine, came over to Moran. The walker pointed to Bob. Putting his mouth close to the ear of the shift boss, he shouted an introduction. A moment later the three of them walked back to the jumbo.

They stood upon the platform of heavy timbers talking in shouts. Bob noticed how the shift boss looked him over in swift appraisement. He remembered Mother Kelly's words; it was the men or he, one or the other; and he had his fight laid out ahead of him.

"Shaky ground ag'in," the shift boss was shouting. "I think we ort to change that powder. Mebbe Judson."

"I w'u'd say Hercules," yelled Moran. The pair of them began to argue over details. Bob listened idly. Moran beckoned to him. "Casey, here, he says Judson," he shouted. "Wot do ye think?"

Hercules or Judson? Bob did not know either explosive. Nor did he know the rock itself yet. He had no idea of his own on this subject. He looked the shift boss in the eye.

"Hercules," he cried, without an instant's hesitation. "If the rock is what it looks to me."

And now he saw, over the face of the shift boss, an expression like satisfaction. As if the man thought more of Bob than he had thought a moment before.

It was the first encounter. He had made good. He thanked Mother Kelly.

He stayed with Moran on the work all that day. He watched the men. He saw that reckless swagger of these giants where it belonged now. It was good to look at it. When they had shot the cut-up in the heading, he saw the big runners hurry in to load the side rounds. He followed them into the thick nitro fumes. His head swam; it was all he could do to stand. He saw one of the runners—a blear-eyed fellow with a face all scarred by powder burns—crumple in a heap. When they had carried the man out and revived him, the fellow laughed, cursed loudly, spat, and went on in again.

And, watching these things, Bob felt his confidence becoming stronger. These were the men whom he had to master. They seemed willing enough to work; glad to do it. He told himself that he could handle *them,* all right.

CHAPTER VII.

When Bob came to Mother Kelly's for supper that night, the dining room was alight and alive with the clatter of dishes mingled with the noise of conversation. Several men were seated about the long table near the door, among them the shift boss whom he had advised to use Hercules powder. These men were in their working clothes, but their hair was plastered tight from much brushing, and their faces shone from soap and water. At Mother Kelly's boarding house there was not the free-and-easy table behavior that ruled in the company's cook shanty.

One or two of the bosses nodded at Bob as he passed by. He acknowledged their salutations absently. His eyes were on the engineers' table. There, seated next to Smith and opposite Moran, the day walker, was the girl whom he had rescued that morning.

He felt a warm flush coming into his cheeks as he bowed to her. He had wondered who she might be; and whither she had gone when she left him up there on the mountainside; what had brought her to Eagle Pass. Now she was sitting here—and his empty chair was beside hers. Life was a fine thing! Even now, in the midst of its first hard struggle, it held great hopes—vague hopes, that he could not place, and did not try to name, that lured him and made him forget all other things.

She looked more beautiful to him than she had looked that morning. Her cheeks were brighter; her eyes had more light. But in her bearing now, as she smiled on him, was something that he rebelled against; although it

made him more eager—an independence. As if she were mistress of the situation now, no longer leaning on him, but ready to command him.

Indeed, it was clear enough that she was in command here; holding her little court. Smith's face lighted as he spoke to her; he was—even in that first moment Bob felt it in Smith's demeanor—her ardent admirer. Moran and Smith's rodman were self-conscious in her presence. They regarded their knives and forks as if they dreaded the slightest error in their food handling. And, when she addressed a word to one of them, that one would look up quickly, reply in an embarrassed monosyllable, then bend scrupulously to his knife and fork again.

The girl was serene; and she was happy in her serenity. Mother Kelly, busy as she was, attending to the various wants about the room, was finding time to hover over her. And now, when Mother Kelly looked at this girl, her own large face grew soft, more feminine.

And it so happened that as these things come to him, Bob felt in the thrill that seized him on sight of her, a little throb like pain. It was as if she had belonged to him alone up there on the mountainside; and now he saw others sharing that precious possession.

But Bob walked down the room with a smile, which belied all his own feelings—a smile of ordinary pleasant greeting. He took refuge behind the mask of conventionality. Thus hiding his own heart and soul, he got a formal introduction to her at the hands of Smith.

She was Miss Lowden; and she was the school-teacher at Eagle Pass.

"I didn't know," he said, as he took his seat, "that we had a school here." And now his tone was proprietary—he was the superintendent. Thus he incased himself in more armor, and strove to shut his feelings deeper within himself.

"Oh, yes," Smith was speaking, "there are four or five families now: Doctor Daulton, Nolan, the storekeeper, and—let me see——"

"The Murphys and the Hansons," she interrupted. "Ten children altogether."

For some reason or other Bob thought she did not seem particularly impressed with his importance. He was glad that she didn't allude to the morning's accident; but he wished that she had showed more feeling at learning his identity. In some intangible way she seemed to be arrayed against him. The idea that she, too, might be on the defensive never occurred to him.

And now he found himself talking in commonplaces to her. What was more, Smith, on the other side of her, was competing with him. In fact, Smith seemed to have the best of it. The assistant was standing on the firm footing of old acquaintance. Were those two sweethearts? Bob wondered if that were not the case. And, if it were, what business was it of his? But the idea hurt him. He wished that he did not like Smith so well.

Moran and the rodman were silent. They had no social experience, no conventionalities behind which to hide, no little things to say. They only knew that they could not utter their sentiments of frank admiration to this girl's daintiness and beauty; that they could not put their reverence toward her femininity in words. So they kept silent.

At length the day walker found a subject with which to break his stifling dumbness. Bob and he had talked of the cordwood lagging which the timber gang were getting down from the mountainside that day. He brought up that subject now. The two discussed it; and Bob talked at random, for he heard Smith and Miss Lowden in rapid conversation beside him.

After all, if one rescues a girl in the morning, he ought to have some chance to monopolize her at dinner. Bob broke off abruptly from his talk with Moran. A slight stiffness was upon him; he was taking the part of his position in this camp; he was the host.

"You like it up here?" he asked.

"Ever so much." Miss Lowden's enthusiasm was unmistakable. "And you?" She flashed her dark eyes at him. He felt his dignity threatened.

"I can't say that I do, exactly," he said. "I should think *you'd* find it lonely—among all these men."

"The men!" She laughed. "Why, they're ever so good to me!"

The idea of that pack being good to any one quite took Bob's breath. He listened in silence while she described various clumsy courtesies on the part of the drill runners.

The shift bosses at the other table were leaving the room. Smith and Miss Lowden had finished their supper now, and were sitting before empty plates. Mother Kelly spoke from her place back by the stove.

"Smithy," said she, "I want ye to go down and get my mail."

"Good!" said Miss Lowden; "I'm going down to see Mrs. Daulton." She turned to Bob. "Won't you come with us, Mr. King; and meet the doctor?"

"I'd like to," he answered.

A few minutes later, Miss Lowden, with Smith on one side and Bob on the other, walked down the hill. The route to the post office led past the row of saloons which made up most of the town portion of Eagle Pass. Although it was well past one pay day and a long time before the next, many men were loafing about these places, because of the general dissatisfaction. As Moran had put it, they were "bumming downtown."

Two or three groups of these men were on the narrow sidewalk. They were discussing bosses and giant powder and rock and steel. They were talking loudly. And now, as the three approached one of these groups, Bob heard an oath. He clenched his fists; his face flushed; his eyes became intolerant.

The man who had uttered the oath raised his hand to emphasize his words. In the middle of that gesture he looked around. His eyes fell on Miss Lowden. As if lightning had struck him, his voice stopped. His arm hung poised. He stood, hand upraised, immobile, dumb. The others in the group, glancing in the same direction, stepped to one side with heavy celerity. Their huge hands swept to their oilskin hats. The man who had been swearing became alive again. He jerked his hand upward, touching the brim of his sou'wester.

Passing this little crowd and others, Bob noticed how Miss Lowden and Smith took all these things as a matter of course; the roughness of the men, and their sudden endeavors to conceal that roughness in the girl's presence.

The post office was also a drug store. Doctor Daulton—"the doctor" was the name by which he usually went in Eagle Pass—was sorting the mail as they entered. He finished that task, came out behind the counter, and was introduced to Bob.

Daulton's hair was showing its first gray; a dark-eyed Englishman, tall, with that distinction of bearing which Britons in the professions or in the army so frequently possess. In the course of the first five minutes' talk, it developed that he was an Oxford man.

Presently Miss Lowden went off to the residence portion of the building to discuss matters juvenile with Mrs. Daulton.

"Come in and have a smoke," said the doctor, and led the way behind the prescription case, where there were chairs and a table.

"Now, sit down and help yourselves," Daulton invited, as he placed cigars and refreshments on the table. The three of them sat down around it. They were screened from the front of the store.

"No question about it," said the doctor abruptly, "this next first *is* going to be a drag day!" He bent his dark eyes on Bob. "You won't have a baker's dozen on hand when the morning of the second comes."

Smith smiled and puffed at his cigar. Bob looked up curiously.

"I wish," said he, "one of you would tell who's behind it all."

"Wild Martin," said Smith tersely.

The doctor nodded. "Quite right," said he. "Just now, Mr. King, it's a question of who's going to boss this camp—you or Wild Martin."

Bob remembered what Mother Kelly had told him; he recalled the words in the caboose the previous afternoon.

"That fellow," said he, "seems to be

making a lot of disturbance. What's he like?"

The doctor smiled, and answered slowly: "I've known him in two other camps. Just now he's running a machine in the heading. He's a good man, too—when he's on the work. He and his bunch are devils, if they get started downtown. This Wild Martin is the toughest of them. It's bad now, with this ill feeling since Carney was discharged. It's a question in my mind whether they'll tear this camp to pieces."

Smith nodded. The front door opened. The doctor looked through the little pane of glass in the prescription case which he used as a peephole. He raised his hand, with a gesture warning them to silence; and went out to the store. Smith glanced through the pane. He bent to Bob.

"Wild Martin," he whispered.

The man stood in front of the counter. He loomed in that small interior; he dwarfed his surroundings; the doctor looked like a boy in contrast to him. Martin was more than six feet in height; and yet so wide were his shoulders that the general impression he gave was that of a rather short man. His chest was like the chest of a bull.

His squam hat was back, and tilted to one side. Beneath the brim, a shock of black hair shot forward. His face was big-boned, heavy. And there was in it a liveness that made one who looked at it forget the heaviness; a sort of fierce recklessness. A scowl cleft the forehead; and, making him more sinister, a long, ragged scar ran from the corner of one eye down across the cheek.

He was holding one hand before him; it was rudely bandaged. He spoke; his voice was deep, from his big chest.

"I've cut me hand a bit, doctor. I want ye to fix it up."

The doctor bent over the counter. He unwrapped the bandage.

"Great Scott!" he exclaimed. "I should say you had cut it! Come back with me; I'll have to take some stitches."

The doctor started toward the prescription case. Wild Martin followed him. As they entered the little space in the rear, the giant glanced at Smith, and nodded. His eyes fell on Bob; they lingered there. The two men looked each other over.

Bob was sitting in his chair at the little table. His cheeks were like satin; his curved lips were pressed a little tighter than usual; his eyes were full of something near to contempt. A vast intolerance possessed him. Standing there before him, holding his injured hand in the other huge palm, Wild Martin scowled down upon him. In his eyes was a sort of fierce, wanton rebellion, like a sneer.

The doctor was busy with a basin, water, and antiseptic tablets. Over his shoulder he jerked a question:

"How in the world did you manage to do it?"

"Tuk a punch at a fellow, an' put me fist t'r'u' a pane o' glass," said the giant carelessly. The corners of his heavy mouth curled back; his big teeth showed.

The doctor dropped some curved needles in another basin of water. "Here," said he, "roll up your sleeve." He washed the big hand carefully; then: "It's going to hurt!"

"Go to it," said Wild Martin, "I'm used to it."

The doctor thrust the curved needle through the thick skin. He used considerable strength to do it. Wild Martin grinned down upon him. One stitch, then another; a third. The giant showed no sign of pain. Seven stitches in all. He shrugged his shoulders when Daulton, wrapping the clean linen bandages, asked him if it pained him. He swaggered out.

"He'll lie around drunk and never change those bandages unless I happen to run across him and make him," said Daulton. "And that wound will heal."

"Like a dog's," said Bob. "He's just an animal." He pulled out his handkerchief and wiped several drops of perspiration from his forehead.

"That would have made me howl, I think," said Smith.

"No," said the doctor. "Neither of you would howl. You've got too much nerve. A different kind than Martin's

nerve. But, let me tell you something —both sorts are good."

"Well," said Smith to Bob, "that's the trouble maker. What do you think?"

"For the life of me," said Bob, "I can't see anything in him to make a fuss about, nothing extraordinary at all. He's bigger than most of them. But he's just like the rest of them, as far as I can see." He shrugged his shoulders. "I'm not worrying about handling such brutes."

The doctor did not look altogether satisfied. He changed the subject. "We'll go in and join the ladies," said he.

They passed a pleasant evening in Daulton's little parlor. Gentle faces and surroundings made Bob feel more comfortable than he had out there behind the prescription case. It was late before the three of them left. Walking homeward with Miss Lowden and Smith, he felt a soreness come into his heart.

Those two were close companions. And there were times when they talked of mutual friends or little projects of their own.

That night Bob lay awake for a long time. A savage loneliness had come over him. And he felt a throb of pain almost like jealousy.

CHAPTER VIII.

"I expect you to make good." His father's words came up before Bob often during the first few weeks. As yet he was not making good.

The men were leaving the work from day to day. The drill runners were the most frequent among these offenders. And the drill runners were the ones who pulled the rock. Without them, there was no muck to carry out; they bored the holes and fired the shots, which increased the tunnel's length. Now one would leave; the next day two; and so on. And none of them came back. They remained downtown in the saloons.

This brought one result. It showed in the weekly progress report. Napoleon, across the mountain, was driving tunnel steadily. Eagle Pass was driving less and less every week.

And, as yet, the trouble had not started. That was the way that Mother Kelly put it. That was the way Smith looked at it. Bob liked his assistant; he found him a capable engineer, accurate, experienced in the little problems of tunnel work. Also, he could talk freely with Smith, who was—for all his carelessness regarding shaving and clothes—of his own sort. Talking freely, he got frank answers. Smith looked for some sort of outbreak.

"Wait," said he, "until Wild Martin and his gang break loose."

The more Bob thought of it, the angrier he became. The fact that he was beginning to realize how deeply he cared for Miss Lowden did not help to assuage that irritation at all. And so he began to ask himself: "Who is this Wild Martin, anyway?"

A thick-skinned, drunken rowdy, who thrust his hamlike fist through window glasses, swilled whisky, rioted. And every one was wondering whether this big hoodlum would leave the camp standing.

Tossing in his blankets on the last night of the month, Bob pondered over this fact. Then suddenly——

"By Jove," he muttered, aloud, "I think I'll do something myself. If drag day is bothering every one, I'll see that they aren't worried."

With which, he smiled in the darkness; the smile was no longer bitter. It was confident; full of the serenity and self-certainty of youth. A few minutes later he went to sleep, satisfied.

The next morning he was up early. Before breakfasting he walked down to the commissary. The little building, in which the company sold clothing, tobacco, and other necessaries, as well as keeping all the accounts and time, was locked. Bob knocked. The commissary agent let him in—a small man, old in clerical work, bald-headed.

"We're getting ready for drag day," he explained. "We don't let them in until nine o'clock."

"Good!" said Bob. "I came down to see about that. Why does the company

allow the men to draw time checks instead of waiting for their pay?"

"That," said the commissary, "is the law. When a man quits his job, he has a right to his time check within thirty days from the time he started on the work."

"Exactly," Bob said crisply. "Now, did all these fellows start on the first?"

"Very few." The commissary glanced up wonderingly over his eyeglasses. "Why?"

"When did they start?" Bob demanded.

"Well, most of them came on the pay roll about the eighth. You see, it's this way: Many drag on the first. Those can't go to work until the tenth, according to the rules. Others wait for their pay checks. And those others usually go downtown and stay there for three days or so."

"We lose about ten days a month." Bob's voice was full of intolerance.

"Just about," the other assented.

"Well," Bob smiled confidently upon him, "I'm going to put a stop to this foolishness. I wish you'd type some notices for me now. I'll sign them."

They stepped over to the typewriter. Bob dictated, the commissary hammered on the keys. The commissary's face showed more worry as he went on. When he had struck off several sheets, Bob signed them.

"Post them on your door and about the camp, wherever they place the orders," he said. "Good morning."

He walked back to Mother Kelly's boarding house, whistling. His heart was light. He had settled this affair.

The commissary stood reading the notice which he was holding in his hand. He went over it several times. The lines of worry deepened on his forehead. He sighed heavily.

"Well," he said aloud, "I can't help it."

He took a hammer and some tacks and went to the door. He posted the sheet of paper. It read:

NOTICE.

On and after date men leaving the company's employment will get their time checks at the end of thirty days from the time they went on the pay roll.

(Signed) ROBERT KING, Supt.

This order takes effect to-day!

The exclamation point was the commissary's contribution to the document; and it had come unconsciously.

Bob entered the dining room, whistling. Mother Kelly looked up from the stove. "You're early," said she. "Moran and the bosses is the only wans has been in here."

"I've been down on the work," said Bob.

Something in his tone made Mother Kelly look sharply at him. She saw the sureness in his smile.

"Humph!" said she, and went on with her cooking. When she came with the bacon and eggs, she cast another searching glance at his face. "Now, young man, phwhat have ye been up to?"

She stood beside him, her big shoulders looming over him; her hard manlike face looked down on him, and back of the severity was a sort of worry, as of a parent catechizing a willful child.

Bob turned in his chair to face her. The feeling that he had settled things was strong in him just now; and he had cherished rebellious thoughts of Mother Kelly during the past few hours. He spoke quietly, coolly:

"I've abolished drag day."

If he had thrown his plate at Mother Kelly, he could not have taken her more aback. She even retreated for a step; she caught her breath sharply. Then her lips went tight; and, as if she were controlling herself with some difficulty, she said very evenly:

"Ye have? And how did ye do ut?"

Bob told her of the notices; he quoted the wording.

"Well!" said Mother Kelly, "ye *have* bit aff a chunk *this* time!"

Bob's anger returned. "I think," he said stiffly, "there's too much fuss being made here about the men. Every one seems to think they're the one thing on this job; there's been nothing but wondering what they're going to do, when they please to get drunk, ever since I came here."

"Jist so," said Mother Kelly. She seemed to struggle with herself for a moment, trying to hold down something that wanted to find utterance. In the end she walked heavily back to the stove. There she banged the dishes and tins as if she were taking it out on them. After some time at this sort of thing she came over to the table again.

"Jist what d'ye figger the min is goin' to do when they rade this here notice?" she asked.

"That's just what I don't care," said Bob. "If they chose to quit, they can do so. If they chose to keep on working, they can do so. If any one gets fussy about it, I mean to discharge him. I don't care how many of that sort there are. I'll fill their places."

Mother Kelly walked away, and she said nothing more to him. To herself she muttered: "And I've an idee he'll stand pat."

Bob finished his breakfast and walked down to the work. He passed the commissary. A crowd of men—some fifty steel drill runners for the most part—stood in front of the door. As he passed, one or two turned their heads and saw him. Immediately the word flashed around. The others whirled in their tracks to regard him. Their big, reckless faces were fierce; in their eyes shone sullen, lurking devils.

"Stiddy, byes," growled a voice among them. "Wait till Martin comes down."

Bob did not hear the last words; he had noted the looks. He shrugged his shoulders as he went on to the walker's office. He spent the day in here and about the machine shop. He was busy looking over the mechanical end of the plant. Occasionally he noticed groups of men in oilskins coming down the hill from the bunk houses. The groups were quieter than usual. They seemed to be discussing their grievance with a desire not to be overheard. All day long, in front of the commissary, there was a crowd whose numbers varied from time to time. And, like the groups, it, too, was strangely quiet.

The day walker mentioned the subject of the notices during the morning.

"I got an idee," said Moran, almost listlessly, "that there'll be somethin' doin' before we're t'r'u' wit pay day."

Bob looked at him. The day walker's face was calm; he had mentioned it as he would speak of any detail on the work. And he offered no further comment on the matter.

At supper that night, Smith greeted him more warmly than usual. Miss Lowden was dining with the Daultons, and the two men sat side by side. The assistant showed a sort of friendly regard for Bob, as if Bob were in some sort of deep trouble. But Smith did not speak of drag day at all. He did make one remark, however, after they had been discussing late current fiction in the office after supper, that roused Bob.

"If I were you," said Smith, "I'd look about a bit going out after dark. The men are ugly."

"Oh, hang the men!" said Bob. "I'm sick of hearing about them."

Smith shrugged his shoulders, and said no more. However, he reported this conversation next morning to Mother Kelly.

"He's got a lot to l'arn," said she. "And, Smithy, I think he'll l'arn ut quick."

CHAPTER IX.

"Shorty" Carraher, the night walker, was talking to Mike Moran in the general foreman's office, before taking charge. As short as Moran, he was built along wide lines. His face was like a burl of oak; and his hair was spiky. Unlike Moran, he preferred to live near the men, in whose ranks he had toiled for years. He slept in one of the bunk houses, and ate at the company boarding hall. His habits on the work were similar to those of his companion—he was a mole, save at semi-yearly intervals, when he took a week or ten days off, and, as he expressed it, "went on a drunk." Just now he was sober, and imbued with the spirit of the work; the job was the big thing with both of them.

"Ten min in the headin' and a dozen

on the bench," said he, "and by to-morrow mornin' the bulk av *thim* will quit. The rock is runnin' even, too. Divil take these judes; that's phwhat I say."

Moran nodded dispassionate agreement. "I got an idee," said he, "that whin the checks comes to-morrow, they'll stay downtown. They'll start to tear things loose on your trick, Shorty."

Carraher grinned, and ran his thick fingers through his spiky hair. "I wonder how long this boy of papa's is a-going to last."

"Ask me," said the day walker. "I dunno. Only I got a hunch, Shorty. I blowed into the boardin' house last evenin' and caught Mother Kelly blowin' off steam. She was a-pitchin' into him, she was. And, says he to her, when she asked him if he w'u'd give in: 'Not in ten thousand years,' he says. I got a notion he meant it, too."

"A-workin' short-handed! And the worst of it is, the min is a-setting round on beer kags downtown a-lickin' their chops and waitin' fer their checks to buy whisky wit'. And the longer they wait, the more they growl; and the more they growl the meaner they get. Wild Martin, he was wise, he was, whin he helt them aff. 'Wanst they get a few drinks under their belts, they will be wilder than him." Carraher swore a mighty oath. "I wisht him and thim divils of his was in the headin' this night. Ye ort to hear thim muckers that the jude had me put on the sluggers. Wan of thim Greeks is about as handy wit' a burley as a cow wit' a shotgun. Well, I'm aff inside. So long."

The work was quiet enough, and had been since drag-day morning. Quiet for lack of thundering drills on bench and in the heading; silent about the blacksmith shop when the decimated shifts went in; even the timber sheds, whose gangs included the steadiest men at Eagle Pass, were partly emptied. And the town was silent enough, too. The saloons were filled with men. But these men were doing no rioting. Only cash bought whisky in Eagle Pass. And there was no cash. The crowds of hard-faced giants sat about, eyes on the battered bars, waiting. They were like a pack of hungry wolves, sitting about a camp fire, within whose ring of light they dared not venture. Something wolflike was also present in their tones. They did not talk, they rather snarled.

In the meantime Bob had preserved an unruffled demeanor. He ate his meals, smiling as he talked with Miss Lowden or Smith. He whistled when he walked about the work. He spent the most of his working hours about the tunnel and the shops. He was engrossed in many little details, to learn which was pleasant, details about machinery and power. He was also busy with an experiment; he had ordered muckers and helpers put on the drills. Watching to see whether these could learn the business of rock handling, he was acquiring that knowledge much faster than these duller laborers did. For the life of him, he could not understand why they should not grasp it.

Pay-day morning came, and the checks arrived. The company paid at the little depot; its platform was black with men all day. As fast as one crowd got its wages, another came to take its place. Those departing went straight to the saloons. The excitement of this occasion drew many to the row of board structures, who had been staying away for months.

Each of these saloons consisted of one long room, near whose front was a bar of unpainted pine, about whose sides were gambling tables, up and down whose floor men danced to the music of ancient and time-worn pianos. The women who helped out in such revelries were scarce in Eagle Pass. The camp was remote, and winter was coming on. As a consequence, the dancing was of the sort indulged in among the lumber camps, stag dancing. The giants waltzed together, clumsily, boisterously, with stamp of booted feet which made the floor joists shake.

By noontime all the gambling games were running full blast; the long floors were filled with waltzers; the long bars were lined with hard-faced rockworkers, who tossed their liquor down their thick throats as if it had been water. The row of one-story buildings roared

like a row of gigantic hives. And through these roaring crowds, carousing, drinking, whooping with all of them, Wild Martin and a half dozen companions ranged all day long. Where they went, noise swelled like water boiling in a vessel's wake.

Shorty Carraher—"sober, and on the job," as he expressed it—passed on his way to the post office in the early afternoon. He was just up from his day's sleep. Shorty did not often go for mail. And this time he lingered about the saloons, idling in the door of one, entering another, and watching the boiling crowds. He refused a dozen invitations to drink, rejecting those of the more quiet among his friends with a word; spurning the importunities of too-enthusiastic ones by physical force. He stayed for some time. When he came back to the deserted dump he was whistling between his teeth, and gazing thoughtfully at the mountain tops. He nearly collided with Mike Moran.

"Well?" said the day walker. "How's tricks?"

"Been downtown?" Shorty countered. Moran shook his head. The night walker thrust back his squaw hat to run his stubby fingers through his spiky hair. "Mike," he said quietly, "I niver heard more n'ise; and I never seen so little fightin' among the min. It looks bad. They're swilling drink and a-roaring like so many bulls—and," he spoke slowly now, "saving up all the hell that is inside of their hides."

"Oh, they'll tear things loose; all right, to-night," said Moran quietly; and then, with as little interest in his voice: "The new super is inside. He's got eight Greeks, a-tryin' to l'arn thim to run drills."

"No headin' boss?" asked Carraher.

Moran shook his head. "Not a boss fer headin', nor bench. I'm busy outside, and this bye is in the hole. He's made three set-ups himself already. Ye ort to see thim! At this rate, he'll l'arn to be a good runner before he's t'r'u'."

"Son of a gun sticks," said Carraher. "I kind of like him fer ut. If only he had some sinse!"

"Well"—Moran grinned—"we'll see what comes of ut. I guess we'll lose a building or two. Here comes the muck train. Look at that, w'u'd ye! I'm going inside wit' ut."

A dark-skinned man, whose father's sheep ranged some Bulgarian hillside, was doing his best to handle the electric motor that drew the cars. Moran leaped aboard and took the controller from him. Inside the tunnel he found Bob smeared with black oil, plastered with muck, wielding a shovel to bare a portion of the solid rock for the placing of a tripod. Bob smiled up at him, seized the moment to jerk out a command to one of the handful of laborers, and went on with his toil.

Moran said nothing of his talk with Carraher. He bent his back along with the new superintendent, and the pair had the set-up complete within a short time. When the drill was hammering staccato against the granite, with a mucker on the tripod, Bob leaped down the bench and turned his attention to the handful of laborers under the jumbo. He remained inside all day. At supper time he appeared in Mother Kelly's dining room, wearing his rough clothes and rubber boots.

He dropped into a chair, and it seemed to him as if he could not hold his back straight. His face, now that the muck and oil had been washed away, was whiter than usual, and drawn. Sitting there alone at the table—for it was early, and none of the others had come yet—he sighed heavily. Mother Kelly glanced at the hand which he stretched out to receive his plate.

"Show me them hands," said she.

Bob smiled faintly, and stretched out both palms. Two raw, red patches showed on each, where blisters had broken and bled. A long, ragged cut traversed one. He moved his fingers stiffly; the movement brought him pain. Mother Kelly gave him a grim look.

"It will do ye good, young man," she said, and went for the coffee. And as she went, her face lighted, and she whispered to herself: "He has the rale stuff, he has."

Smith and Miss Lowden came in while Bob was busy over his plate. He

tried to talk with them, and found that even speech was a task for him now.

Moran came in. "Well," said he, "we got a dozen inside to-night."

Bob's head went back. His eyes grew hard with the old intolerance. "I'll fill the shifts within ten days," said he. "I'll give these fellows their chance first. And it will be their last."

The walker nodded, as if it were all one to him, and fell to work at his supper.

With that speech of Bob's, silence descended upon the dining room. A silence, broken only by Mother Kelly's heavy-footed stride, or by occasional sharp attacks which she made on the porcelain. It was as if some one had brought up a subject that was taboo.

Smith was the first to break it. He made some commonplace remark about the weather. To which Moran replied:

"'Twill snow inside of two or three days—rale snow this time, too." In his tone was the effort of one who is striving to keep up the talk.

Miss Lowden stole a glance at Bob, as if she dreaded for him. She leaped to the subject which Moran had suggested, and chattered aimlessly about the depth of the last winter's drifts.

And all their minds were on one thing - all save Bob's. These others were thinking of the men downtown, drunken, roaring, and yet not rioting, as they always rioted before. Roaring louder every minute, growing more ugly as the hours went on. Like a mountain flood about to break a jam and tear its way on downward, destroying as it came.

Bob, his thoughts upon the tunnel, engrossed in that problem of his, on driving that hole from which the drill runners had deserted, hardly noticed what was being said around him. He knew the men were downtown, and drunk; and that was all. And, had any of these others told him more, he could not have understood it.

"Are you going to keep a snowfall record like last winter's?" Miss Lowden asked Smith.

"Of course," the assistant was replying, "I always——" He got no further. The front door banged open. All of them turned in their chairs. Shorty Carraher, the night walker, stood on the threshold. His spiky head was bare; his eyes were shooting sparks in his excitement; his breath came in deep gasps, as if he had been running.

"Quick!" he shouted. "The min is coming! They're howlin' drunk! They're going to burn the commissary!"

His news brought a mighty yell from Mother Kelly, a gasping cry from Miss Lowden.

Bob was the first to gain the door. He did not hear Moran and Smith running after him. Nor did he hear Miss Lowden's exclamation; nor Mother Kelly's shout. His mind was working swiftly, concentrated on what had happened, on its cause.

Through his thoughts, one sentence, born of nothing tangible, result of no process that was conscious, kept running. "I've done it, now," he told himself over and over. And he wondered what his father would think when the news of damage came back to New York.

Aloud, he said quietly to Carraher: "All right. Let's get down there as quickly as we can."

They ran down the hill. And still he did not hear the steps of Smith and Moran behind him. He only knew that he was running through the gathering darkness to save the property for which he was responsible. Once, as they ran, he asked a question:

"Have we time?"

"Jist time," called Carraher. "I got the word as they was a-starting out. Wild Martin is at the head of the pack av thim."

"I'll stop them," Bob snarled. "I'll put that——"

"Save yer wind," said the night walker. "Ye'll be down and out if ye kape talkin'."

The commissary was silent when they reached the building. Before it, on a mast, illuminating everything in clear, cold, uncompromising rays, a cluster of electric lights gleamed down through the gray shadows of the falling night. Bob stood on the narrow porch which fronted the store, thankful for Carra-

her's warning, for now he was feeling the distress of a hard run. Smith and Moran came up beside him.

"Hark!" Carraher raised his hand.

From down the dump came a deep, reverberating sound, like the moaning bank-full torrent lashing the rocks in its bed. It grew as they were listening. And, as it grew, its ominous roar took shape; it was the roar of many men. They were not shouting; they were talking together as they came. The burden of that growl rose, and the wind bore it to Bob's ears.

"The swine!" he muttered. "The pack of swine!"

Smith gripped him by the arm. "Look!" said he.

They were in sight now. There must have been more than one hundred in that company. They were bunched compactly in front; their van showed a black, moving shadow in the gray light. From it came the ugly, hoarse mutter, deep-throated, sinister. It swept on nearer.

And now those on the commissary porch were able to distinguish the figures of men in the mob. The front was packed close; there were more than fifty there, they were marching four and six abreast. Big men, the biggest in the throng. Back of them, straggling more loosely toward the extreme rear, followed the main bulk of the pack. And these were smaller.

"The runners," said Moran, in his uninterested voice, "is a-comin' first. Them behind is mostly muckers. They won't do nothin' till these wild ones starts."

"There's Martin," said Carraher.

The giant was walking in the front rank of his fellows. He was bareheaded. He reeled as he came; his lips were moving constantly; and Bob heard the oaths drip from them. As he cursed, his face was working. Wild Martin was as drunk with the violence inside of him as with the liquor which he had poured down his corded throat that day. The foremost rank surged under the cluster of lights. Wild Martin leaped out in front of them, and his eyes caught the group on the commissary porch. He saw Bob.

"Oho!" he yelled. "Byes, the jude is there."

A roar burst from those behind; from fifty thick throats it boomed, a bass shout of hate and derision.

Bob's nostrils grew wide; his face was white as paper, and his eyes blazed. He took a step forward.

"Min," Wild Martin cried, "hould back a bit. I'm going up there and break papa's bye in two. Stand fast, now. I'll throw ye phwhat is left av him."

Again the roar welled up, deeper, louder, more ominous.

Bob started down the steps. He turned, and struck angrily at Moran's detaining hand. "Let me go, please," he said between his teeth. He freed himself, and walked on down. Wild Martin came toward him. One step, then another, then a third. They stood face to face.

The cluster of electric lamps threw sharp lights upon their faces; in the brightness the other men stood out. The little group upon the commissary platform, cool, keen-eyed. The mob, a sea of upturned heads, of coarse features, showing in the bright light, hard, reckless. The muckers in the rear, irresolute, ready to fight or flee as the crisis might dictate. Between the little group and the mob, these two.

Bob's head was back; his eyes were cold; they looked directly into the eyes of Martin, and in them was all the intolerance of the aristocrat. Wild Martin, his head thrust forward, peered between reddened lids. His coarse lips went back, showing his big teeth. Bob spoke; his voice was even, vibrant with repressed rage, yet it was very cold.

"Well?" He drawled the monosyllable, and paused. Then: "What do you want here?"

The tone was chilling in its evenness. The eyes were even colder. Wild Martin checked the movement of his hand, about to reach forward; he dropped it to his side.

He had not looked for this.

Back of him, men were stirring uneasily; their feet made a shuffling sound.

Somewhere in the crowd a voice growled:

"He has sand!"

Bob's face did not show that he had heard. It took on a more contemptuous expression. In that moment he owned the situation. He was giving that pack—who wrestled with steel and with the living rock, who lived for the one sake of risking their lives—what they loved. And for a moment they were silent.

Wild Martin stared at Bob. Suddenly ferocity leaped back into his face.

"Want!" he cried. "Well ye know what we want. We want a man! That's what we want. A man like Carney was. Ye come here wit' yer ways, and ye thry to ride us." He ended with a stream of oaths.

Bob moved a little closer to him. The intolerance was now arrogance. Smiling his contempt——

"I'll give you one chance," he said slowly. "Go back, and behave yourselves. You can come to work, if you do that. If not——"

He got no farther. Wild Martin laughed; it was like the roar of a bull.

"Ho! Ho! Ho! Ho! We can! Now, men!" He reached out his arm.

Moran was leaping down the steps, too late to stop him. Behind Moran came Carraher and Smith. A throbbing roar arose from the mob.

Wild Martin's hand clamped down on Bob's shoulder. Striking with all the force that was in his body, Bob planted his fist in the great, scarred face. The blood spattered on his knuckles. He struck again.

The giant laughed with bleeding lips. He lunged out with the other arm. He seized Bob about the waist. The huge hands gripped like a great vise of steel. Bob threw himself back, then forward; they clamped down and down. His breath was going under that monstrous pressure. He battered that grinning face.

Moran was rushing in. Spurning the walker with one booted foot, Wild Martin lifted Bob clear of the earth. As if the burden in his two hands were a baby, he swung Bob up and up, above his head.

"Now, byes," he bellowed, "here he comes!"

He strained his mighty arms, about to heave. Moran, rising from the earth to which the heavy boot had hurled him, raised his eyes to see the climax.

A broad figure, rushing around the corner of the building, unseen in the tumult, seemed to shoot through the dusk. It was upon Wild Martin now; a whirl of skirts; a bare arm uplifted; eyes aflame. Mother Kelly—never had she looked so much the amazon as now—smote the giant on one cheek with the flat of her hand. The sharp sound of the blow came like a pistol shot. Her short gray locks tossed as she cuffed him with the other palm.

Like a boy whose ears are being boxed, the drill runner dropped his burden. He threw both arms before his face. Mother Kelly, arms akimbo now, stood facing him.

"Be aff!" Her voice was shrill. The voice of a virago. Her manlike face was full of fury. She stamped her booted foot. Raising one hand, she pointed down the dump. "The whole pack av ye," she cried. "Phwhat do ye think ye are? Ye—Murphy, Flynn, Duffy"—she named a dozen of them—"ye'll burn no buildings here. W'u'd ye run wild because this tarrier tells ye? And go to prison, fer aught ye know? Or hang?" Her voice rose shriller. She berated them singly, naming many of them; she abused them as a crowd.

Wild Martin turned to face her. She whirled up to him, fists swinging, eyes flashing. "Git!" she commanded. He retreated before her. She struck him as he went. Scowling, he raised his arms to ward off the blows that she was raining upon him.

From the mob arose a roar. It was deep-throated laughter. She came on toward them. Laughing still, the drill runners in the foremost rank turned and fled before her.

"Well," said Moran, in his listless voice, as they retreated down the dump, "I never seen the like o' that anywheres."

Bob stood silent, watching it all. His head was bowed.

CHAPTER X.

Bob went back to Mother Kelly's boarding house alone. He found his room, and, lighting the tallow candle, sat down on the edge of the bed. He placed his chin in his two hands, his elbows on his knees, and thought. He sat there for a long time. He did not move, save at long intervals, when his chest swelled to a deep, painful breath.

In the old days, when the West was pastoral and the ranges were still unfenced, when cowboys were cowboys and tenderfeet were really tenderfeet, there was a favorite practical joke. It consisted of telling an Easterner that the worst outlaw among the saddle horses was gentle; and gathering about while he mounted that animal. The first emotion which the luckless victim felt—after collecting his scattered senses sufficiently to realize what his emotions really were—was a vast and deep surprise. Afterward, his feelings depended on his caliber. If he had "sand," there came a dogged rage, which made him arise and mount again.

Sitting here on the edge of his bed, Bob was testing that first huge surprise. Events had come so swiftly, since Shorty Carraher had burst into the dining room with the news of the mob, that he had now his first opportunity to realize what had really happened. It came to him.

He had gone forth, confident in his supremacy. He had found himself a plaything in the hands of that mob. He had tasted the shock of encountering physical strength far beyond his own.

It made him dizzy; he felt revolted, sick. And there came over him a feeling of his utter futility. He took a long, deep breath. He closed his teeth; his jaws tightened. His nerve asserted itself.

"Stay with it," his father had said.

"I'll handle that crowd now if I die doing it," he told himself. Then he remembered something more; this had happened almost in the presence of Miss Lowden; by this time she would have heard the details.

He did not have the solace of the tenderfoot thrown by the broncho. He could not get up now and catch his horse. He had to wait. He stopped himself from thinking over what had happened; he began to plan ahead. He went to bed, with the beginning of a new idea already mapped out.

As for the men of Eagle Pass, they retreated down the dump until Mother Kelly's voice was far behind them. Then they sought out the saloons. It was a wild night downtown. They had keyed themselves up to a high pitch. They had to let off steam. When the various fights were over and the various fighters were asleep, nature took a hand.

It started to snow. That morning the big flakes fell steadily. The next night they continued to fall; and the day following. There was no cessation. The mountains became white; the cañon white between them; outlines became rounded, then disappeared. The road was blockaded; no trains ran.

No egress from Eagle Pass. The men remained. Bob was shut in with them here.

Bob spent his days underground. He was busy now with the beginning of his new plan. He was trying to teach those Greek muckers to run machines. He often missed his noon meal at the boarding house, by staying inside the hole.

One afternoon he stood in the office staring out of the window at the falling snow. Smith laid aside the old magazine which he had been reading by the stove and looked up at him.

"Gets tedious, doesn't it?" said he.

"Well, rather," Bob frowned. "How deep does it snow here?"

"Fifteen to eighteen feet usually," said Smith. "I see the men are beginning to come back."

"The shifts are filling already. They're getting sense. To-day we got a dozen more drill runners from downtown. But what's that got to do with the weather?" Bob flushed as he spoke. The subject of the men was a sore one with him.

"Just this," answered Smith. "You've got these hobos now for the winter. They'll stick pretty close to the job until after the first thaw. They can't travel; and you can't get other men."

"I don't see how you make that out."

"Well, a hobo doesn't travel after the snow flies. Brake beams and 'decks' are uninhabitable in cold weather. Tie piles don't make good shelter, either. How could that bunch go looking for work?"

"Do they travel that way—like tramps?" asked Bob.

"The only time they ride the cushions is when they're being shipped from some employment agency. Otherwise—to reach an agency—they go underneath or overhead. Always, my son. No, you'll not lose these 'bos till spring. Nor will you get others."

Bob frowned. Every one about him seemed to know more of the men than he; and even the weather appeared to be a factor in handling them. As yet, he told himself, he had not proved a factor at all.

"Anyway," said he, as much to himself as to Smith, "I'll show them what's what before spring. Then I'll fill their places with others."

The assistant did not reply to this. He had found Bob decidedly touchy, irritable to the point of moodiness, ever since the episode of pay night. No mention of that incident had ever passed between them.

A knock sounded on the door. "Come in!" called Bob.

Miss Lowden entered. She wore a red toque; her skirts were short, and rubber boots covered her feet. Her cheeks were unusually bright, as were her eyes. Bob smiled, and became rather stiff; it was as if he cloaked himself in conventionality to hide something.

"Hello!" said Smith.

"Are you two coming for that walk?" she asked commandingly.

"Just a second." Smith started toward his room. "I'll get my boots."

Bob flushed uncomfortably. "I don't think I'll go to-day," said he.

"Oh, I say." Smith turned round. "Come on!"

Bob felt in his soul that the assistant was lying when he used that tone of entreaty. Miss Lowden's face altered. An expression of disappointment came over it.

"You know," said she slowly, "the rotary is coming over the hill now; and both of you were going with me to watch it."

The memory of that promise was very fresh in Bob's mind. He had made it with a queer mixture of rebellion and desire. Rebellion because he was certain that Miss Lowden had rather go alone with Smith, and also because he was a little at outs with himself for feeling that desire. He always felt that way when there was an opportunity to be in her company. He very often told himself that the cause lay in the one fact of her being the only girl in the place. He had no business to fall in love with a country school-teacher because of the circumstances of their first meeting, romantic as those circumstances might have been. Nor did he have any business to feel a sullen gnawing somewhere in his soul when she and Smith talked so often together, even though he did deem himself a third party—a rank outsider. If these two chose to be sweethearts, he ought to be glad for them.

"Really," he said, "I had some work to do. But that can go until later. Is the rotary in sight?"

"Coming down the last leg now," she cried. "Do hurry!"

He half ran to his room and slipped on his hip rubber boots. He was back as soon as Smith. The three of them set out, all talking rapidly.

They walked down the hill; the path was narrow, walled high above their heads on either side with sheer banks of dazzling, crystalline white. The great flakes fell softly upon them, touching their faces with cool caresses, spotting their coats in beautiful designs. Miss Lowden laughed aloud; she was talking fast; it was as if she were perhaps a little nervous for all her high spirits; ill at ease, or vaguely restless. Smith

answered her; his demeanor was almost boisterous; he spoke familiarly with her, as a man would with his sister.

Bob's words had no freedom; they came lightly from his lips, but they were commonplace, pat little sayings. Uttering them, he remembered none of them. His mind was not on them. Had he spoken what was in his thoughts, he would have startled himself and both of the others.

The girl was more beautiful in this snow than she had ever been. Her dark hair and her cheeks, all aglow with the cold, made startling, high-colored contrasts against the surrounding whiteness. Her eyes were soft, and lights flashed from them. She was intoxicating. Bob hardly dared to look at her.

They passed Mother Kelly, splitting wood. She waved one huge, mittened hand at them. "Get a move on ye!" she shouted. "The rotary's a-comin' down to the main line."

They obeyed her injunction. They floundered through a stretch where no path had been shoveled. The soft snow allowed them to sink to their knees; the two men took Miss Lowden, one holding either arm, and helped her through it.

As they were nearing the main line, she pointed up the hill toward the little cabin where she lived. A dozen men were at work with shovels. "They're making my path wider," she said. "Off shift, all of them, too. Isn't it nice of them?"

In the dozen, Bob recognized some of the faces which he had seen on the payday night before the commissary. He hated these men. And they toiled for her! They had been eager to drive him out of camp—to kill him! The feeling of great and savage loneliness came over him again. He smiled as he said lightly:

"I think, Miss Lowden, the company might do well to put you in my place. We'd have these hobos pulling rock then."

It was the first time he had spoken about himself and the men. In his voice, for all the lightness, was a trace of bitterness. She flashed a swift look at him; her eyes were full of sympathy. She had thought often—more often than she cared to acknowledge—of him taking his punishment in silence.

They stopped near the bottom of the hill. The main line was some fifty feet below them; from their position they could see up the first leg of the switchback, slanting upward along the mountainside. The rails were hidden now; there was no sign of grade, and even the cuts were filled level to their tops. The snow had obliterated everything.

They looked eagerly up along the undulating, dazzling surface of the drifts in the direction where they knew the switchback's track lay hidden. Suddenly all three of them exclaimed aloud.

Far up along the mountain slope, a huge, semicircular wave of clean, pure white arose. It rolled high into the air; it descended in a long, even arc. It extended at right angles to the direction of the track. A silent billow; tons and tons of snow upthrown, hurled by some mighty, hidden force.

It was advancing toward them. It marched onward swiftly, silently, and always it rose in that lofty semicircle and fell far from its starting point. It soared lightly; it curved with a grace that was dainty in its perfection. And —with all that lightness and grace—its enormous bulk thrilled the senses of those who watched. It awed them.

It came on down the mountainside in a huge, thick silence. And as it drew nearer, growing larger every moment, a vibrant humming emanated from the depths behind it. The sound swelled; it filled all the air.

Now in the dense whiteness, details began to show—whirling streaks of snow; large lumps, streaming feathery, cometlike tails behind them as they soared through their trajectory. The vibrant humming resolved itself into the rapid, loud coughing of locomotives. It increased into a thunderous roar.

Bellowing, the rotary swept past them down to the main line. The snow showered over the mountainside in great lumps. Behind the receding wave ap-

peared the engines—two of them—vomiting black smoke; behind them a short string of freight cars; and back of those cars two more locomotives. At the very rear was another rotary. It was idle; its great fan wheel, many-bladed, crusted with snow, was still.

Down on the main line the train stopped. After a moment it came roaring back.

"They'll go on East now," said Smith. "By to-morrow they'll have the line clear—for the present, anyhow."

Bob was silent. He was still feeling the exhilaration which comes to a man beholding a great spectacle for the first time. He breathed deep. He watched the receding rotary. Down beyond the junction of the switchback and the main line he saw the snow wave rise again. On and on it went.

From up by the post office came a shout. Turning, Bob saw Daulton waving his hand in cheerful greeting. He returned the salutation somewhat listlessly. The exhilaration had passed. He glanced at Miss Lowden and Smith.

The two of them were talking in low tones. The assistant said something, leaning closer to the girl. It seemed to Bob that Smith's face had suddenly grown very tender. Miss Lowden's cheeks grew deeper red. Her eyes were full of a deep light as they flashed toward Smith. Bob saw her little hand steal out and grasp the gloved hand of the assistant.

"I think," said Bob, "I'll be getting inside now. I've got to look up a number of things this afternoon."

To their entreaties that he go with them to the doctor's, he replied almost brusquely. A big desire to get away from them, to leave the sight of them, was on him. He turned his back on them; he plunged through the drifts, hurrying down the hillside.

Something very close to despair was choking him this afternoon. He saw the men inside the hole. The sight of their faces brought a grim, stubborn rage to him. And always in his memory he saw that little hand steal out and grasp the hand of Smith.

Moran, the day walker, noticed that Bob was unusually polite in talking with him that day. He did not know that this politeness was the result of a stern repression, that the superintendent was fighting a hard battle to hold himself in hand.

CHAPTER XI.

As the days passed his confidence returned to Bob. He would be master yet, he told himself. But that confidence was different than the old, arrogant contempt which had possessed him before pay night. He lay awake nights, and spent his daytime hours close to the work, endeavoring to perfect his plan of subjugation. This crowd of big-boned toilers was a strong brute; it could be ferocious.

In twos and threes the hard-rock men were coming back to work. As fast as they came they got machines. There arrived a day when all the drills were manned. Of these, six on the bench were being run by Greeks. This was the squad of muckers whom Bob had been trying to educate. He watched them carefully; they were the nucleus of his pet project, his plan to gain mastery. If he could educate them to these machines, then train others, the situation would be in his hands. By springtime he could pick out the last dissatisfied member of that pay-day mob and send him away forever. With that club in his hands, he felt certain that many of these hobos would come to whatever terms he chose to dictate.

He was standing on the blacksmith-shop platform one afternoon with Mike Moran. The latter was looking at some steel sent out for sharpening.

"Never," said the day walker, "did I see the like o' them Greeks. They spile everything they lay their hands on. Thank God, the old bunch is comin' back."

"About these Greeks," said Bob; "I want you to keep them on machines. If any of the old crowd come now, let them go mucking."

"But——" Moran looked at Bob. Then he shut his lips tight.

The two of them went inside. They stood on the jumbo, watching the ma-

chines on the bench. Two old runners were there; the others were Greeks. The hard-rock men stood on their tripods, huge, somber giants in this roaring cavern. Their faces, muck spattered, streaked with oil, were intent. Their drills roared steadily; there was no cessation in the thunderous song. But the Greeks beside them were having a hard time of it. One was struggling futilely, trying to pry loose a twelve-foot steel bound in its hole. Another, through some fault in his set-up, was having trouble with a badly balanced tripod; at every moment the mass of steel which he was striving to control was threatening to topple over on him.

As Bob frowned at these two, the machine of a third Greek, being afflicted with a loosely tied chuck nut, dropped the steel from the socket. With a roar in which the ugly crack of a broken drawhead mingled discordantly, it began bucking like a fractious horse. It leaped clear of the ground; it lurched. The runner, groping wildly for the air valve, tried to cling to the crank. The drill snarled furiously. It thrashed about like a wounded animal – a mass of steel running amuck. The old runners, glancing up at the tumult, grinned derisively as the swarthy-faced man, fear written all over his features, dropped all holds, and ran. The bench boss fairly hurled himself on the machine, which was now leaping toward the edge of the bench. Some one in the meantime shut off the air at the nipples. Immediately the monster became harmless. The Greek came back; the bench boss cursed him in oaths that roared above the uproar of the drills.

Bob shut his lips tight. "Anyhow," he said to himself, "I'll keep them. I won't let that crowd of runners come back unpunished to their jobs."

"We're goin' to try that new powder in the headin'," Moran shouted in his ear. "They'll shoot along about eight o'clock."

"I think," Bob called back, "that I'll stay inside. I want to see how that pulls the rock."

Two hours later Shorty Carraher, coming in, found Bob eating some lunch which a nipper boy had brought to him from the car which bore the supper for the shift. The superintendent had a piece of pie in his hand; he was drinking black coffee from a tin can.

"Evenin'," said Shorty. "How's 'scoffin's'?"

Bob smiled, answering the greeting. He had begun to learn some of the slang of the place, and he had begun to like Shorty Carraher. He stayed in long after the firing of the last side round, and went out with the night walker. The pair stopped at the timber shed.

A gang was working there by the light of the electric lamps. They were shaping segments for the support of the roof—ten or a dozen men. Shorty Carraher watched them, his eyes going from one detail to another. Bob noticed that the night walker was unusually silent, and, glancing at him, saw a peculiar, glazed look in his eyes. Occasionally Shorty passed his hand over his forehead; and once Bob heard him swear in an undertone. His own eyes became inquiring.

"Headache," said Shorty. "Eatin' that powder smoke after they pulled the cut. It always does me up. It was worse to-night, wi' that new giant." His tone was full of the suppressed rage of a man who is enduring severe physical anguish. He walked about restlessly. The timber boss came to ask some question. The night walker replied irritably.

They had been walking down the length of the shed. Shorty paused beside one of the men—a tall, wide-shouldered young fellow, with a mop of red hair. He was shaping a block of pine with a heavy adz.

"Here," growled Shorty, "that's no way." He snatched the implement from the hands of the red-haired man and took a few sharp strokes. His manner was abrupt; his movements were quick and sharp. The timberman scowled.

"D'ye see now?" grunted the night walker. The other nodded. "Well, do it that way," Shorty commanded. His face worked as the pain in his head gave a sudden twinge; he glared at the red-headed toiler. "Ye ort to have more sinse," he growled.

The face flamed beneath the mop of red hair. "The other way's the way I always done it," said the young fellow hotly. "It's jist as good, too."

"That," shouted Shorty, "is a lie!" And he added an oath.

The red-headed timberman cursed back. The oaths of the two mingled.

Their voices heightened. The gang in the timber shed looked up from their work. Suddenly Shorty ripped out an epithet which no man will endure.

With a roar of deep-throated rage, the red-headed man rushed toward the night walker. Adz in hand, he came. He swung the heavy implement over his head. His eyes were blazing. His face flamed.

Shorty Carraher stood to meet the onslaught. He bent forward; his arms were half doubled. His body swayed from side to side, ready to dodge in either direction.

The adz swept forward, beginning its descent. Leaping into the affray from one side, the timber boss gripped the weapon by the handle. The red-haired man, taken by surprise, stopped in his tracks. The pair wrestled together.

Shorty Carraher stood watching them. After a moment of futile resistance, the red-haired man dropped the tool. The night walker shrugged his shoulders as he walked away. Bob followed him.

When the two of them were some distance from the timber shed, Shorty swore aloud.

"That," said he, "was a bad mistake. I sh'u'd of had more sinse." He walked on in silence; then, turning to Bob: "That feller won't never stand fer driving," said he calmly. "I know ut, too. It was the hurtin' of me head."

The next evening Bob was with Moran when Shorty Carraher came to take charge.

"Say," said Moran, "that red-headed timberman—Hudson—has quit."

"Quit!" said Carraher. "Wot's the matter wit' him now?"

"Well," said Moran listlessly, "he was a-tellin' me to-day about that mix-up him and ye had in the timber shed. He looks at ut that ye don't want him around after him a-makin' fer ye wit' that adz."

Shorty Carraher grinned. "Say, Moran, tell that fool to come back on the work. Wot's his mix-ups wit' me got to do wit' the job? He's too good a man to lose, he is."

"Ye're right," Moran nodded. "The bye is a number-one hand."

There was no further discussion on the subject.

Reviewing the incident that night, Bob mentioned it to Mother Kelly.

"The funny thing," said he, "is this: I've seen Shorty treat other men just that same way he tried on this fellow, and it worked to a T."

"Sure!" said Mother Kelly. "Did God make min all alike? Ye have got to handle wan in wan way, and another in another."

"Pretty white of him to give the boy his job," Bob ventured.

Mother Kelly was standing behind his chair. She cast a shrewd look down at the back of his head.

"Pretty good sinse, I call ut," said she. "Moran and Shorty is paid fer driving min and pulling rock, not fer saving up grudges agin' anybody."

Bob reddened, and said nothing.

But he did some more thinking in bed that night. The next morning he hunted up Moran.

"About those Greeks," he said. The day walker looked sharply up at him. "Send them back to the muck pile as fast as the old runners come back."

"Sure!" said Moran. "And now I want to ask ye about some lagging."

He did not come back to the subject with Bob. To Shorty Carraher he said: "The bye is getting sinse."

"He'll need ut," said Shorty, "before he pulls rock as fast as they are a-pulling ut over on the other side."

The progress that they were making over at Napoleon was, after all, the big factor in opening Bob's eyes. He was here to drive tunnel; and he had not yet driven tunnel as they did over there—as Carney, thief and grafter, had done before him. Every week a measurement was taken in each of the two

headings which were approaching their meeting place. And every week Eagle Pass showed up poorly. Before that fact even the deep, grim antagonism which he felt toward these drill runners became a small thing.

Shorty Carraher had forgotten personalities—and why? For the big thing—the work. Bob made up his mind that it was his business to do the same thing. And Shorty—old in handling men—had to deal with some in one way, and others in another. Bob determined to make a study of individuals.

That he might drive that mob to pull the rock, he strove now to handle them. He had been here only a month; his viewpoint had changed so much that he himself did not realize the extent of that change.

But this new task—the learning of the men—was hard. It seemed at times well-nigh hopeless. For he had no tolerance for these men's ways. And in their turn they remained steadfast in refusing to take him as they took the other bosses. At his approach they shut themselves into the hardest exteriors which they could muster. He had as yet to show these men that he was made of better stuff than they.

CHAPTER XII.

October passed. November pay day came. Wild Martin and his crowd had put in less than two weeks' time.

"They're figuring on enough to buy whisky," said Mother Kelly.

"Seems to me that's the only purpose they have in life," said Bob.

The two of them had fallen into the habit of talking over many details of the work together. They usually held these conferences after supper, when Smith and Miss Lowden had vanished together, bound for Doctor Daulton's, where the school-teacher visited with the postmaster's wife. The departure of his companions always left Bob miserable. He found the work his only solace. Mother Kelly, on her part, seemed to enjoy gossiping about it.

"Until ye get them wild ones so that they'll eat out of yer hand," said Mother Kelly, "ye'll have a good half of the min drunk wit' them ivery pay day."

"Anyway," Bob smiled bitterly, "they're not intending to burn any buildings this month."

"They left aff steam last time," she said, in a matter-of-fact tone. "'Twill last thim for a while."

"You mean?" Bob looked at her.

"I mane, the best runners that ye have has to tear loose just so much, wan way or another. They got to do ut. 'Tis in thim, and has to come out. I've follied public works fer twinty year. I never seen ut anny other way wit' the runners."

The idea stuck in Bob's mind. He asked Moran about it one day in the walker's office.

"Sure!" said the day walker. "The best wans, thim that pulls the most rock, is the wild wans. And if they do not tear things up by the roots ivry so often the ugliness stays inside of thim. It has to come out."

"No need for their spending more than half their time downtown, and disorganizing the others," Bob frowned. "They're holding progress back."

"I'll tell ye, man to man," said Moran, "the r'ason: They think ye are a joke. When Carney was here, he had thim a-pulling rock for him."

Bob flushed. It hurt. But it sank in, as it would not have sunk in some weeks before. He was learning. He returned the walker's direct gaze.

"I'm a better man than Carney," said he quietly. "But you're right. It's up to me to show them."

"Jest so," said Moran apathetically. "If I did not think 'twas in ye, I w'u'd not of said what I did."

Pay-day week passed. The men were drifting back again. In time, Wild Martin and his followers swaggered up the dump and went to work. Bob stood one night watching them at their machines.

They might be thugs during their hours of recreation, but they were artists when it came to running sluggers in the heading. Weary hours spent trying to teach muckers this same art

had given Bob the knowledge from which came appreciation as he watched these giants.

Here in the dusky heading they stood, under the yellow beams of the electric lamps, wrapped by the fog of condensed air from the exhauts of their machines. The big sluggers, bellowing their iron song, ran steadily. The solid granite of the mountain trembled to their mighty battering. The runners, their hands on the cranks, were frowning, intent on their task, imbued with one idea—driving tunnel. As they bent down to free the run-out steel, or lifted the huge machines, changing the set-ups, their bodies heaved in herculean efforts.

He often stayed now to watch them working. He saw them wrestling with the steel and fighting with the living rock. He saw them, when the rounds were being loaded, ramming the giant powder down the holes, handling the high explosive fearlessly, as if they liked it.

Once when there was some bad ground, he noted how Wild Martin, trimming roof, stood wielding the long pinch bar directly under a loosened mass of rock the size of a washtub. And when the granite fell to his skillful hammering, the giant leaped aside, escaping its weight by a hair. Bob barely managed to restrain a startled ejaculation. Wild Martin glanced at the fallen fragment, laid down his pinch bar, pulled a black plug of tobacco from his pocket, bit off a piece, looked up at the roof, and set to work again.

Bob retired to the jumbo. He sat down on a broken wheelbarrow, and he thought it over. His hatred for Wild Martin was passing; he was studying the man impersonally, in pretty much the same way as the shrewd tenderfoot would study the manner of the outlaw's buckings.

This blear-eyed giant handled steel and battered the living rock; he was made strong for that purpose. He risked his life as part of the day's work. He was made fearless for that purpose —and reckless. Bob stayed there on the dismantled wheelbarrow for some time, thinking.

He came to the boarding house near midnight. He was foraging in Mother Kelly's pantry for some cold lunch. Hearing a heavy tread, he looked around.

"Well, young man!" It was Mother Kelly.

He laughed. "Caught in the act!" said he. "I've something on my mind."

"What is that?" she demanded.

"This wild bunch," said Bob. "Do you know—it's that rowdyism of theirs that makes them good runners. They have to be hard and reckless."

She laughed. "I've been a-tellin' ye that this two months," said she.

"Well"—Bob gestured with a piece of pie—"the idea is this: The same thing that made them ready to burn buildings, that sends them downtown and makes them disorganizers, is the same thing that I need from them. I can't get along without it."

"Ye are a-seeing ut, then," said Mother Kelly. "I thought ye w'u'd."

"The idea," Bob went on, "is this: How am I going to get that thing harnessed—to keep it pulling rock? By Jove! I wish I could see that."

"Lad," said Mother Kelly, "them tarriers is thicker-headed than ye be. Ye are a-l'arnin' thim. 'Twill take thim longer to l'arn ye. When ye show thim that ye are not a jude, even if ye did come here wit' a white collar, and that ye are not a joke, even if ye are a rich man's son, then mebbe ye will get what Carney got out of thim. They knowed he was a better man. They do not know that ye be."

She paused abruptly. The front door opened. Smith entered.

The assistant looked surprised. "I thought," he said, "that every one was in bed. I was going to steal a bit to eat myself."

"Smithy," said Mother Kelly, "ye do yer sparking pretty late."

Smith flushed. Bob's face was red. And Bob's heart was sore with a gnawing jealousy. Mother Kelly's eyes went from one of them to the other. Bob saw that sharp look. His cheeks grew deeper crimson.

"Humph!" said Mother Kelly.

"Here, Smithy"—she started back to the cupboard—"I'll get ye a bite." As she went, she muttered to herself: "Good grief! And that's what is a-bothering him! The schoolma'am—good grief!"

She said nothing more, but brought some cold food out. While Smith began eating she left the room.

Bob and the assistant remained in the dining room, talking. They spoke of a discrepancy which had shown in the levels Smith was checking over. Their conversation did not stray to Miss Lowden. They never spoke of her when they were alone together.

CHAPTER XIII.

November went by, and its waning days found the same question bothering Bob. The shifts became smaller as the month grew old. He lacked his best drill runners again, and they were luring the others from the work.

The question of demonstrating to these men his right to boss them had become an obsession with him. Sometimes he felt shaky, wondering whether, after all, he had that right, whether he was made of the proper stuff. But those fits of depression wore off before a grim determination that had taken possession of him.

Always on Saturday nights he found the same situation confronting him when they telephoned over the weekly progress report from Napoleon. Eagle Pass was not pulling its share of rock. And always, reading the figures of the two reports, comparing them, he thought, with a sigh of regret, of Wild Martin and his crowd of star drill runners, sitting on a row of beer kegs, cursing him, instead of being in that heading, driving tunnel. He had come to look on those foul-mouthed giants as forces now, to reckon on their foot-pounds of energy.

He was sitting at supper one evening alone in the dining room. Mother Kelly came and pulled a chair up beside him.

"When Christmas comes," said she, "there will be one grand lay-off. They will stay until January pay day. Phwhat will ye do?"

"Chances are," Bob said bitterly, "they'll be getting ready to raise more trouble again by that time."

"Jest about," said she.

"Well"—he smiled wearily—"I can't abolish drag day this time, anyway."

"Sometimes," said she, "I think ye done a good thing then—though ye did not know ut. It may work out all right. But this Christmas drunk—phwhat do ye think?"

Bob sighed. In these weeks his face had grown older; there were new lines upon his forehead.

"They all go, I suppose?" he said finally. Mother Kelly nodded. "If I could find a way to shorten the thing." He looked up at her. "I wonder would it be possible?"

"They got to have a week," said she, "but this two and three-week business is getting bad. 'Twill bring another ruction."

"I've got it!" Bob clapped his hand down on the table.

"No need to break the dishes," said Mother Kelly. "Phwhat have ye got?"

"Listen," said Bob. "If there was no January pay day."

"Hould on!" she cried. "I thought ye was a-getting sinse. Ye can't stop pay day, young man."

"I'm not going to," Bob laughed. "I'm going to give them a Christmas present. See here." He leaned toward her, unfolding his plan. As he talked, she began to smile. "Ye are wiser than I thought ye was," she said, when he had done. "That ort to work fine. Hello—here's the schoolma'am."

Miss Lowden's cheeks were bright from the cold outside. Bob stole one sidelong glance at her, and then, in sheer desperation, glued his eyes upon his plate. If only Smith did not exist! Or if he could forget her!

She was talking vivaciously, enthusiastically over little things. He answered her in monosyllables. He wished that, like the old Greek hero, he could put cotton in his ears. The curtness of his tone made her stop suddenly. A hurt look came into her eyes. They ate for

some moments in silence. Back at the stove, Mother Kelly scowled and banged the china viciously.

Then, remembering the severe punishment that he had been enduring here, and his uphill struggle with the men, Miss Lowden spoke again.

"We're going to have a dance Christmas Eve," she said. "Won't it be fine?"

"A dance!" Bob's look was astonished now.

"Yes," said she. "Mrs. Kelly says we can. And Mr. Smith is going to get the music. He says there's a man downtown can play the accordion, and another with a violin. He's going to hire them."

Bob was about to ask who would do the dancing, when Smith and Moran entered, the former with the progress report. Bob opened it, and read the figures.

"Napoleon's got twenty feet the best of us again," he growled.

Moran sighed heavily. The day walker's eyes showed weariness. He had been up early that morning.

"Bad ground," said he. "I got an idee 'twill bother us fer a week or so."

"I wish," said Bob, "we could get some of those hobos from downtown."

"There's half a dozen of the worst of the bunch a-comin' in to-night," said Moran. "Martin is wan of thim."

A nipper boy entered noisily, and tramped down the room, his boots hammering the floor boards. "They want ye inside, Mr. Moran," he said. "Fall o' rock in the headin'."

Bob swore, and flushed as the oath left his lips, and began apologies to Miss Lowden.

"Carraher got his ribs caved in," the nipper boy went on enthusiastically, "and Casey's all smashed up."

Bob was on his feet with Moran. "Looks like luck was agin' us," murmured the day walker listlessly. "And I'm all in to-night."

The muck train was stopped near the blacksmith shop. Hurrying up to it, the two men saw a group of big oilskin-clad men handling a long burden. The careful slowness of their movements told the story as quickly as the form of what they bore.

"How badly is he hurt?" Bob demanded.

"Wan or two ribs smashed." The voice came thickly from the form. "I was fair under ut. Ye got to get them muckers to wurrk at—that——" The voice trailed wearily away. "Get—the —wheelbarrers——" And Shorty Carraher fainted as dead away as any woman.

"One of you men make a run for Doctor Daulton." Bob ordered. "Where's Casey?"

"Here!" The heading boss whom Bob had advised to use Hercules powder limped up; he was holding one arm with the other.

"All right," he growled, as Bob knotted two handkerchiefs together, making a sling for the broken member. "Ye want to get in and get them muckers to work. They're scared crazy. And that bunch of Martin's is a-growling. There'll be trouble."

"Take these men up on the hill to Mother Kelly's," Bob ordered. "Come on, Moran!"

The two of them leaped aboard the muck train. As the cars roared in through the darkness, Bob frowned. He was thinking fast. His thoughts were with Wild Martin and the runners. The ugliness inside of them was beginning to boil again. He had them now—in the tunnel. If only he could get a first hold on them and lay foundations for that new plan of his!

The train came to a jerking stop in front of the jumbo. Bob and Moran leaped off.

In the yellow light and the deep shadows, the shift had gathered. The men —sixty odd—stood like a disordered flock of sheep. The bulk of them—the muckers, Greeks and Slavs—showed panic in their faces. Here and there among the crowd, in pairs and groups of three and four, the drill runners held their places apart from the common herd, aristocrats among the toilers. No fear was in their reckless features, but many scowled sullenly, or, spitting as they swore, muttered ugly oaths.

Before them all, and looming above them, the jumbo cast shadows upon them, the huge-timbered platform built to the level of the bench. Above the jumbo the great twelve-by-twelve roof timbers showed dimly.

Bob pushed his way among the big-framed men, black-clad in oilskins. He paid no heed to them; he saw no individuals. His mind—keyed to one idea—centered on one object—was not now concerned with them. He wanted to see the trouble, then to overcome it. So long as the drills roared and the line of wheelbarrows carried out the broken rock, the hole was growing. Now the tunnel was silent, and no barrows were moving. He leaped up the ladder to the top of the jumbo; Moran climbed behind him.

Ahead of them was utter darkness. In that darkness sounded the spatter of dropping water.

A loose coil of insulated wire lay beside Bob; at its end a cluster of five incandescent lamps. He picked it up, held the lights above his head, and peered before him.

From the jumbo to the summit of the bench there lay a fifteen-foot interval, spanned by the narrow plank gangway whereon the muckers wheeled their barrows. Bob started across the bridge, carrying the cluster of lamps. The wire trailed behind him.

The yellow light cut the gloom; he saw the scene of the disaster in that circle of illumination; as he walked on, details became plainer to his eyes.

The summit of the bench lay halfway between the floor and the roof of the tunnel. From this point there was a cavern of some fifty feet; it ended at the heading's breast. For nearly twenty feet that cavern was roofed with heavy timbers. Beyond these timbers the roof was of the living rock, unprotected, unbraced, thirty feet of this.

In the middle of that unprotected interval a huge mass of granite had cleft from the mountain's bosom and fallen. It lay now, blocking the plank pathway that led from the heading to the edge of the bench, a heap of rock nearly a man's height.

"Got to get that out before the wheelbarrows can move a pound of muck from the heading," said Bob.

As if in answer, warning him of man's littleness, the mountain spoke. A booming crash, a tremble of the solid rock beneath his feet. A fragment of the roof fell so close ahead of Bob that the wind from its sides fanned his face.

"That's wot druv them muckers out," said Moran quietly behind him.

Bob turned; he saw the tired lines upon the day walker's face. "I need all you can do to-morrow," said he. "I'm going to take charge to-night."

He started back toward the jumbo. Walking before him now, Moran said nothing. His face was thoughtful. On the jumbo, he looked keenly at Bob. Then abruptly: "All right," said he. "Mebbe it's best." He left at once.

"He's bit off a big chunk," he told Mother Kelly, a half hour later. "But I got an idee mebbe he can handle ut."

Bob's eyes left the walker as soon as the latter acquiesced in his suggestion. He was intent on the men now. He stood on the jumbo's outer edge, looking down on them, gathered there beneath him.

His eyes swept over the crowd—the muckers, heavy-faced, their fear showing, and their bewilderment. The big drill runners in their black oilskins, unafraid, scowling now, swearing. He knew that they had been growling about him, stirring up dissatisfaction. And he was going to take a long chance with them, to play a daring game. He had more things in mind than the starting of those wheelbarrows, big as the immediate issue was. He leaned farther out.

"Martin!" Bob's face was tense. His eyes were blazing. He shouted the name like a sharp order.

Wild Martin, sneering among his fellows, started at the summons. He raised his eyes.

"Bring that bunch of heading runners up here!" Bob shot down the command like a bullet.

"Come on, byes." Wild Martin grinned. "We'll see phwhat the jude wants."

Bob heard it. His blood ran hotter. But he shut his lips tight. He smiled to himself as they clambered up the ladder. They faced him there in the shadows. The glow of the lamp cluster which he held illuminated his face. He pointed to Martin.

"You take this shift," he said quietly. "You're boss."

Turning his back upon them, Bob leaned over the jumbo again. "Get those muckers up!" he called to the bench boss. "Tear into that rock as quick as you can make it."

Behind him, Wild Martin stood, scowling, irresolute. Bob straightened, and passed the bully, paying no heed to him. He was walking toward the gangplank, carrying the light cluster. Ahead of him lay the unroofed section and its dangers. Over his shoulder he jerked —as an afterthought:

"Let's see whether you can drive tunnel."

Wild Martin's mouth closed like a steel trap. The pride of his art swept over him. "Get in there, byes," said he. "Get a move on!"

The seven swaggered across the gangplank. Their leader had spoken, and it was in their hands to show what they could do. On the summit of the bench Bob stopped ahead of them. He picked up a long pinch bar. They watched him as he went on toward the fall of rock. Unhesitating, he went straight to the spot; from the roof, water was dripping steadily; the sound of the drops came loud into the silence. At intervals there came the rattle of small particles dislodged from the roof and falling. Bob stopped; he looped the insulated wire around the pinch bar; he climbed upon the heap of débris which had stricken down Carraher and the shift boss. Over his head the black hole in the roof occasionally disgorged a smaller fragment. He did not heed them. Raising his improvised torch, he scanned the shadowed dome above him.

Wild Martin and his runners passed on toward the heading. Into their reckless faces came something that drove away the scowls, a flicker of surprise akin to admiration.

"Martin!" The giant turned at Bob's call.

"Give me one of your men—a man with sand. I'm going to trim roof."

Martin scowled again. "Ye byes," said he, "get in there and finish mucking out." He walked back to Bob. "I'll help ye trim that ruff," he said quietly.

Bob had climbed down from the fallen rock. The pair stood facing each other. Ahead of them was the safety of a solid cavern roof; behind them the timbers gave protection. Upon them here fell little showers of pulverized granite; above them huge masses hung, poised, ready to drop at any moment. They stood, each looking the other over —the giant, hard-featured, blear-eyed, recklessness written on his big face; and the smaller man with his skin like satin, his fine nostrils, and his proud mouth. In that moment each saw in the other that indomitability which is harder than steel or the living rock.

"Gimme that pinch bar," said Martin. "Now"—he grinned and spat— "we'll see wot it's like." He raised the bar with the cluster of bright lights into the hollow of the roof. Both men stooped forward, peering upward.

A cavity ten feet or so in circumference, in shape like a huge, inverted bowl. Wild Martin tightened his jaw, then stepped higher on the heap of broken rock, directly under it. Bob climbed beside him. The giant moved the pinch bar, swinging the lights about the hole. Here a thick chunk of granite hung apparently by one corner; there a larger piece showed a half-inch cleavage from the supporting rock. Other seams had opened between.

Suddenly "Luk out!" Wild Martin bellowed. He leaped aside. Leaping with him, Bob saw the larger of those two masses drop where he had been.

"Bad ground," growled the giant. "Where's them muckers, annyhow?"

The bench boss was running over the gangplank from the jumbo.

"Them Greeks is crazy," he called. "They're a-startin' out."

"Wait here," Bob ordered.

Martin shook his head. "I'm shift boss, ain't I?" he growled.

The two of them ran together to the edge of the bench. They leaped down over the fourteen-foot shelf of rock; they raced toward the tunnel mouth. Many of the men were still standing, waiting. More than half were on their way outside.

"Get ahead of the hull o' thim," gasped Wild Martin. They ran side by side. Their heavy boots pounded on the tunnel floor; they spattered muck and showers of water. They reached the rear ranks of the crowd; they passed these; they came to the van. Ahead of the foremost they turned.

The mark of fear was on the faces of these foreigners. They came, walking fast, some running, jostling one another, talking in their own tongue, over this catastrophe which they had witnessed, this cataclysm which had swept close to them.

Bob met the first man, and thrust him back; the fellow tried to push on. Bob seized him by the throat, and whirled him about. A second Greek was running by him; his fist flew out, and the fugitive dropped. Wild Martin, rushing upon a trio of muckers, saw, and laughed as he flung them back toward the heading. The mob was upon them now.

They plunged into the crowd; they shouted commands; they picked up men by the collars, and threw them back against their fellows. The foremost fell away now; several turned and fled in the direction whence they had come.

Bob's head was back; his nostrils were wide with rage. He followed them, shouting like a herdsman driving cattle. The bench boss had joined him now. As the three of them restored order in that fear-stricken mob and got them up the bench, with their picks and shovels, Bob remembered how he had once thought of putting these men to running drills.

"All right," said the bench boss. "They'll stick now."

The bench runners were already at their machines under the last of the roof timbers. The tunnel resounded to the beating roar of the drills. The first wheelbarrows got their loads and began their journey over the gangplank to the jumbo. Wild Martin and Bob resumed their task of trimming roof.

"The trouble," said Wild Martin, "was this: Thim muckers seen the rock fall, and they was not used to the like of that."

Bob smiled grimly, remembering the growling that he had heard, and what the heading boss had told him. He said nothing of that, however.

"Think that bit will stand bracing now?" he said; and Wild Martin nodded.

The timber gang were laying mud sills for the first sets of segments. Wild Martin cast an eye about.

"I'll go up and see how they're a-making ut wit' that set-up," he shouted.

Two hours later the last bracing was up; the roof segments were being rapidly put in place. The wheelbarrows were running from the heading on a cleared pathway. A dozen muckers were removing the rest of the fallen rock. From the breast of the heading came the mighty, roaring salvos of the sluggers. Wild Martin's men had made their set-up.

Bob went up there and watched them. They were standing at the cranks of the cannonlike sluggers, bending forward, peering through the mists of frozen air, watching the plunging steel bite into the granite. Wild Martin stood behind them; his eyes went from one of them to another; he was frowning, intent upon the job of driving them.

At midnight the shifts changed. As the heading runners leaped from the muck train to the blacksmith-shop platform, they talked of the work.

"That jude," said one of them, "he has some steam, he has."

It was the thin-voiced man whom Bob had heard in the freight train. And him whom his fellows had called Bill on that journey laughed as he answered:

"I'm thinkin' he is some driver himself, that jude. Carney never kicked a bunch into the headin' anny faster than him and ye did this night, Martin."

The new shift boss scowled. "If he has any idee I can't make my shift drive

tunnel," said he, voicing his thoughts, "I'll show him, if I have to break the backs of ivery wan of ye."

Inside the tunnel, Bob was standing on the heading muck heap. His lips were moving rapidly; his shouted orders came fast into the din of steel and beaten rock. The work was going smoothly. Upon him was a new assurance, a graver bearing than he had owned before, backed by a greater, more quiet certainty.

CHAPTER XIV.

Christmas Eve in Eagle Pass began in that peculiar drab quality of darkness which always accompanies a heavy snowstorm. In Mother Kelly's boarding house the dining room was aglow with many lights; Smith and Miss Lowden were busy with evergreen boughs, decorating the place. They worked feverishly; they laughed with the brightness of anticipations.

Down on the long gray dump, the outside gang worked with shovels, keeping the tracks clear for the muck cars; the incandescents on the trolley poles cast yellow glowings over these toilers. A dozen men were busy in the timber sheds. The row of saloons which comprised the town was quiet; and the flakes fell softly on the narrow sidewalk.

In the post office and drug store, Daulton was sorting out the mail, in all probability the last for some days to come. The storm promised to be of long duration, and drifts were already heavy along the main line. The doctor was not clothed in accordance with his surroundings this night. He was immaculate in evening dress.

His hair was smooth; his shoulders were back; his bearing as he walked about putting the letters in their boxes was well-nigh military.

Bob entered the store. He was in oilskins and hip rubber boots. The doctor glanced around the corner of the tier of boxes, and saw him.

"Hello!" said Daulton. "Aren't you going to the dance?"

Bob's eyes widened as they fell on Daulton's raiment. "By Jove! I'd forgotten what a dress suit looks like!"

"But how about you?" persisted Daulton.

"I'm going late," said Bob. "There's bad ground inside, and no one but me for walker until Carraher's ribs are well. I'll be along before the evening's old. I say! You make me wish I'd brought my own glad rags along."

"My boy," said Daulton, "I always remember to dress three times a year—Christmas, Fourth of July, and the queen's birthday. A man must stick to some conventions, or he's gone to seed entirely." He laughed, and Bob laughed with him.

"I don't know," the latter said, "but you're right. I'd forgotten it was Christmas Eve if it hadn't been for preparations up at Mother Kelly's. Ever since we struck that shaky ground, and Carraher got laid up, there's only one thing I *do* know—that's weekly progress."

"It's doing you good. You're learning things. As a walker you get closer to the men. I say there—close that door, will you? Oh, it's you, Martin! Good evening, and Merry Christmas."

Wild Martin, closing the door against the swirl of snow that was trying stubbornly to follow him, stamped his booted feet. "Evenin', doctor. Same to ye." He let his bold eyes go to Bob. "Evenin'," said he, and nodded curtly.

"No mail for you, Martin," said the doctor.

"Didn't hardly look for none, but I run down at mealtime and tuk a long chanst." Wild Martin shook the snow from his big shoulders.

Bob looked the new shift boss between the eyes. "That bad ground stays with us," he said. "Think we'll get out of it before New Year's?"

The question had a peculiar effect on Wild Martin. He scowled, then hesitated a moment before answering. It had suggested a subject which had been on his own mind.

"Say," said he finally, "I'm goin' to lay aff to-morrow."

Bob sighed. He had known it was coming. He had now the crisis for

whose solution he had planned with Mother Kelly.

"How many of the others are going with you?" he asked.

"The hull bunch!" Wild Martin answered, with a bit of defiance in his voice.

"Puts the work in rotten shape," said Bob. "I'd counted on your shift to pull rock, the way you started in."

"I can't help that," Wild Martin said, with finality. "To-morrow's Christmas. I always go on a drunk Christmas."

Bob did not answer this. Instead, he turned his back on Wild Martin. As the other started to leave, Bob said quietly:

"Are you men going over to Napoleon this time, or are Moreley and that crowd coming over here?"

It was entirely unexpected. Wild Martin let his jaw drop. Then he grinned. The grin passed quickly. He shut his lips tight.

"They're comin' acrost the hill," he said tersely.

"The reason I asked," said Bob, drawling slightly, "I—er—thought you'd get it over sooner if the free-for-all took place on this side. You don't have to go over and back, you see. Is that right?"

Wild Martin was busy digesting the fact that Bob showed so much knowledge. It made him slow to reply.

"Well," he agreed, "I guess it ort to be right."

"See here," Bob spoke crisply, "you'll knock off work at midnight, and by to-morrow at this time you'll all of you be pounded pretty well to pieces. I'm willing to be fair. I'll give you a week. It's time enough for you to have your fun and sober up. I want you to bring that heading shift in on New Year's."

"New Year's!" Wild Martin shouted. "If I would come back then, thim others w'u'd not. There's January pay day a-comin' after."

"I understand," said Bob. "I've made a special order for this time because it's Christmas. You can drag this month's time checks on the twenty-sixth. That clears it all up at once."

"Ye mean——" Wild Martin hesitated.

"For this once," said Bob, "I want you men to get it done and over with. Understand? And I look for you and your gang back on New Year's."

"Well," said Wild Martin, with a mighty oath, "I'll bring my bunch back then."

"All right." Bob spoke carelessly. "Good night."

"Good night, sir," said Martin. And as he left, he wondered to himself how he had come to tack on that title.

Daulton smiled and shook his head. "That's doing it handsomely," said he.

"Nothing of the sort," said Bob. "I've been working it out by arithmetic. I get the best of it. It saves the January lay-off at pay day. There won't be a baker's dozen downtown then."

"Right!" said Daulton. "I say—you've taught those tarriers."

"I'm teaching them," said Bob. "It isn't altogether fun. But there are some things I can't change in them, any more than I could make them stop eating with their knives. I can give them this drag day—as a Christmas present. Of course, if it was any other month, I couldn't."

"Exactly," said Daulton. "A man can't back up when he's made an order."

"Not even if he made a mistake," said Bob grimly. "Well, I'm going inside. I'll see you at Mother Kelly's." He paused at the doorway. "Do you know," said he, "I can't help wondering myself who's going to lick this year—our crowd, or the crowd from Napoleon."

"Our crowd, of course," said Daulton.

"Well," Bob smiled, "I hope so."

CHAPTER XV.

Bob did not leave the tunnel until the evening was well started. The bad ground had made trouble for the runners in the heading. When he saw that they had things in hand, he called Wild Martin to one side.

"I'm going out," said he, "for the night. You're walker until the change of shifts. The outside gangs are short;

there's nothing to look after there. And when you knock off, there won't be a baker's dozen on 'graveyard shift,' anyhow." He went over a few details of a general nature which concerned the work.

Wild Martin listened. As Bob mentioned these other matters, he nodded comprehensively at each.

"All right," said he at the end. "I'll pound them on the backs till the 'graveyard' comes."

In the giant's bearing when he was at work there was a quiet efficiency, a spirit of responsibility. These things had never showed so much as they did to-night. Bob felt their presence. He had no worry with the work in this man's hands.

And Martin, watching the superintendent, found himself respecting a sureness in Bob's demeanor, a knowledge of the job's details, coupled with an incisiveness that had crept into his voice. Nowadays, speaking of Bob, he still called him "the jude"; but the old contempt was not so strong in his tone; it was no longer an epithet. This young fellow seemed to know his business, after all.

As he was leaving, Bob turned. "I'll look for you and those heading runners at New Year's," he shouted.

Wild Martin nodded. "I said so, didn't I?"

They parted. The gulf between them had narrowed. It still existed; there was as yet no bridge. Whenever they faced each other, it was two fighters, each looking out lest the other get inside his guard. But it was Martin who felt himself sometimes losing ground.

When Bob leaped off the muck train at the blacksmith-shop platform, hard by the portal of the tunnel, his eyes went to the sidehill. Mother Kelly's boarding house was a blaze of light; down the night wind came the strains of an accordion mingled with the wailing of a badly played violin. It was a waltz tune, an old, old melody—"The Blue Danube."

And for all the lack of careful execution, that music, softened by the distance, insisted on some of the feeling that the composer had given it. It throbbed its story of moonlight and love—its silver river current and its knitted hearts.

The muck train had rattled on down the dump. The platform of the blacksmith shop was silent. Bob stood still, alone in the shadows. He drank in the sad happiness of those strains. He stared at the lighted windowpanes up there on the hill with eyes that were widened with eagerness. His face was white and tense. Into his heart came a dull ache. Then he shut his teeth close together and walked up the slope.

He gained the office through a side entrance. The room was dim, and in the dimness he made out two small white patches. He frowned, and walked over to the place where he had distinguished them. A cot bedstead which Smith usually kept covered with old blue prints had been drawn out from the wall. On this lay the two white patches. Peering more closely at them, he saw what they were—two sleeping babies!

Through the darkness from the room below came the last few bars of the "Blue Danube." Bob bent over the sleeping babies. He had forgotten that any one had babies up here. It all seemed strange and out of place. He felt suddenly the roughness of his clothes, the dirt upon his face. He hurried to his room.

It came back to Bob, as he was changing his clothes, that there were gentler things in life. The only softness that he had known up here he had been forced to shut away from his heart whenever it came to him. He had held himself down rigidly to the harder, sterner things. But now it hit him between the eyes. And it seemed like ages since he had remembered anything save hard rock and harder steel and men harder than either rock or steel. He felt a tugging at his heartstrings as he drew off his working garments.

He hurried getting into the suit which he had worn on that journey to Eagle Pass. And now insistently—he could not fight it away—came the vision of two eyes of deep brown—eyes that were

like two black pools, looking up from his arms into his own eyes.

When he opened the door of the dining room, Bob was quite stiff, as formal as a young man can make himself when he has shut himself into the importance of his position at the head of things.

The room was bright; the floor was bare of furniture; many of the guests were gathering, forming two sets for a quadrille. They were all talking rapidly, and through the voices came the gentle laughter of women. The walls were nearly hidden with evergreen boughs. Through the dark branches gleamed the incandescent lamps.

In the middle of the floor, handsome, distinguished, stood the doctor. He was acting as the master of ceremonies.

"Two more couples!" he called. His eyes fell on Bob. He smiled a smile at once dignified and full of the spirit of the occasion. He waved his hand. "Mr. King," he cried, "the ladies have been waiting for you. Ladies, Mr. King is here."

Bob smiled back at him. He was genuine, was Daulton—the right sort. Miss Lowden, dazzling in a dress of soft black stuff that clung to her figure, and wearing a band of gold in her hair, glanced up at him. Her cheeks were pink; her eyes glowed as she smiled into his eyes. Bob felt his blood race through his veins. She was standing beside Moran. The day walker, in a suit of bright blue, whose coat still showed many wrinkles from long repose in a trunk, was striving, with knit brows, to bring the end of his coat sleeve over a cuff which he had shot out too far, and at the same time to let no one know what he was up to.

The sight in some way made Bob lighter-hearted.

Mrs. Dolan, the storekeeper's wife, tall and thin, and with an eye like the eye of a rattlesnake, came up on the arm of the power-house engineer, whose bowed legs made him walk like an Irish comedian.

"One more couple!" called the doctor. He glanced meaningly at Bob.

Down at the end of the room Mother Kelly sat. No one was beside her. At first Bob hardly knew her. Mother Kelly was clothed in silk. From top to toe, she was resplendent in a garb of changeable green; its colors shimmered in the light; they shifted mysteriously from the hue of a young pea to a cold, metallic blue. Her hair was banded around with a broad pink ribbon which traversed the edges of her head from brow to the brown nape of her neck. Her mighty arms lay supinely in front of her; her big, toil-worn hands were folded on her lap. Mother Kelly had not danced that evening.

Bob knew it the moment his eyes fell on her. There is something in the soul of a woman which cannot hide itself under any exterior. Mother Kelly could not help betraying it now, although she herself perhaps had not allowed herself to know it.

Bob walked swiftly across the room. He came straight to Mother Kelly. She smiled up at him. And being, after all, a woman, Mother Kelly knew what he had come for. She did not say that she knew it. Nor did she alter her expression in the slightest. But even as she greeted him with:

"Well, young man, you're late!" a pink began to steal into her bronzed and wrinkled cheeks.

"May I have the quadrille?" Bob bowed, asking her.

"Go along!" She smiled in spite of herself, and in that smile was the gratification which her heart felt.

"One more couple!" As the doctor called again he saw them, and he smiled happily.

They came on the floor, her arm on Bob's. A mighty weight, that arm of Mother Kelly's. And her bulk loomed big beside Bob's slender figure. But under that dress of pea green, that changed mysteriously in the shadows to cold, metallic blue, the great bosom was heaving a little more than usual. Deep inside her, Mother Kelly's heart was leaping again as it had not leaped for many a long day.

"Lad," said she to Bob, as they took their places, "I've not danced fer better than twenty years."

The music had started. "Salute your partners!" Daulton called.

Bob bowed low to her. She dropped a curtsy, and no woman's knee bent more gracefully, nor did any woman in that room sink lower than she did. The pride of her sex was strong within her—and she was Irish!

They danced together through the changes. Once, passing round in a grand right and left, Bob looked down the room, and caught Miss Lowden's eyes fixed on him from the other set. And the smile that Miss Lowden gave him was filled with a thankful admiration that made him glad he had lived this long to get it.

The second figure was livelier than the first had been. Bob danced with the formal grace of one who has learned it beyond mistake or misstep. But Mother Kelly danced it with the grace of the born dancer. And when they took their seats she was surrounded by the men in the room. They were competing to seek her for the next waltz.

"You told us you couldn't dance," said Smith, "and now you blossom out this way!"

"Be aff wit' you, Smithy!" she said. "No more I can. I've fergot ut this manny years." She did not tell him how her diffidence had made her wait to be urged, nor how Bob's tact had made her feel that he wanted her for partner. But her eyes were sparkling, and although she declared that she was tired she was on the floor during the remainder of the evening.

"You are a dear!" Miss Lowden exclaimed to Bob, as they waltzed together. He smiled down at her, and then his face became serious.

"Mother Kelly is more to me than any one, excepting——"

He stopped abruptly. And during the rest of the dance he said nothing more. He was stiff; when she spoke to him as they were going to their seats, he answered her rather brusquely.

She felt that sudden alteration in his demeanor. She pressed her lips close together for a moment; then she, in her own turn, spoke coldly to him.

Once or twice as the evening wore on and other dances came, she glanced in his direction. She knew that he was ignoring her purposely. She felt it keenly. She strove not to show it. And, striving, she smiled more frequently when others danced with her. Her woman's instinct made her take pains to see that Smith sought her out as often as possible. And Bob, seeing these two pass him on the floor, felt as if some one had thrust a dull knife into his heart and turned it slowly.

Late in the evening Bob found himself sitting beside Mother Kelly.

"Lad," said she, "how does the work go?"

He told her of his interview with Martin in the post office. She smiled broadly.

"Ye handled him right," said she. "He'll be back New Year's. Ye saved a ruction. I think ye have thim now."

He drew a deep breath. "Honestly?" he asked.

"I do," said she. "Ye've made good."

He forgot his trouble for the moment. He was boss! He grew bigger now—a man in his own eyes. Then the throb of pain returned to his heart.

"I think," said he, "I'll go out and have a smoke."

He left Mother Kelly and walked the room's length. The dancers were hard at it. Daulton was two-stepping with the buxom wife of the power-house engineer, the mother of one of the two babies who were reposing up in the office. He beamed on Bob as they passed. Daulton had a happy faculty of enjoying things to the utmost. He was an enthusiast, and yet he held his place. He was himself among these people, the college man, the man of the old school.

Bob glanced around the room. Last summer he would not have believed it possible that he should be dancing with people of this type—and seeking Mother Kelly as his first partner! Yet it seemed natural enough now. He had changed a great deal in these months.

Outside, in the coolness of the winter night, he smoked his cigarette. The snow was falling softly. The big flakes cooled his face. Down on the dump,

the string of incandescent lamps showed —a row of yellow blurs. A sound made him turn his eyes toward the town. From the saloons there arose a luminous patch into the darkness. He heard the roar of voices; they were rough voices, deep-throated, a crowd of big-lunged men yelling. And his pulses quickened at that sound. It brought him back to that first pay night, when he had faced the mob. For the yell was one of deep ferocity.

Then came the crash of tramping feet, the sharp shouts of men in combat.

Bob smiled. Evidently the men had arrived from Napoleon. The big "free-for-all" was on, the yearly fight, a tradition here already. It must happen. He knew that. Listening, he caught himself hoping that Eagle Pass might win; that Wild Martin and his followers might batter their enemies, might pound their way to victory.

For these were his men!

Things had changed. He saw them differently. He was much older. A boy no longer. A man, with a man's deep responsibility. He had been lacking that before. He breathed deeply. This was better.

The snow was soothing on his warm cheeks. The music had ceased inside. A step sounded back by the door. Some one else had come to seek the outer air. He heard low voices—a man's voice and a woman's. And the woman's voice was very sweet. The accents were to his ear endearing.

As he turned on his way back to the room, he saw them. It was Smith and Miss Lowden.

Into Bob's soul crept back that bitterness. He could not understand the scheme of things, the cruelty of the universe, which made him love this girl, which made her love another, and that one his companion.

Morning had begun to grow well along into the small hours when the dance broke up. The dancers departed by twos and in little groups. Into the air, heavy with falling flakes, he sounded many a "Merry Christmas!" Bob, calling greetings to others, saw the girl as she left, along with the doctor and Mrs. Daulton, whose road lay past her little cabin. She did not look in his direction.

CHAPTER XVI.

When he was going down from Mother Kelly's boarding house to the portal on the afternoon of the twenty-sixth, Bob saw a black patch against the white snow of the mountainside.

"Them runners from Napoleon," said Moran, who was with him. "They are a-going to catch the rotary and make the switchback. 'Twill be their last chanst to get back to work, I take it. By to-morrow we'll be snowed in."

The flakes had been falling steadily all Christmas Day, but the storm had abated during the night. Now the leaden sky promised a speedy renewal. The rotary, coming up the grade, paused at the spur where the main line ended and the first leg began its climb. Bob watched the big men swing on board the freight cars.

"Well," said he "I'm glad they didn't stay over. With our bunch dragging to-day, there'll be drunkenness enough here without their help."

The rotary started up the hill. The string of freight cars was black with men.

"They ort to be glad to get out," Moran said quietly. "The way they got hammered up night before last! They say 'twas the biggest free-fer-all on public works in years. No use talkin' —that gang of Wild Martin's is handy wit' their fists."

Down in front of the commissary, a crowd had gathered already, waiting for their Christmas presents—the time checks which Bob had promised. He glanced in their direction, then shrugged his shoulders, and looked the other way. They were not a pleasant sight for fastidious eyes. Many of them bore the marks of battle, and few were in anything approaching a thoughtful frame of mind. The sight of them, idle and carousing, angered Bob. But in the anger was a sort of tolerance. After all, it was the only way they knew.

By evening it was snowing hard again.

Few men were on the work. The revels downtown were in full blast vhen Bob went down to the post office.

"No mail for a week," said the doctor, "or ten days. This is going to be the heaviest snow of the winter. Hark!" He raised his hand.

The two of them stood still, listening; their faces whitened. A deep, hollow moaning came down upon the place. Through the storm it descended from some distant height, and the floor of the building trembled. A monstrous groan, as if one of the mountains were in awful pain, and, uttering its plaint, had stirred upon its bed.

"Snowslide," said Daulton. "A big one, too."

They glanced at each other, then smiled, as if ashamed of the fear which had come over them.

"Nature," said Bob, "is not gentle when things go wrong. That made me feel mighty small and helpless."

"Gentle?" said Daulton. "Great Scott, no! She's like those drill runners. You could hardly call her methods Chesterfieldian when she's aroused."

They chatted for a half hour or so. Once again while they were talking, they stopped abruptly, and stood silent while that hollow groaning came from the peaks.

"I never can get used to that," Daulton said. "I've heard it often in the mountains, too."

That night when he came out from the tunnel to set the outside gang to shoveling out the tracks on the dump, Bob caught the rumble of distant avalanches.

"Twenty feet on the level," Smith told him the next afternoon, when he arose from his day's sleep. "At this rate, we'll have a record fall before the storm is over."

Bob was taking it easier than usual just now. The shifts were woefully short of men. A handful of drill runners and a little crowd of muckers were pecking away at the granite. He was not wasting time trying to teach machine handling to the Greeks now. Instead, he saw to it that the timber gangs —whose men were steadier than the hard-rock men—caught up with the roofing, and that the outside gangs kept the tracks cleared. He was preparing for the advent of Wild Martin and his followers.

For Bob had faith in Wild Martin's promise. He believed the giant would bring back his shift, and when that crowd came he knew the others would follow them.

As a consequence, Bob spent longer hours downtown at the doctor's in the evening. Passing the row of saloons on his way to the post office, he heard the tumult within those long barrooms, the shuffling of many feet at stag dancing, the roaring of many voices, and occasionally the sharp thud of fists.

The old intolerance was not bothering him now. He could not help a sense of disgust at these things, but he saw that there was a reason behind them. And, seeing this, he began to figure on a method by which to counteract the pay-day evil.

"No use," said he to the doctor, "to have them carousing so long. It isn't necessary. If they have to let off steam, they can do it in other ways."

"How, for instance?" Daulton asked.

"I have an idea," said Bob, "but I'm going to figure it out first."

He did this figuring with Mother Kelly. He felt more confidence in her than in any of the others about him.

Miss Lowden was staying at the boarding house during the week. School was closed, and Mother Kelly had insisted upon it, because of the remoteness of the teacher's cabin.

"Ayther," said Mother Kelly, "ye'll wake up some marnin' to find the place buried, or ilse there'll be a snowslide will carry ye and the shack down in the crick."

There was good sense behind the warning, and so Miss Lowden stayed. After supper she used to sit in the dining room. Smith usually stayed there until Mother Kelly drove him away to bed. And after Smith had gone, Bob used to drop in for a midnight lunch. So it happened that the school-teacher was present when Bob unfolded his plan to Mother Kelly.

"The idea," said he, "is this: As soon as the weather clears, and I can get the order out, I'm going to send to San Francisco for several sets of boxing gloves. Then I'll start a tournament for the championships of Eagle Pass—heavyweight, middleweight, lightweight, and featherweight. I'll hang up prizes, and announce it. Now, you see, there'll be matches every month—pay-day night. What with the bullies trying to stay sober to fight, and the rest of the crowd staying away from downtown to watch the scraps, it ought to counteract things to some extent. It will give them a good chance to bruise one another like civilized beings."

"That sounds pretty good," said Mother Kelly thoughtfully.

"Later on," said Bob, "after things get to going, if it works, I can furnish some other entertainment for them once in a while. It wouldn't cost much to get some one-horse vaudeville troupe to stop over for a one-night stand. But that will work out afterward."

"I think," said Miss Lowden, "that's fine! You're the first one I ever heard try to really do anything for these men."

Bob flushed with pleasure at her words. "It isn't for them," said he. "It's for the work. I'm doing it in cold blood. I can't say I like those fellows so awfully much—not after what's come and gone."

"Young man," said Mother Kelly sternly, "I've dead dogs lie. There's manny a tarrier was in that crowd at the commissary is sorry he wint now."

"Well," Bob was talking for Miss Lowden, "I don't hope to change those hobos. They'll get drunk, of course. But they'll not spend all their time at it for a week. And I thought if Daulton would work with me—I know he's done a lot of that sort of thing on the quiet—he could make quite a few of them bank their wages, buying money orders, you know."

"That's splendid!" said Miss Lowden quietly.

"Daulton," said Mother Kelly, "would break his neck to help ye do ut. He's a fine man, the doctor."

Bob hardly listened to her now. Miss Lowden's praise had driven all else from his mind.

Strange, he told himself, when he had gone back underground, how he could not help shaping his actions with that hope in the back of his head that they would meet credit in her eyes. He had no business to care for her. And there was Smith.

But, for all his reasoning, he could not help thinking constantly of her now.

New Year's Eve he went to bed shortly after midnight. He wanted to be up before noon; he wanted to see whether the men would come back. If Wild Martin kept his word, Bob was sure the situation was in his own hands. He had to wade waist-deep through drifts going to the boarding house that night. It had kept the small outside gangs busy clearing track upon the dump and shoveling snow from overweighted roofs.

Every night the booming of avalanches had been in the air. He had gotten so that it did not freeze his blood as those first ones had done, but he could not become entirely accustomed to that awful diapason. He went to sleep with the roar of one directly across the cañon in his ears.

CHAPTER XVII.

The winter sun was streaming rays into his window when Bob awoke New Year's morning. He leaped out of bed. In the office he heard Smith whistling "Annie Laurie" as he worked. The assistant stopped when Bob began his dressing.

"Sun's out," he called.

"I see it is." Bob frowned. He did not like to hear Smith whistling that love song. He hurried into his clothes. As he was pulling on his coat, Smith called again:

"I say! Come out here and see something, will you?"

Bob came into the office. Smith was standing by the window. Joining him, Bob gazed through a patch of the pane which the frost had left clear.

Eagle Pass was clean, unsullied white

in the noon sunshine. Undulating billows showed where the timber piles lay hidden on the dump. Only occasional strips of building walls close under the eaves broke that crystalline pallor.

Between the boarding house and the row of saloons was a bare strip of mountainside more than two hundred yards in width. This strip extended upward for more than one thousand feet, like a wide avenue reaching skyward among the trees. At the bottom of this avenue a line of men extended one hundred feet in length. They showed deep black against the snow.

Big men, clad in their oilskins, they were wading waist-deep. They were coming from the direction of the saloons. They were marching slowly, with effort, plowing their way toward the tunnel portal. Bob counted.

"Just fifty-one," said he. "Good work!"

Wild Martin was leading his fellows to resume their toil. And following these, as they had followed them away from that toil, the rest of the drill runners had turned their back upon the pleasures of the yearly drunk.

Smith smiled widely. "They wouldn't do that for Carney," said he.

Bob felt his blood tingle in every vein at that praise. He turned and looked at Smith with proud, happy eyes.

Then the pride went from his face, and his cheeks whitened. Smith turned pale. They stood there facing each other, eyes full of a great, horrible fear.

The mountain spoke aloud above their heads. A deep, rending groan. It endured. It swelled louder; it became a roar. Lower than the lowest note on an organ's register, it welled over everything.

The windowpanes were trembling; beneath their feet, the floor was shivering like a live thing.

The very air, overladen with that thunder, seemed to shudder to its awful weight of sound. The volume grew. It was descending upon them, closer, louder, deeper as it came.

Both men stood petrified for the moment. Then together they turned to the window. Smith battered for a moment at the frozen sash; he loosened it; he raised it. They thrust their heads out.

Far up, near the head of that bare avenue whence the timber had been cleared, the white snow was moving. The surface up there heaved as the surface of the sea heaves in a storm. At first, as they gazed at it, the motion seemed almost stationary; then they saw how the billowing snow masses were descending down the mountainside. A slow, mighty march. Then, as his eyes hung on it, Bob saw that the slowness was but a deception born of the mighty size of the moving mass.

It was racing down. Trees close to the edge were apparently speeding upward. One hemlock, projecting beyond its fellows, was caught by the outer limits of the slide; it started down the mountainside, throwing its branches about like a swimmer tossing his arms.

Bob awakened from the lethargy into which the appalling spectacle had plunged him. The sight of that tree made his eyes go suddenly down toward the foot of the mountain, where he had been looking with pride only a moment before.

"My men!" he cried.

They had heard, and they had seen. The foremost of them were more than halfway across the clear interval; the rearmost were one hundred feet out on the unprotected strip. Now they had paused, looked upward, then turned to flee back. They were struggling in the waist-deep snow.

Even as he looked at them, caught in this trap, Bob saw how they were fighting grimly. There was no panic; that line remained almost as straight as it had been before.

"They're sticking to their old tracks," he cried. "No panic for them!"

A roar like the crashing of many batteries of artillery drowned his last words. The slide swept down past the boarding house. In its path the black forms still lunged and leaped toward their goal. Then suddenly they seemed to rise higher. One form whirled here, an uptossed arm showed there. The rushing snow now covered everything.

Bob was sobbing as he ran down the

hill. He did not know how he had left the office, he did not remember anything that he saw or heard. He knew now that he was running for help. Down by the blacksmith shop, he met Moran.

"I sent a man inside," the day walker said quietly. "The shift will come out wit' shovels." He looked at Bob, and then he swore. His voice choked. It was the first feeling he had ever shown since Bob had known him. "I seen ut," he explained. Then: "Here's a shovel, and there goes the timbermen."

Bob started, shovel in hand, toward the side of the mountain, the spot where he had seen the last man vanish.

"Easy," said Moran quietly. "Not there." He pointed down to the cañon bed beside the dump. Bob, following his gesture, saw an upheaved surface, broken by many sharp lines, upthrown into abrupt waves. "That's where ut stopped," said Moran, and hurried toward the place.

A score of men were there already. Some had come from the saloons, others from the timber sheds and the dump. Among these Bob saw Daulton, in his shirt sleeves, and bareheaded, as he had come from his store.

"Now, men," Bob cried, "there are fifty-one of them. I was counting them when it came."

"Get into line!" Moran's voice came sharper than usual. "Right acrost. Every man got a shovel? All right. Now, start down here. Each of ye take a six-fut strip, and go straight down."

They started. Many were working feverishly, Bob among these. "Aisy, lad," said Moran. "This is a stiddy job. Ye need yer strength." He walked along the line, a shovel in his hand, warning several against the haste that would wear them out too soon.

The shift came from inside the tunnel; they set to work along with the rest. In spite of the walker's warnings, they panted as they toiled; they threw the snow in huge lumps. The air was filled with these.

Bob was sweating now. He paused to fling aside his coat and vest; he peeled off his outer shirt, then bent to it again. As he thew himself into the toil, he heard Smith panting beside him.

A yard down, four feet, then six. And only snow to reward their efforts. Another foot. Bob's shovel encountered something hard. He uttered a shout. The walker jumped into the hole beside him. Smith swore as he heaved the loads from his shovel blade. They uncovered the head and shoulders of a man. The shovels sank deeper. They reached down and pulled him out by the shoulders He stared up at them.

"L'ave me be. I can get out now. Go fer the rest!" He struggled out. "I'm all right," he cried. "I tell ye. Gimme a shovel!" He joined them, and worked with them.

A moment later Daulton shouted that he had found another. They hauled this one forth—Bob recognized the face—one of Wild Martin's heading runners. The fellow was dazed, hardly sensible. As the cold air struck his lungs, he groaned.

"Take him up to the bunk house," Daulton ordered. "Rub him down. He'll come through, all right."

He turned and resumed his shoveling. In the next half hour they had uncovered ten more, none badly hurt. But each one whom they found was a little worse off than the last one had been.

They bent to their shovels; they worked as they had never worked before. And now they were reaching men who shrieked as soon as they breathed the outer air. Daulton dropped work and went with the bearers to the bunk house to administer such remedies as would relieve the lung congestion.

The pace of this toil was terrible. None spared himself. A man dropped in his tracks from sheer exhaustion. Others were staggering. Bob heard Moran warning him against too great exertion. The words came to him as if from a great distance. He was as a man delirious with a fever. He did not feel the efforts which he was making. He knew nothing but one fact: These men had been coming to keep their word with him.

The afternoon wore on, one terrible hour after another. Men came to take

the places of worn-out fellows who in their turn rested. Mother Kelly had leaped into the deep, wide trench to relieve one of these. She stood there wielding a long-handled shovel, doing the work of two men. Miss Lowden and the doctor's wife came down, struggling with the weight of huge pails of coffee.

Many turned from their task to drink gaspingly; then resumed the work again. Bob did not once stop the steady movement of his arms. It seemed as if something outside of him were doing that shoveling, instead of himself.

They found Wild Martin senseless, huddled up where the snow had borne him, looking like one dead. As they carried him away to the bunk house, Bob looked up for the first time; he gazed after the group who were bearing the giant's apparently dead body. He clenched his teeth to hold back a sob, and then he threw himself at the snow bank as if it were an enemy.

Ten men came out senseless. Two were still lacking. Moran was grasping Bob by the shoulders, shouting in his ear.

"Ye'll kill yerself," the walker cried.

Bob shook his head, and went on shoveling. At the end of the line they uncovered the fiftieth man. As they were taking him out, Bob came to the last one. He bent down with Moran and Smith to lift this one from the snow. When they had gotten the limp form up on the trampled surface of the drifts, Bob stared at Moran.

"The last," said the walker.

Bob nodded in a dazed sort of a way. He started to climb out. He staggered, stopped, reeled, and fell.

"He's clean done out," Moran said.

An hour later Bob came to his senses. He was in his bed, and Doctor Daulton was pouring hot whisky between his teeth.

"Well," said Daulton, "they'll all come through. Three cases of pneumonia, I guess."

"None lost?" Bob whispered. His voice seemed to have left him.

"Not one," said Daulton. "You're nearly as badly off as any of them."

Bob shook his head from side to side on the pillow. He still felt very dizzy and weak.

"I'll be about in an hour," he whispered.

"Lucky if you're out in two days," said Daulton. "You've overdone badly."

Even as the doctor spoke, Bob felt his senses slipping from him. He was strangely sleepy.

CHAPTER XVIII.

That snowslide had clinched Bob's prestige. He was sick at Mother Kelly's boarding house for a week. And the news of that sickness went around the bunk houses. Old drill runners told how they had dropped beside him, unable to keep pace with his efforts in the work of rescue. The knowledge that he was lying helpless up there on the hill because he had given his last ounce of strength and will power to save their lives did not get any extended comment from the victims on the slide.

"There's more to the 'Old Man' than I thought," said Wild Martin, discussing it in B bunk house.

That was the most that any one of the crowd said. It was the most that any one could say. From that day on, Bob owned the title which Wild Martin had bestowed on him. The "Old Man" he remained. And in the parlance of the hard-rock men, that is the highest title which can be given. It means the boss of everything and every one on the work.

By February pay day the boxing gloves had come, and the tournament for the championships of Eagle Pass was inaugurated. There were three grueling fights in B bunk house. The fighters, stripped to the waist, hammered joyously at each other's faces, and bruised with all the heart that was in them. Shorty Carraher, able to get about nimbly now, refereed. The audience packed the bunks and the benches, roaring their approval at every well-delivered blow. And after the battles came a stag dance to the music of

the accordion and the violin. That pay day was duller for the saloon men than any of its predecessors had been.

It was the beginning of a new order of things. Bob, watching combatants and crowd, knew that he had planned well. He had not abolished carousals, nor did he ever expect to do that, but he had relegated them to a secondary place. He walked homeward from the bunk house with the sound of the accordion and the violin in his ears, mingled with the heavy tramp of dancers' feet. He owned the situation now; he was the boss.

Smith caught up to him. The assistant was smoking his ancient brier pipe. They walked together in silence for some distance. Finally——

"I'd like," Smith said, "to have two weeks off. Do you think you can spare me?"

He put the question in a matter-of-fact way. But there was something in his voice which made Bob look sharply at him, something of repression. He was puffing again at his pipe, but the puffs came a little faster than usual. He was looking straight ahead of him under the electric lights.

"Nothing wrong, is there?" Bob asked.

Smith's deep flush did not show in the light, but an awkwardness was evident as he hesitated.

"Oh, no," he said then. "Quite the contrary. I—er—just wanted a vacation."

"By all means," Bob told him.

"What on earth," he wondered, "could it be?" The assistant was always taciturn, close-mouthed as to his plans. But this time he had struggled as if he had been in half a mind to tell something. The thing remained in Bob's head after he had departed.

A coast wind was bringing one of those early thaws which make one seek the outer air. The next day Bob started for a walk down the track. Miss Lowden met him at the foot of the hill.

"Well," said she, and her eyes were dancing, "you're without your assistant."

Bob stopped. She was smiling happily. Evidently there was something back of this vacation of Smith's which he did not know. The girl seemed bubbling over with a secret.

"He's gone for two weeks," said Bob aimlessly.

"Yes," said Miss Lowden, "for two weeks."

The air was heavy with a lazy, moist warmth. Beside the track the snow was dripping; little streams of water ran along the right of way. A promise of the coming spring was in the breeze. They stood there, and they both felt it. Nature was speaking to them in whispers. Her face was looking up into his. Bob felt a great, dumb yearning. Even as he began to fight the battle against it, she spoke.

"I was the only one who knew," said she. "He kept his secret mighty well, I think."

"What secret?" Bob's eyes showed his surprise as he asked the question.

"Don't you know yet?" she asked.

He shook his head.

"That's just like him." She laughed aloud. It thrilled Bob. "Why, he's gone to get married!"

"To get married!" Bob stammered. "Why—I thought—he—why—you and ——" He paused, and stared at her, bewildered.

"What did you think?" She was as surprised as he now.

Bob was silent for a moment. Then: "Take a walk with me," he said, almost brusquely. His head seemed to be going round and round. He had some things which he must untangle at once.

She did not answer, but she walked by his side. They went down the main line, between the dripping, soggy snow banks; the spring breeze, like a robin singing ahead of his time, made their blood run faster. Their cheeks were red. Bob was thinking hard.

"No," he said, at length, "he never told me. Smith is a peculiar fellow; he doesn't talk much, you know."

"I know," she said quietly, and glanced at him, a sidelong look. Her breast was heaving a little as she spoke. "He confided in me. He was troubled

a bit last fall. Really it's quite a romance."

"I'm awfully anxious to hear it." Bob's voice was full of a big, sudden hope.

"He'd been engaged." Miss Lowden was looking straight ahead of her now, and the color was deepening on her cheeks as she spoke a little more quickly than usual. "But it had been broken off for some reason. He was feeling cut up about it a whole lot. And he told me then. I was sure that the girl must be wrong, you know. He's an awfully dear fellow. And I told him that the best thing to do was to wait and let things mend themselves. Not to go and lose heart and all that sort of thing. Well, he used to come and tell me how things were going. That was when you first came. You remember the day when you were so brave up there on the mountain?"

She flashed a sidelong look at Bob that made his heart leap within him as he bowed and murmured something.

"Well, that evening he had heard from her again, and he was feeling that things must be coming right, after all."

Bob remembered that evening, and how Smith's companionship with Miss Lowden had seemed to him.

"It didn't take long after that," she went on swiftly. "The day we went to see the rotary he told me how he'd gotten word a week before to the effect that she was coming West this winter. Now, that was just like him to say nothing about it for a week, even to me! I was *so* glad for him then."

"Yes," said Bob grimly, "I remember." He had the picture of her hand slipping to Smith's.

She looked up at him. They had walked down beyond the little depot now; the camp was hidden by a curve.

"You do remember?" She asked the question with wide eyes. Her voice was sincere. Yet he was sure she knew now what it was that was in his memory.

"I do," said he. "I suffered that afternoon."

He stopped walking. She stopped, and stood beside him. And now her woman's heart must have told her plainly how things stood. She was trembling a little; the color had fled from her face; then it returned in a deep wave. He was looking straight into her eyes. And he saw what was there.

"I've been so blind"—he was speaking very slowly now—"and such a self-centered fool up here. I never saw things as they were. I've eaten out my heart—seeing you two together. I thought you cared for him. And now—you don't!"

"Why, no!" She had herself in hand again. She was mistress of the situation. He felt that, too. His jaw went tight as he fought to assert himself.

"I'm not going to wait," he said quietly, "to tell you. I love you!"

It startled her, although she had realized that happiness for some moments now.

"We'll walk on a bit?" he asked abruptly.

She bowed her head. They walked down the track together. Upon the mountainside the pines and hemlocks showed deep black against the crumbling banks of snow. The moist, warm air bore a subtle perfume, the promise of the far-off summer.

At last they stopped again, and she lifted her face up to look into his eyes.

"And I love you," she told him simply.

It took them a long time to come back to the camp. And they did not say many words. But they told each other much—of stifled longings, of the pain of dumb waiting when neither had understood.

Mother Kelly was splitting wood when they climbed the hill together. She turned and faced them, one hand upon the handle of her ax. Her eyes went over them. Her lips relaxed.

"And so," said she, "ye've done yer courting, young man? Ye made up fer lost time, all right."

CHAPTER XIX.

They had a dance when Smith came to Eagle Pass with his bride. The doctor was responsible for this. Daulton

made it a fourth occasion of the year; he wore his dress suit.

As master of ceremonies, the doctor enjoyed himself hugely that evening. He also unbent to dance the Virginia reel with Mother Kelly. In her dress of changeable silk, whereon the pea green shifted mysteriously to a cold, metallic blue, Mother Kelly was much sought after this time. Only two women approached her in honors feminine. One of these was the little, mouselike bride whom Smith had brought here. The other was Miss Lowden. And Miss Lowden was handicapped in the number of her partners from the fact that she so unmistakably belonged to Bob. He had that air of happy proprietorship which comes to a man whose approaching marriage has become a matter of common knowledge. His fiancée, in her dress of soft, clinging black, and the golden band upon her head, was strangely beautiful now. More beautiful than she had ever been. For in her deep black eyes there was a great, soft light that always showed.

Mother Kelly was sitting at the end of the room when Moran came and took a chair beside her. The day walker was in his gala suit of bright blue. He struggled to adjust a stubborn shirt cuff; then, following the eyes of his brawny neighbor——

"The Old Man," said he, "is stepping lively to-night."

"He ort to," said Mother Kelly. "He's lucky, that bye. Luk at the woman he has got!"

"A fine, upstanding girl," said Moran, in his listless voice. "She'll make him a good woman, she will."

Mother Kelly fell silent, watching those two, waltzing to the "Blue Danube." Her face grew softer.

"Mike," said she, "it's hard to think of the likes of her a-growing old and bearing childer, and seeing them go from her."

"She'll have an aisy life," said Moran. "Luk at her man! Lord love ye, he's going to be prisident of this here road some day!"

"Wot's the odds," said Mother Kelly, "if he does be prisident some day, and rich? Them two will have their troubles—jist like all of us. Oho, I know! Ut comes to rich and poor. 'Tis because I have the likin' fer him and the love fer her that I can look back meself and see what they have got in front of thim. We all grow old, we do."

Smith came up for a dance. She smiled widely at the assistant. "Smithy," said she, as she arose to waltz with him, "ye are a rascal! Ye put one over on the hull of us."

"My word!" Daulton was saying to himself. "This camp is changing. We're becoming civilized."

The room was aglow with lights; the evergreens masked the bare walls. Even the accordion and the violin had improved since that dance of Christmas Eve. The doctor's eyes strayed to his own wife, waltzing light-heartedly with Smith's rodman. The care of her home and children had not yet driven the prettiness from Mrs. Daulton. Daulton's own eyes grew finer as he looked at her.

"It's the ladies," he said to himself. "They make us gentlemen—even up here in Eagle Pass."

He smiled at Bob, who was walking by him with Miss Lowden on his arm. The two of them sought the outer air together.

"Wait until they're married," thought Daulton. "My word! We'll have a dance then that will be a dance!"

A week later a train pulled into Eagle Pass. A passenger train—three cars—baggage, diner, and a private coach. It was the president's special. By orders it had come here, without previous announcement.

President King swung from the rear steps—a little man, wiry—mastery written in the many lines on his quick face. He walked straight to the tunnel portal.

As he was hurrying briskly toward the blacksmith shop, President King frowned; his face looked as if he might be worried. He was doing much thinking.

He had interchanged a few letters

with Bob during that previous fall and winter. He himself had written no question regarding the work. And Bob had volunteered no information. Often, sitting back in his Broadway office, the little, gray-haired man had wondered what was happening up there in the heart of the mountains. But, wondering, he had always shut his lips tight; and he had waited.

And now he was about to see. He only knew that progress reports showed good work. Eagle Pass was pulling more rock than Napoleon. That was all. Good in itself. But due to what? Or whom? His reason told him that Bob had made good. His heart often faltered in spite of that reason.

He came to the blacksmith-shop platform. It was early in the morning. The ingoing shift was gathering there. Big men, clad in black oilskins. Their faces were many of them stamped with recklessness; bold faces, hard, and eyes that gazed fearlessly before them. The men were talking among themselves. The bigger ones—giants, who carried huge chuck wrenches—swore to emphasize their words. A tough crowd. After all, it had been much to expect of a boy to gain a place among these swaggering giants. And Bob was a gentleman.

King noticed how they looked at him, and in the curiosity of their faces he saw also the indomitable roughness of the toiler whose trade is hazardous.

One of them, bigger than his fellows, was standing near. The man was delivering a curt order. Evidently the shift boss. King spoke to him.

"Where's your superintendent?" he asked.

Wild Martin turned at the question. He looked into the eyes of the questioner.

"Don't know," he said tersely; then, calling to a power-house engineer who was going off shift:

"Say, Bill, where would the Old Man be?"

King drew a deep breath. He was prouder than he had been a moment before. Bob had evidently earned his spurs.

The power-house engineer was jerking his thumb down the track.

"There he is now," said Wild Martin, and turned to give some order to his shift.

King had not looked at the giant when he answered. His eyes had followed the direction of the gesture. Bob, clad in corduroys and oilskins, with a squam hat on his head, was coming up from the timber sheds.

They shook hands quietly.

"I saw your car and hurried up here," the younger man was saying. "I was down on the dump."

He looked at his father. His own eyes were proud.

"Want to take a look inside?" he asked.

King nodded.

They rode in together on the muck train. They spent the morning in the tunnel. When they had lunched in King's private car, they came back and went over the outside workings. King was saying little. Bob was explaining details, telling of new needs.

To these things President King paid some heed. But what interested him most, though he did not speak of it, was Bob's manner with the men. He heard his son give orders; he saw those orders received. And he heard the bosses in their turn ask questions or make suggestions. He drank in these things as a thirsty man sucks in deep drafts of water.

When the day shift was going out again the two stood on the platform of the blacksmith shop. King pointed at Wild Martin.

"Foreman?" he asked.

Bob nodded. "He can pull more rock than any other heading boss on the work," said he quietly.

"Tough, isn't he?" King looked quizzically at his son.

"When he's laying off he's the toughest man here or in Napoleon," said Bob.

"How'd you come to give him that job?"

"I told you," Bob smiled, "he's the best shift boss we have. The men would go to the devil for that fellow."

King shrugged his shoulders. "I fancy," he remarked quietly, "you must have had a bit of trouble before you got authority with *that* crowd."

"Well," Bob said slowly, "I *did* have to do a bit of adjusting before I fitted in. But that's done now."

They were walking toward the railroad track. Bob was silent, thoughtful. King spoke.

"I think," he said, "you've learned what I sent you here for. Do you imagine that you could tear yourself away?"

Bob looked into his father's eyes.

"Not until the job is finished," he said. "I'll tell you what I *do* want."

"Well, what?" King demanded.

"This job," said Bob, "would go better with both sides under one man. I want—when I've shown that I can do it—to handle the whole thing."

King whistled. "You really like it here, then?"

"I want to finish what I've started," said Bob. "And I do like that part of it. Besides"—he paused, and his cheeks reddened—"I'm going to marry next month."

King exclaimed his astonishment.

"I'm going to take you up to my quarters now," Bob went on evenly. "To Mother Kelly's boarding house. I want you to meet Mother Kelly herself—that's her splitting wood up there on the hillside. She's done a great deal in helping my—er—education. I owe her much. And I'm going to introduce you to my fiancée, too."

There was something in Bob which King found it hard to get accustomed to—a quiet certainty, as if what he said was so simply because he said it. Encountering this, King felt at once pride and a sense of his own helplessness.

President King's special dropped down the grade that night. President King sat alone in his private car, thinking. He had done what he had set out to do. He had given Bob what he had wanted to give him.

GEORGE RANDOLPH CHESTER, author of "Get-Rich-Quick Wallingford," has written a new novel which is better than anything he has yet done. He describes it as a tale of politics and red roses. It will appear serially in the POPULAR. You will get the first installment in the next number, on the stands two weeks hence, July 7th.

A DOUBLE-BARRELED ESCAPE

MINERS are among the most heroic people in the world. Danger is always beside them, and they are schooled to believe that at any time they will come face to face with death. The result of this is that they are humorous in their boldness.

In one of the mines of Pennsylvania there was a cave-in which imprisoned a miner named Jack Thornton. The accident happened on Friday afternoon, and the fellow laborers of the entombed man set to work at once to dig him out. It was not until Sunday morning, however, that they reached his prison chamber, and by this time they were wondering whether he had been suffocated or starved to death. One of them stuck his head through the aperture made by the picks of the rescuers and called out:

"Jack, are you all right?"

"All right," came the reply, and then after a pause, "What day is this?"

"Sunday," answered the friend.

"Gee!" exclaimed Jack. "I'm glad of that. That was one Saturday night when those saloon keepers didn't get my wages!"

Home Again

By J. Edward Hungerford

I AM back to punchin' cattle from my little fling in town,
Whar I passed up all my freckles an' my coat uh golden brown;
Whar I dropped a thousand dollars seein' things by day an' night,
Whar I acted plumb outrageous in th' glare uh 'lectric light;
Oh, my nerves are weak an' quakey like I'd been off on a spree,
An' my voice is meek an' shaky like it hadn't orter be;
I am kinda shy on muscle, an' my face is drawed an' thin,
An' yuh betcher boots, ol'-timer, that I'm *glad* I'm *home* ag'in!

When I blows into th' chuck house, ol' Mizzoury shakes his head,
Sez 'e: "Texas, yore plumb frazzled, look wore out an' underfed;
Thar's some cabbage an' some murphies, gitcher fork into that fry—
When you've finished, shove yore plate up fer a chunk uh this yere pie!"
All th' boys wuz glad to see me, from ol' Pap to Shorty Bill,
An' they kinda watched me anxious while I et my mortal fill;
Then th' foreman rose an' mumbled, with a sorter sheepish grin,
"Golly, boys, it's shore refreshin' seein' Texas home ag'in!"

Well, I hikes out to th' corral, fer to wrangle up my hoss,
When I runs amuck uh Monty, who's th' Bar X stable boss.
"Holy smoke!" he gits out raspy, peerin' squint-eyed through his specs.
"That thar pesky bronk uh your'n, he's plumb loco fer yuh, Tex!
Hasn't been hisself a minute sence yuh went an' hit th' trail—
Jes' been mopin' round unhappy, with a limp, dee-jected tail!
Here he comes, the leetle rascal—Lordy! ain't he ga'nt an' thin?
You kin betcher spurs, ol'-timer, that *he's* glad yo're home ag'in!"

I ain't kickin' none on cities, fer I've knowed their magic spell,
An' I 'lows to them that likes 'em they's th' one *real* place to dwell;
But with me I'd ruther linger whar a man kin lift his voice,
An' git echoes from th' foothills with no interferin' noise;
Whar the air is clean an' bracin', an' th' sky is free uh murk;
Whar a feller's strong an' husky, with an appetite fer work;
Whar thar's always warmth uh welcome, an' good friends to take yuh in—
Golly! Hombre, but it's *bully*—this yere bein' *home* ag'in!

The Peculiar Gifts of Mr. John T. Laxworthy

AND THE ADVENTURES AT THE PARADISE HOTEL IN WHICH HE BECAME ENGAGED

By E. Phillips Oppenheim

Author of "The Tempting of Tavernake," "Peter Ruff and the Double Four," Etc.

PRINCIPAL CHARACTERS IN THE SERIES.

MR. JOHN T. LAXWORTHY: Chief of the trio of investigators. In appearance he is both unremarkable and undistinguished; he is of somewhat less than medium height, of unathletic, almost frail physique; his head is thrust a little forward, as though he were afflicted with a chronic stoop; he wears steel-rimmed spectacles; his hair and mustache are iron-gray. "My chief aim," he tells his two associates, "is to make life tolerable for ourselves, to escape the dull monotony of idleness, and incidentally to embrace any opportunity which may present itself to enrich our exchequer."

MR. W. FORREST ANDERSON: Assistant to Mr. Laxworthy. A thoroughly British, self-satisfied gentleman; his figure is distinctly corpulent; he wears scarcely noticeable side whiskers, and his chin and upper lip are clean-shaven.

MR. SYDNEY WING: Assistant to Mr. Laxworthy. From the tips of his shiny tan shoes to his smoothly brushed hair he is unmistakable; he is young, he is English, he is well-bred, he is an athlete. His face is pleasant, unintelligent.

V.—THE VAGARIES OF THE PRINCE OF LIGURIA

MR. LAXWORTHY took an intelligent interest in the gambling at Monte Carlo. He found the atmosphere of the rooms unbearable, and he addressed two complaints to the directors concerning the ventilation, which it may be hoped produced their due effect. Apart from these drawbacks, he found the scene interesting. On the day of his arrival he wandered from table to table, keenly interested in watching the different systems of gambling and the physiognomies of the players. It was not until he had been in the rooms for over two hours that he ventured a bet on his own account, which he promptly lost, greatly to his disgust. After that his interest waned for a time, and finally he left the rooms and sat by himself before one of the small round tables of the Café de Paris, where he arranged his shawl about his shoulders, and ordered a pot of English breakfast tea.

It was precisely at this moment that Mr. Laxworthy's character as a man of gallantry was finally established. Inside the rooms, half an hour before, he had been dimly conscious of the smile of a woman from the other side of the tables, a good-looking woman with a mass of red-gold hair, a long lace coat, and a little Pomeranian under her arm. They had brushed against one another at the door, and his apology had been answered a little more graciously, perhaps, than the occasion demanded. She was walking past him now, very slowly, and as she passed she glanced with amusement at Mr. Laxworthy's shawl and teapot.

"Monsieur feels the cold?" she murmured, with a smile.

Mr. Laxworthy rose at once to his feet.

"Without the society of madame," he replied, raising his hat. "To offer tea, perhaps, to a lady so essentially Pari-

This series began in the May Month-end POPULAR. News dealers can supply back numbers.

sian would be clumsy, but there are other refreshments if madame would condescend."

Madame sank into the chair by his side.

"You are without doubt English," she said, smiling up at him, "and very English. But where did you learn to speak my language like that?"

"Madame," Mr. Laxworthy replied, "in my youth I was more of a citizen of the world. It is only for the last fifteen years that I have lived in the quiet places. All this is new to me. Pardon. You will permit me to order you something?"

Madame was disposed to take some coffee. She declined a liqueur, however, and Mr. Laxworthy found himself agreeably surprised by her voice and manner.

"It seems strange," she remarked, "to talk with any one who finds anything new here. For ten seasons I have spent three months of the year here. Can you understand that I am a little weary?"

"You play?" Mr. Laxworthy asked.

She shrugged her shoulders.

"What can one do? I risk a few louis, and if I lose I leave off. It is not at the tables that the big gambling is done in Monte Carlo."

"I have been given to understand," Mr. Laxworthy said, "that a great many people go instead to the Sporting Club."

She smiled.

"There is high play at the Sporting Club," she admitted, "but there are private houses in Monte Carlo where one may see the most extraordinary gambling in the world."

"You interest me," Mr. Laxworthy declared. "I must admit that I find the study of people engaged in gaming particularly interesting. I am, in my small way, a student of humanity, and the effects of gambling upon certain types of character are more than interesting."

"You are among those who think," she murmured, looking at him out of her soft-brown eyes. "It is a pleasure to talk with you, monsieur. Here the men are all butterflies. They think and care for nothing except the amusement or the passion of the moment. That is why I like your countrymen. They are more serious. They see beyond."

"Madame," Mr. Laxworthy declared, "you flatter me."

"Come," she said; "I stopped to talk with you because I found your appearance amusing. Tell me, why do you wear that gray shawl?"

Mr. Laxworthy frowned.

"I am subject to rheumatism about the shoulders," he replied. "Any sudden change of temperature I feel at once. The shawl is a necessity to me."

She laughed at him.

"Rubbish!" she exclaimed. "A young man like you to talk of rheumatism!"

Mr. Laxworthy felt his spectacles. To be called young by a woman so charming, whose eyes seemed all the time trying to provoke some answering light, was, after all, not disagreeable.

"Madame," he said, "I am perhaps a year or two older than I appear, but if it affords you pleasure, behold!"

He carefully removed and folded up his shawl. She smiled approvingly.

"You look much nicer now," she declared. "Please go on and tell me about yourself. You are really a stranger here, and you are interested in your fellow creatures?"

"That is entirely my position," he assured her.

"You are alone in Monte Carlo?" she asked.

"With two friends," he replied; "also Englishmen."

For some reason or other she seemed disappointed.

"Neither of them has ever been here before," he went on. "They are both entirely new to this sort of life."

Madame's disappointment was mitigated.

"They are like you—personable?" she asked. "Forgive me, but I ask for a reason."

Mr. Laxworthy pointed them out. They were on the steps of the Casino, looking about them. She raised her lorgnette and approved.

"Very good," she declared. "Now you must give me your card, and present your friends. Then, if it pleases you, I

shall give you the opportunity of seeing things in this place which may interest you. I have the entrée to a house where play takes place every night for stakes far exceeding anything you can see in the ordinary way. I will take you and your friends there to-night, if you promise that you will not talk about your visit."

"Madame," Mr. Laxworthy replied, "it is a promise easy indeed for me to make. I never betray a confidence."

"Your friends are coming," she replied. "You shall present me. My name is De Cléry—Madame De Cléry, remember."

"It is not a name, madame," Mr. Laxworthy declared, "which I shall ever be able to forget."

She looked at him curiously.

"I think," she said, "that in your younger days you must have been quite a courtier."

Anderson and Sydney duly arrived, and were duly presented. Whatever surprise they may have felt at seeing their chief in such company, they effectually concealed. Madame had without doubt the power to charm, and for ten minutes or a quarter of an hour they sat together at the little round table, talking gayly. She rose at last, almost regretfully.

"We are to meet again to-night," she said. "That will be really something for me to look forward to, for so many of my friends are away just now that I am even a little lonely. At what hour would you care to go? Will eleven o'clock be too early?"

"Your own hour, madame," Mr. Laxworthy begged. "We could not, I presume, induce you to dine with us first at Ciro's?"

She hesitated for a single moment.

"I shall be charmed," she replied. "About half past eight, I suppose? Could I trouble you?" she added, turning to Sydney, with a little smile. "My automobile is there—no, the gray liveries. If you could step across, it would be charming of you."

Sydney hurried across the road, and a moment or two later a handsome automobile, upholstered in white, with chauffeur and footman on the box, and a beautiful bowl of pink roses upon the table, drew slowly up. There was a coronet on the panels. Madame stepped inside, with a little farewell nod.

"It is au revoir, then," she said. "And, Mr. Laxworthy," she added, laughing at him out of the window, "take care of that rheumatism."

The automobile rolled away. Mr. Laxworthy and his friends followed slowly on foot toward their hotel. In accordance with their established custom, neither Sydney nor Anderson asked a single question. Their curiosity, however, was obvious, and Mr. Laxworthy, after a preliminary cough, proceeded to gratify it.

"You were doubtless somewhat surprised to see me engaged in conversation with a lady of Madame De Cléry's appearance," he remarked. "I can assure you that she is a perfect stranger to me, both personally and by reputation. I make it a rule to converse amiably with any one who addresses me, and the lady in question made, I may say, marked overtures. The inference is naturally simple. She desires to profit by our acquaintance. If she succeeds in amusing us a little, why not? One is willing to pay for amusement."

Mr. Anderson coughed.

"Isn't this sort of thing just a little dangerous in Monte Carlo?" he remarked.

"Especially with such a thundering good-looking woman," Sydney put in.

Mr. Laxworthy shrugged his shoulders.

"I," he said dryly, "am not susceptible. The undoubted attractions of madame are not likely to disturb my peace of mind. I go to this house she speaks of. I shall find pleasure in watching men gamble for huge sums, if, indeed, that is to be seen there, but I do not think that any one will induce me to wager more myself than I am content to lose as the price of an evening's entertainment."

"So long as we are able to keep to that," Anderson remarked. "The worst of it is, you can never tell where these things will end."

"One hears such strange stories," Sydney added. "A promiscuous acquaintance at Monte Carlo is about as risky a thing as one can think of."

Mr. Laxworthy looked from one to the other of them.

"Well," he said, "for real Scotch caution commend me to you two. Here we are in the very promised land of adventures. We have one offered to us, the ending to which, perhaps, may be a little obvious, but which still possesses charms, and you two talk caution like a couple of old housewives. Madame De Cléry does us the honor to dine with us this evening, and we shall certainly visit in her company the house she has spoken of. At this hour of the day I do not usually indulge, but I am informed that the cocktails at the bar on my right here are unusually well mixed, and form an excellent apéritif. We will enter and drink together to a successful and amusing evening."

Madame arrived at Ciro's barely ten minutes late, and justified in every way Mr. Laxworthy's secretly conceived opinion of her. She wore the plainest black evening gown, with only a single ornament suspended from her neck by a band of black velvet. Her hat was a triumph of simplicity. Even the gold of her hair seemed subdued by the manner in which it had been dressed. No one who entered the restaurant was of more distinguished appearance, though it was noticeable to the three men as they greeted her that a whisper passed from one to the other of the little groups of diners.

Mr. Laxworthy had selected a table at the corner of the terrace. Madame took her place with a smile of approval, and buried her face for a moment in the cluster of pink roses by the side of her plate.

"You are indeed civilized people," she murmured, smiling at Mr. Laxworthy, who had for the evening discarded his shawl. "Tell me why it is that this is really your first visit to Monte Carlo? You have traveled much in other countries?"

Mr. Laxworthy spoke of South America and other of the places which he had visited. As the dinner progressed, it was clear that Madame De Cléry had changed her opinion of her new friends, and with her altered point of view a certain uneasiness now and then betrayed itself in her conversation and reference to the evening to come. Toward the conclusion of their repast, a trifling incident happened, unnoticed by the others, but appreciated by Mr. Laxworthy.

A little group of three people were leaving the restaurant—a woman and two men, obviously English, and obviously people of some consequence. Ciro himself conducted them to the exit, in order to gain which they had to pass within a few feet of Mr. Laxworthy and his guests. Madame De Cléry had been in the middle of a sentence, which seemed somehow to die away upon her lips. Her fingers were nervously clasped in one another under the tablecloth, her face was suddenly hard and strained. The remnants of her youth and freshness seemed suddenly to have gone. She looked with dull, longing eyes into the face of the woman who passed. Mr. Laxworthy alone saw the recognition, saw the slight drawing away of the newcomer, the frown on the forehead of the tall, good-looking man who brought up the rear of the procession. The little tragedy—one of those of which the world is full—was over. Mr. Laxworthy leaned over the table, and talked for a moment earnestly with his two friends. He had forgotten something of interest to tell them. Madame looked across into the garden, and struggled with her ghosts.

The conclusion of the meal was gay, though most of the conversation lay between Sydney and madame. As they rose and strolled out, she seemed afflicted by a curious hesitation.

"After all," she said, turning to Mr. Laxworthy, "perhaps it would amuse you more to go into the rooms. There is always plenty to see there, and I have not been there in the evening for some time."

Mr. Laxworthy shook his head.

"The rooms will be there another

night. Your offer might not be repeated. I have really a fancy to watch this high gambling of which you have spoken. Unless you foresee any difficulty, or embarrassments, let us keep to our original program."

Madame made no further objection.

"My automobile is at the door," she said. "Come!"

They all stepped in. There was still room to spare.

"To the Villa des Acacias," madame ordered briefly.

"Is it far?" Mr. Laxworthy asked.

"About halfway to Mentone," she replied, "on the summit of the hill. It is rather a beautiful place. You should see it in the daytime. Perhaps," she added, "if you all behave very nicely, our hostess may ask us to lunch one day."

They turned toward Mentone, away from the shore, and climbed the great hill. Soon they left the main road, and entered a dark avenue, which they circled round and round until suddenly they came to an open space, and saw above them the villa, which seemed indeed to be built on the rocks. Though the night was warm, the curtains were apparently all drawn, and only by odd chinks of light could one believe that it was inhabited. As they drew up before the front door, madame turned round.

"Look!" she said.

"The view," Mr. Laxworthy declared, turning his coat collar up, "is magnificent. I find this chilly breeze, however, a little dangerous."

"You take too much care of yourself," Madame De Cléry murmured. "I perceive, Mr. Laxworthy, that you are afflicted with nerves."

"I have reached an age," Mr. Laxworthy replied, "when a certain amount of care of one's person is necessary. I admit that the view to which you point is one of the most magnificent in the world. I admit that those lights which seem to be gleaming at our very feet, are like the spangles upon a woman's cloak. I do see that it is possible, even at this hour of the night, to catch the outlines of those white buildings, which throw their shadows into the sea. It is all wonderful, madame, but it would interest me more just now to see the door open."

She laughed softly at Sydney.

"Really," she declared; "I have met no man for a long time so refreshing as your dear Mr. Laxworthy. Behold!"

The door was opened. A pale-faced manservant ushered the visitors in. Fronting them was a great bank of hothouse flowers. Softly shaded electric lights hung from the ceiling. The wide hall was crowded with trophies. A second servant was already relieving them of their coats. A third man had thrown open the door of a small room on the left-hand side of the hall.

"We go in here," madame remarked, throwing her cloak to a maid, who seemed to have appeared from nowhere. "At the Villa des Acacias we invert the order of things. It is our hostess who comes to us."

They found themselves in a charmingly furnished little apartment, full of divans, books, and papers, water colors of the vicinity upon the wall, photographs everywhere. The servant was arranging coffee and liqueurs upon the sideboard, but save for themselves the apartment was empty. Madame De Cléry walked restlessly about.

"Our hostess has peculiar ideas," she explained. "I am one of her intimate friends, but she does not permit even me to introduce strangers unless she herself approves. I have telephoned to say that I am bringing you. She will come and talk to us in a minute or two. In all probability she will then invite us to watch the baccarat or the roulette. If she does not, there is nothing to be done but to make our bow and depart."

Almost as she spoke, the door was opened. The butler who had admitted them stood on one side.

"Madame La Marquise!" he announced.

A woman of striking appearance entered. She was tall and thin, her face was as white as powder and natural pallor could make it. Her hair was gray, her eyes black. With the same breath she seemed young and elegant, elderly

and scholarly. When she spoke, her voice was a charm.

"My dear Lucie," she exclaimed, giving both her hands to Madame De Cléry, "this is indeed a pleasure! Present me to your friends."

Madame De Cléry presented them in turn. Each was allowed the tips of her fingers.

"I find in Mr. Laxworthy," Madame De Cléry remarked, "an interesting claim upon our sympathies. This is his first visit to Monte Carlo."

The lady who had been announced as Madame La Marquise turned and looked at Mr. Laxworthy. For several seconds she said nothing. Mr. Laxworthy, too, preserved silence. In a sense, the moment was significant.

"Mr. Laxworthy has doubtless been a great traveler in other countries," Madame La Marquise said softly.

"In my younger life, yes," Mr. Laxworthy assented. "Of late years I have not found it amusing to wander far from home. My health requires attention, and my small estate interests me. My two friends here have persuaded me into this trip."

"We must do all that we can to make it pleasant for you," Madame La Marquise replied. "It is charming of you to climb the hill that I may claim from now the pleasure of your acquaintance. Some evenings we play here. It might interest you to watch us. To-night, alas! I am alone."

There was another silence. Madame De Cléry seemed a little discomposed. Mr. Laxworthy's low bow might indeed have been meant to hide his disappointment.

"Mr. Laxworthy," Madame De Cléry said, "is a philosopher. I have found him studying expressions in the gaming rooms. He makes notes of what he sees. He travels, I believe, with the manuscript of an uncompleted work."

Madame La Marquise nodded slowly in appreciative attention.

"Mr. Laxworthy has indeed the air of a scholar," she remarked. "He will find, I am sure, much in Monte Carlo to interest him."

This time her tone seemed final. The three men glanced at Madame De Cléry for their cue. There appeared to be nothing left but to take their leave. Madame La Marquise herself led the way to the door.

"You will do me the honor, Mr. Laxworthy?" she said. "I shall send you a card in a few days for one of my small parties. You may find them interesting. You stay here, and at what hotel?"

"For a few days only, madame," Mr. Laxworthy replied, "at the Hotel Hérmitage."

They were in the hall now, and the butler was already moving toward the front door. Then from the door of the front room a young man, burly, almost corpulent, with flushed face, suddenly appeared. He held out both his hands to Madame De Cléry.

"Ah, Lucie!" he cried. "This is delightful! But you were not going?"

Madame De Cléry paused.

"Dear Julien!" she exclaimed. "Indeed, I had only brought three friends of mine for the pleasure of presenting them to your aunt."

"Absurd!" the young man declared. "Present me also to your friends. We are dull to-night. Monsieur Le Prince has drunk too deeply. All the time he asks for more company. We need livening up. Present me to your friends at once. They must join us."

Madame La Marquise stood like a figure of stone while the introductions progressed. The newcomer, with his arm through Sydney's, would have led them at once to the room from which he had issued, but Mr. Laxworthy hesitated. He turned at once toward his hostess.

"Madame," he said, "it is perhaps your wish that we should pay you a visit at some other time?"

She shook her head.

"Monsieur Laxworthy," she replied, "I appreciate your consideration. I will admit that there are circumstances which made me a little reluctant to offer you the hospitality of my rooms this evening—yet, after all, you three are men. I think that you, Mr. Laxworthy,

have learned how to take care of yourself in every part of the world. Stay if you will."

Already the little party was crossing the hall. Mr. Laxworthy and his friends were ushered into a room different in every respect from anything they could have imagined. The floor and paneled walls were of light oak. Although a faint perfume of rose water hung about the place, the ventilation was perfect. There were no pictures upon the walls. The furniture consisted only of divans and a number of chairs. The room was almost T-shaped. At the farther end was a baccarat table, at which three men were seated. At the end nearest to them was a roulette table. Of the men at the other end of the apartment, one was tall, red-faced, with a mass of gray hair. The others were insignificant.

"It is Monsieur Le Prince who sits there," Madame De Cléry whispered to Mr. Laxworthy. "One does not introduce here. You play or not, as you choose."

His hostess bent slightly toward Mr. Laxworthy.

"This was what I used to call my music room," she said, "when I built the villa ten years ago. Since then, alas! music has become a small thing in Monte Carlo. The fever for gambling is everywhere. To keep my friends I have been forced, as you see, to turn it into a room where one may play."

"The necessity seems regrettable," Mr. Laxworthy remarked, "but I find it interesting. It is indeed strange that in one little corner of the world associations seem inevitably to arouse an instinct that often remains dormant in other countries."

The young man, who had been standing on the outskirts of the circle, laughed.

"Perhaps you yourself, Mr. Laxworthy," he said, "are beginning to feel that instinct. Will you play? The prince there is eager to take another bank at baccarat."

"I prefer to watch baccarat," Mr. Laxworthy answered dryly. "Roulette, if you will."

"Roulette, by all means," the young man declared. "Playing for so short a time, the odds in favor of the bank will almost disappear. The house shall make a bank against the visitors, or the visitors shall make a bank against the house—which you prefer."

"The visitors are in the majority," Mr. Laxworthy replied. "Let the house take the bank."

The young man seated himself at the wheel. He turned round and called up the room.

"Monsieur Le Prince," he said, "we play at roulette. Come and stake some of those thousand-franc notes which you have won from me to-night. What do you say, you others?"

They both turned round, men of uninteresting and undistinguished appearance. Monsieur Le Prince laughed harshly.

"I will come, perhaps, soon," he cried. "At present I restore my nerves with your excellent brandy."

They saw then that his eyes were bloodshot, and it seemed to Laxworthy and his companions that it was the task of the two who sat with him to keep him quiet.

"To-night," the young man declared, "I have no courage. I limit you to a thousand francs in even chances, fifty francs on the numbers, and a hundred francs any combination. At this infernal game I always lose."

They sat down. Madame De Cléry, with Sydney by her side, Mr. Laxworthy opposite, next the young man who took the part of the croupier, and by his side Forrest Anderson. Madame La Marquise hesitated for a moment. Then she went and stood behind Madame De Cléry's chair.

"Madame La Marquise will not be seated?" Mr. Laxworthy asked.

"Roulette wearies me," she replied. "All these games of chance weary me. They are resolved by no laws. One plays eternally, and one learns nothing. One has nothing to hope for. If it were not for my friends," she continued, fanning herself lazily, "there should be no play in my house."

They played for a dozen coups or so.

The bank won and lost, and won again. Mr. Laxworthy was in the act of placing a hundred-franc bill on the space in front of him when the attention of all of them was diverted by an angry voice at the other end of the room. The prince had risen to his feet. He stood there—a huge, unprepossessing-looking creature, head and shoulders taller than his companions, with bloodshot eyes, puffy cheeks, and protuberant veins.

"Let me alone!" he cried thickly. "If I choose to play, I play with whom and when I please."

He pushed one of the men, who would have restrained him, on one side, and came slowly down the room toward them. He walked unsteadily. His shirt front was stained with tobacco ash and coffee. His tie was crooked, his hair unkempt. All the time Mr. Laxworthy watched him approach. The prince eyed them all fiercely.

"Madame La Marquise," he growled, "you would send me home, eh? Not yet! I shall play a little while with these good people. Afterward, they shall all play baccarat. Julien takes the bank, eh? Then we know what to expect. Still, I will play. A thousand francs on the red, *mon ami.*"

He stood glowering at them. Mr. Laxworthy's eyes scarcely left his face.

"My dear prince," Madame La Marquise said, "do you realize that you have been here in your present attire since midnight yesterday? To please you, I have found people to play baccarat all through the day. My friends here only play roulette. Take my advice, and go home."

"Why should I go home?" the prince answered roughly. "I have won money here, I like it here, I like all of you except that miserable young Englishman who insulted me. I have a quick method, monsieur," he continued, turning suddenly toward Laxworthy, "of dealing with those who do not know their places. I find there are many Englishmen who have that fault."

Mr. Laxworthy looked at him steadily through his spectacles, but he neither spoke nor gave any indication of having heard a word he had said. Monsieur Le Prince glared at him, red-eyed and truculent.

"You, sir, with the spectacles," he called out, "I speak to you! Do you hear?"

Mr. Laxworthy, who had just won a small coup, finished counting his notes. Then he looked up.

"Certainly I hear," he replied. "I wish you would speak in a lower tone. I find your voice disagreeable."

There was a dead silence. Monsieur Le Prince struck the table with his fist so that the counters rattled.

"You hear him!" he cried, glancing around. "He finds my voice disagreeable, that miserable little ape with the bent shoulders and the spectacles! A tradesman from England! He finds my voice disagreeable!"

"Not only that," Mr. Laxworthy continued calmly, "but I find your manners beastly."

The prince glared across the table. Then very slowly he began making his way around it toward where Mr. Laxworthy sat. Mr. Laxworthy sat back and crossed his legs. Julien leaned toward him.

"For God's sake, man, don't irritate him! You know who he is? The Prince of Liguria. He is first cousin to his majesty. He does what he likes here. I have known him to strangle a man for saying less than you have said."

Mr. Laxworthy smiled.

"He will not strangle me," he declared.

The prince was standing now over Mr. Laxworthy. Instead, however, of at once attacking him, he pointed to the end of the room.

"Show them, you, there, Mark and Delamores," he called out. "Show them how I treated the young Englishman who grumbled at my naturals. There is another one here who has to be taught his place in a minute. Show them, I say."

Madame La Marquise glided to his side.

"Monsieur Le Prince," she begged, "all that I could do I have done. For Heaven's sake, be discreet."

The prince shook himself free.

"Show them, I say!" he called out, in a voice of thunder, "or I'll wring your necks where you sit!"

They rose hesitatingly, and pushed the table before which they had been sitting, to one side. Then one saw that on a sofa behind—the sofa upon which the prince had apparently been sitting—was stretched the figure of a man. Madame De Cléry sprang to her feet and rushed across the room. It was one of the two men who had dined at Ciro's.

"It is Victor!" she cried. "How did he come here? What has happened?"

"For twenty-four hours," thundered the prince, "I have played baccarat at that table. I have won money, it is true, but I play well. There came tonight that pale-faced Englishman. He spoke of my naturals—there were four following. He asked me a question. There he lies, with my answer upon his temple."

Mr. Laxworthy rose deliberately to his feet. He followed Madame De Cléry across the room. Together they bent for a moment over the young man who lay upon the sofa. Then Mr. Laxworthy turned round.

"Madame La Marquise," he asked, "is there a doctor to be found?"

She glanced toward the prince.

"A doctor is not necessary," she said. "The young man will recover presently. If we sent for a doctor, he would expect us to explain."

Mr. Laxworthy came slowly down the room.

"Sydney," he directed, "you will find a telephone in the hall. Telephone at once to a doctor and to the chief of the police."

The prince threw up his hands, and laughed. He stood before the door and raised his huge arms.

"Let me see," he called out, "who will dare to leave this room."

"My friends and I are about to leave it," Mr. Laxworthy replied. "As for you, you will remain here."

The prince smiled—a very ugly smile. Madame De Cléry came softly down and laid her hand upon Mr. Laxworthy's arm. She was very pale, but she was struggling hard for composure. "Mr. Laxworthy," she said, "I am sorry that I brought you here. I did not know that the prince was in the house. Believe me, it is no use sending for the police. While he is here, he must be obeyed. No one will listen to a word against him. His rule here is one of the most impious things in the world. It is a thing to which you must bow. That young man on the sofa is my own cousin, and he is badly hurt. Worse would come of it if we make a scandal."

Mr. Laxworthy quietly disengaged himself.

"All that you say, madame," he replied, raising his voice, "might well be true if that man were indeed Monsieur Le Prince. As a matter of fact, I am surprised, Madame La Marquise, I am surprised that you should for one moment have been deceived. Look at him closely. I tell you that he is no more the Prince of Liguria than I am. His name I have forgotten, but I will tell you this: He is a Swede, not a Russian, and he bears on his right arm the brand of Sing Sing Prison."

The silence which followed could almost be felt. Then, with a roar, the man came at Mr. Laxworthy. Within a few feet he pulled up short and staggered back. Mr. Laxworthy's hand was as steady as ever, and the muzzle of his revolver was black.

"I remember your name now," Mr. Laxworthy continued. "You are Carl Osterhafen. You were thrown into prison in New York for keeping a gambling den. You declared yourself there to be the natural son of a Russian nobleman. It was very likely true.

"Madame La Marquise," he proceeded, turning toward his hostess, "if this man has won money in your house, he should be compelled to restore it. Make him do so now. Sydney, stop those others from leaving."

Osterhafen's companions had tried to reach the door, but were prevented. Madame La Marquise was shaking with passion.

"Mr. Laxworthy," she said, "I am eternally indebted to you. These two I

knew to have once, at any rate, been in the suite of the Prince of Liguria. They came here yesterday and told me that he was in Monte Carlo, incognito. For him I got up a baccarat party last night. There were others who said that he cheated. He has won three hundred thousand francs, which he has about him, and nothing which I could say or do would induce him to leave the place. Tell me what I shall do?"

"The young man, who is Madame De Cléry's cousin," Mr. Laxworthy declared, "is not seriously hurt. Insist upon the return of the three hundred thousand francs, restore their losings to your friends, and let him go. A scandal here will do no one any good."

Osterhafen swayed upon his feet. The rims under his eyes were purple; his face was diabolical.

"I restore nothing!" he cried. "You little devil!"

Once more he seemed about to fling himself upon Mr. Laxworthy, and once more he pulled up short.

"Osterhafen," Mr. Laxworthy said calmly, "I have dealt with more dangerous brutes than you, and I have never failed to shoot straight when the moment came. Put the money on the table, and be gone before madame changes her mind. The scandal, after all, would be little compared with the pleasure of sending you and your two confederates where you belong. It is not for nothing in Monte Carlo that one personates the head of a royal house and cheats at baccarat."

Osterhafen fell back. His two associates seized hold of him. They talked together rapidly and earnestly. Osterhafen flung upon the floor a great parcel of notes.

"Are you satisfied, madame?" Mr. Laxworthy asked.

"Indeed I am," she replied. "Let them go."

Some one touched the bell. The butler appeared at the door.

"Monsieur Le Prince and his suite will leave for Monte Carlo in the automobile of Madame De Cléry," Mr. Laxworthy announced. "Be so good as to tell the chauffeur to return here after he has deposited Monsieur Le Prince at his hotel."

The man bowed, and held the door open. The three men passed out. The man who had been hurt was sitting up, now, and Madame De Cléry was at his side, bathing his temple. Mr. Laxworthy replaced his pistol carefully, and straightened his glasses.

"I was in the middle of a most interesting little coup," he remarked, leading the way to the roulette table. "If it is not imposing upon you, sir, it would give me great pleasure to continue playing while we await the return of the automobile."

Julien sat down in the croupier's chair and spun the wheel with trembling fingers. Madame La Marquise crossed the room to Madame De Cléry.

"Lucie," she whispered, "where did you find him, this wonderful man?"

Madame De Cléry smiled.

"Sitting outside the Café de Paris, drinking English breakfast tea, with a gray shawl around his shoulders," she answered.

Madame La Marquise shook her head. She looked at the notes which she held in her hand. She looked at Mr. Laxworthy, intent once more upon his system.

"It is a wonderful race," she declared. "Mr. Laxworthy!"

"Madame?"

"Have you, by chance, ever heard the fable of your great Scotchman—Robert Bruce—and the spider?"

"Without a doubt, madame," Mr. Laxworthy replied, without looking up from the board.

"Will you remember," she begged, "that if ever the spider can help, I and my house are at your service? You will not forget?"

"Madame," Mr. Laxworthy assured her, straightening his spectacles for a moment and turning toward her, "I forget nothing."

The sixth story in this series—"The Last of Stephen Lenfield"—will be published two weeks hence, in the first August POPULAR, on sale July 7th.

The Gods of Sport

By James French Dorrance
Author of "By Rule of Finance," Etc

"Hail, hail, the gang's all here!" Poughkeepsie is wide open, for this is regatta week. Tag along with "Pop" Hayden and see how he boosts the oarsmen of his Alma Mater, venturing even his good name on as hopeless a betting proposition as ever furrowed the brow of a Cornell-I-yell-er.

A FAT man, youthful, in cream flannels striped with blue, bulged from a chair in the center of a parlor car on the Albany Flyer. Gloom was undeniably stamped upon his face—a face made for laughter. The slouch of his figure gave generous confirmation of his black mood.

He made a striking contrast to the other passengers, who were in a state of semiriotous joy, such as comes to college youths, their sweethearts, and their chaperons, on holiday bent. Like the man of weight, they were ticketed for Poughkeepsie, where on the next afternoon the crews of six colleges would meet in the great annual regatta of the Hudson.

The rolypoly chap took no part in the frothlike chatter of those about him. He alternated the activities of gazing in dazed fashion out of the car window at the wide river and scowling at a legal-looking document which he took from his pocket. This document he held at varying angles, but neither right side up nor upside down did it seem to please.

A dozen youths, who had been tossing high balls in the café car ahead, suddenly appeared at the forward end of the parlor coach, and began a loud-voiced chant:

"'Pop' Hayden! We—want—Pop—Hayden! We—want—Pop! Cornell, I yell, yell, yell, Cornell!"

The billowy chap in the cream flannels, who had graduated from their college just twenty-four hours before, continued to gaze at the placid river. The fact that his fellows were shouting for him failed to arouse his interest.

An impromptu committee of three detached itself from the delegation at the car end, and advanced on Hayden in question-mark formation. This committee had been admonished to advise, remonstrate, persuade, or by force of arms strip the big fellow of the cloak of gloom which enveloped him.

"It was almost too much for you, wasn't it, Pop?" was the opening of "Shorty" Palmer, in his most sympathetic tone.

"What was?" demanded Hayden wearily.

"The fact that you actually graduated yesterday—that prexy really did hand you a sheepskin with a big A. B. engraved thereon."

"I expected to graduate," droned Pop, with the air of one who had lost his last friend and all hope of making another.

"You expected to graduate!" The rising inflection in Ted MacLane's voice spoke incredulity. "You mean you expected to be fired every other day of every term of every year of the college

quartet! You ought to be proud of your record of narrow escapes."

"No," returned Pop, shaking his head drearily. "I always expected to graduate. Honest, I did! The faculty never actually caught me at anything."

Pop Hayden's four undergraduate years at Cornell had been as precarious as ever fell to student lot without spelling faculty-made tragedy. Luck of an uncanny sort had been with him the freshman night he stole the chimes from the library tower, making half the university miss their eight-o'clock lectures. This luck had clung to him like a bur even through the senior afternoon when he pocketed the only manuscript of the dean's address to the graduating class, leaving that cordially disliked fossil speechless before a most critical audience. The faculty always knew, but could not prove.

"Then if it isn't surprise at being a bachelor of arts, what the devil is it?" demanded Shorty Palmer, dropping some of the sympathy tones.

"What is what?" asked Pop, even more wearily than before.

"What has stunned you, doped you, sapped all the laughter from your limpid eyes, moved the joy wrinkles out of your fat cheeks, and turned them into gloom furrows on your manly brow?"

Hayden looked out the car window, seemingly absorbed in a colony of canal boats which a pair of powerful tugs was moving up the Hudson.

"Say, Pop," began Ted MacLane, in coaxing tones, "you're not taking seriously what prexy said yesterday about the tr-rials and tr-r-ribulations of going out and facing the cold, cold world, are you? 'Course, a college grad has only one chance in seven hundred, they say, of making good in said cold world, but then——"

"Aw, come on, Pop! Cheer up! Maybe you're the seven hundredth," completed "Irish" Ganley, the third member of the committee. "There's a café car up ahead. We've got to make Rome—Poughkeepsie, I mean—howl to-night, and you'd better lay the foundation. Your license as an unbridled lunatic runs out to-morrow."

"Beat it, my sons!" commanded Pop solemnly. "I fain would be alone with my thoughts."

The committee returned to the car of moisture without him. For a mile or two they speculated on the cause of Hayden's unusual grouch. They finally set it down to the well-known fact that Dave Van Camp, a hated junior, was escorting Miss Grace Morton, a dazzling blond beauty with heiress prospects, to the regatta.

Pop's "skirt trouble" dated from earlier in the week. Miss Morton had been his senior-week guest up to the time he forgot that the senior ball was held on Wednesday night. True, Pop had remembered when turned out of the Dutch Kitchen at two a. m. Thursday. He was in no condition then to explain, and the next day could not for the life of him manufacture a competent excuse. Van Camp had made the most of this bibulous freak of memory.

Hayden had been a four-year mystery at Ithaca. He came from somewhere down in the Pennsylvania coal regions, and had mentioned the fact that he was an orphan. No student had more money to spend than Pop—at least, none spent more. Now and then he talked about "the Hayden millions," but in such a jocular manner that no one felt accurate on the subject.

He had started the process of endearing himself to his fellows early in his freshman winter, when he joined the "scrubs," and let the varsity squad use his mountain of flesh as a doormat. Being heavy-footed, he did not hope to make the team, but as practice material felt that he excelled. He had continued this humble, thankless task until a broken leg and collar bone sent him to the college infirmary. By springtime he was repaired, and hopefully reported at the boathouse, where crew men were being tried out.

The coach gave one glance at his two hundred and sixty-five pounds, and sniffed: "Did some one tell you that we carried an anchor on the eight-oared shell?"

"Isn't there anything an elephant can do for the honor of the university?"

Pop had asked sadly. "Don't anybody round here love a fat man?"

There was no answer. He was wrong, however, about no one loving him, for, as a matter of fact, none of the heroes of gridiron or diamond had more friends.

The "first call for——" announcement of a black man in a white jacket reminded Pop that the dining car would be a more comfortable place to nurse his gloom. He would feed the Frankenstein that was grumbling within him a course dinner, and perhaps quiet the beast before the train reached Poughkeepsie.

Looking over the menu, however, he found nothing that Frankenstein wanted.

"When the ordinary man hears bad news," he soliloquized, "he takes to drink. I'm the ordinary man. I've heard the worst news a fellow could hear, and—and—Grace has kicked my hat out of the ring. If sorrow can be drowned in drink, me for it. I know what I'll do—I'll drink a course dinner instead of eating it!"

And he did. He started with a cocktail, followed it with a pony of brandy, and then ordered champagne.

As he sipped his wine, a smile issued from the cloud on his face—a stranger of a smile, sardonic, bitterly ironical. Taking from his pocket the legal document, Hayden read again its superscription:

To be delivered to my beloved son when he has graduated from college.

"Dad sure knew the rules of the game," he told the wine bubbles. "Every senior gets a present on graduation."

Then he read on, mumbling the words in an undertone:

DEAR BOY: I hope you have enjoyed your four years in college. The provision I made for you should have given you every luxury. I had to work my way through, and the result was a cramped ambition.

Have you been led to believe that a fortune awaited your graduation? Sorry I must disappoint you, boy, but there is nothing left, absolutely nothing. By this time you know the joys and the possibilities of living; go out into the world and earn the right to live. YOUR FATHER.

"There's a graduation present for you!" he told the champagne bottle. "Now, isn't that a peach of a legacy? 'The Hayden millions!' Myth millions! It is to laugh! Let's have a look at the remnants."

He emptied his pockets on the table as he emptied the bottle. He covered the check for the liquid meal with the price and a generous tip. Then he carefully counted what was left, for the first time in his life figuring small change.

"Twenty-seven dollars and forty-five, forty-six, forty-seven cents," he announced the score. "It is to laugh!"

It was dusk at Poughkeepsie when the train spouted its eager load from every platform. An informal procession climbed the long hill toward the Nelson House, the headquarters for all colleges the night before the regatta. Hayden was not alone in breaking the climb with sundry halts for refreshments. His grouch was fading rapidly.

As he entered the lobby of the venerable hotel, a crowd of his fellows were parading in lock-step gyrations. He was seized upon as leader, and the chant changed to:

"Hail, hail, the gang's all here!"

Not unwilling, Pop led the parade, up the stairs, through the parlor, and among the tables of the big dining room.

"What position does the big fellow play?" a visiting belle asked her freshman escort. "I don't remember him in the line-up last fall."

"His only position is that of the most popular man in college," returned the youngster worshipfully. "His only athletic record is beer for capacity, and he sure can go some on the brewery course!"

Grace Morton chanced to be at the freshman's elbow, and heard his strange eulogy. She watched Pop Hayden lead his band into the barroom, from which a moment later there echoed:

"Hayden! Pop Hayden! Pop Hayden!

"Who's all right? P-o-p H-a-y-d-e-n!"

As the door swung open to permit the egress of one whose thirst for the time being was quenched, she heard them singing "For he's a jolly good fellow——"

Tossing her blond head angrily, she turned away.

"And once I thought I loved that fat man!" she muttered.

At this psychological moment Dave Van Camp returned to his duties of devotion, and fell heir to the most encouraging smile with which she had ever favored him.

"Take me out in the air, Dave," she said. It was the first time she had ever forgotten the "Mr." and the "Van Camp." "The atmosphere in here is a little too—too highly rarified."

It is legend among the colleges that on preregatta nights the chief of police of Poughkeepsie locks his little jail and throws away the key. It is truth that a deal of liberty is permitted the students to spend in near riot the dollars their daddies gave them for more sober purposes of education.

After seven o'clock the streets belong to the visitors. The crews which are to drive their flimsy shells down the river the next afternoon are safely tucked away in isolated "quarters" near their respective boathouses. There is no possibility of the noise in the center of the town disturbing any but its citizens, and once a year these citizens don't seem to mind being disturbed.

The excitement starts with a parade by the college most confident of winning. Perhaps the students hire a band to lead them, but the blare of the brass is never more than an accompaniment for the noise of their leather lungs. The parades multiply, even to the number of colleges which have crews entered.

This particular year the University of Wisconsin, confident of winning with its varsity eight the blue-ribbon event of the regatta, had sent a trainload of rooters from far-away Madison. They were first on the street after dinner, and for a few moments had a monopoly on noise and public interest.

It was Pop Hayden, by now gloriously aroused, who sounded the battle cry of Cornell and formed an opposition procession. This he led in person for half a dozen blocks, then fell out of line, puffing like a porpoise.

"What you fellows celebrating tonight for?" asked a commercial traveler from the curb. "You ain't won any races yet."

"The word 'yet' is correct, friend," returned Pop. "It's the reason for advance celebration. To-morrow night—sad but true—to-morrow night we may not have a thing to celebrate. And, friend, this life isn't all celebration."

"I know how you feel," said the man of the "grip." "I went to college onct myself—business college."

"Much obliged!" said Hayden, solemnly shaking the stranger's hand.

Then his mood changed, as liquor-fed moods will. The gloom that had shrouded him in the afternoon fell again like a dark mantle. Uncertainly he wended his way back to the hotel, stopping just once at a liquor store to purchase a quart of nondescript rye. His spirit cried out for solitude, and he sought his room.

There a delegation from his particular crowd found him after a long search which began when the parade ended. He had pinned his diploma on the wall of the bedroom, and was sprawled on two chairs in front of it. The bottle was half empty on a table at his side.

The intrusion of the excited ones did not disturb him. He looked up, and smiled vaguely. Then he motioned to the parchment on the wall.

"Lesh we forget!" he muttered thickly.

"What's eating you, Pop?" demanded one of the searching party.

"Th' Hayden mill'ons! Tish to laugh!" he chortled in return.

"What you want to hide out here for?" cried another. "Do you know what's happening outside?"

"Nop," Pop admitted. "Know whash happenin' inside. Washr row? Has Mr. Hudson's river run dry an' lef' ush wishout race track?"

Some one produced an emergency bottle of spirits of ammonia, and another wielded a wet towel. Between

them they straightened out Pop's speech and took the glaze off his eyes. They couldn't exactly reach his mind, however.

"Glad the river's all right," he went on. "It'd be a slow race without a river. Trust the Poughkeepsie Bridge hasn't fallen down and blocked the finish?"

"Just listen a moment, Pop," urged Shorty Palmer. "There's the very devil to pay down in the betting shed. Cornell's a joke, and we want you to turn the laugh."

"What sort of a joke?" asked Hayden, rising and doing a turn about the room, less unsteadily than might have been expected.

"No one will bet on our crews. You know how rotten things look. Why, even the Syracuse bunch are offering odds that they are ahead of us in the varsity."

"An' no one will bet on Cornell?" asked Hayden.

"There's not a dollar showing."

"Not even 'for the honor of Cayuga's waters'?" quoted Pop from the college song.

"There hasn't been a Cornell backer in an hour. It's a crime the way they're joshing us. What can we do about it?"

The fat fellow leered at them. "Didn't occur to any of you worthy gents to put up some of your own dollars for the honor of the school?" he demanded sardonically.

Their excuses were individual, but equally positive.

"We'll take the remnant of the Hayden millions, and go down and look 'em over," was his final solution of the problem.

Placing bets on the boat races is the serious business of the night before the regatta at Poughkeepsie. Sentiment rather than actual crew form has always ruled. The fact that there are three races on the program—freshman eight, varsity four, and varsity eight—gives every university a betting chance, and the degree hunters will take advantage of the slimmest.

For several years Cornell had taken the big race, and on particularly propitious occasions had carried home two cups. Never, however, had she or any other college swept the river by taking all three races.

This year Wisconsin, Pennsylvania, and Syracuse had all sent powerful crews. Columbia had invented a new coaching system and was an unknown quantity, her trials having been made secretly. Cornell seemed swamped by an accumulation of disasters.

A late winter had kept the ice in Lake Cayuga and the oarsmen on the rowing machines, instead of in their shells, until the first week in May. The crew quarters across the river at Highlands resembled a hospital. The bow man in the varsity eight was suffering from boils. The regular freshman coxswain was in a hospital with appendicitis. Two men on the four-oared crew had recently been the victims of ptomaine poisoning. The word had been passed from Cornell training quarters to keep money in pockets.

Half a block down an alley from the Nelson House is an automobile shed which the students annually seize as a betting ring. This night it held at least two hundred students, who were making bets among themselves or placing money with a professional bookmaker who had come up from New York for the occasion.

A big football player from the University of Pennsylvania, obviously out of training, had mounted a box, and, with tears in his voice, was begging the crowd to show him a man from Cornell with money to bet and nerve enough to bet it.

"Here comes that very man!" shouted an Ithaca freshman, as Pop Hayden and escort entered the improvised ring.

"Hurrah for Pop!" shouted another of his satellites.

It was not the first time that the big fellow had played the rôle of savior of college honor. It had cost him many hundreds to back up a forlorn hope of a ball nine the previous spring. Again and again he had taken a bank roll to Philadelphia on Thanksgiving Day, only to leave it with the cashier of the Belle-

vue-Stratford for the lucky Quaker students whose bets he had covered.

There was a rush in Hayden's direction.

"You got a lot of my money last June, Hayden," cried a dapper little chap from Madison. "How much of the Wisconsin green stuff will you cover this year?"

"Give me a chanst, will yer, Hayden?" urged a Jewish youth from Columbia, forgetting college polish in his eagerness. "You've trimmed me regular three years running."

"Hold, you vultures!" cried Hayden, a smile on his flushed face, a dull, faraway look in his eyes.

"Name your own odds on the varsity, Hayden!"

"I'll take anything you offer that Syracuse wins the four!" offered a Salt City man.

"Two to one you have to take Penn's wash in the big race!" taunted a third, waving a red-and-blue flag in the big man's face.

"Just a minute, Shylocks!" cried Hayden then, the gibes and jeers having confirmed him in a half-formed, drink-inspired purpose. "Cornell will accommodate you to the lasht pound of flesh. To-morrow you'll wonder how you came to forget her blood, the red Cornell blood, the blood that wins boat races!"

Hayden conferred for a moment with the professional bookmaker, who was quitting his box, and borrowed the "pro's" money satchel, the strap which held it suspended at his waist, and a pad of betting tabs.

Then, amid a cheer from the Cornell contingent that fringed the ring, he hoisted his bulk on a groaning box, and prepared to open the betting.

"The odds?" "What odds?" "Give us the odds!" came a chorus from the eager enemy.

"Let me see," said Hayden, with studied slowness. "There are three races." He paused for effect. "I'll make it one to three that Cornell sweeps the river!"

A hush fell over the betting shed. The surprise was stupendous. Hayden smiled broadly.

"Come on, you four-flushers!" he cried. "Come and bet with a man!"

"What—what did you say you'd bet?" gasped one in the front row of the crowd.

"One to three that Cornell wins all three races!" repeated Hayden. "Does it stick in your craw?"

"Has Pop gone crazy?" Ted MacLane demanded of Shorty Palmer, as they stood on the outskirts. "We never won three races at a clip. What's more, we never will!"

"Crazy as a March hare," declared Shorty, "and soused to the gills, to boot. But I don't see what we're going to do about it. It's his own money—and, Lordy, what a gold-plated call of the bluffs these outlanders have been making!"

As soon as the student crowd realized that Pop meant business on his unheard-of proposition, the money was all but thrown at him. Sheepshead Bay on handicap day in the palmiest seasons of horse-racing never saw a more frenzied betting ring. Pennsylvania fought with Wisconsin for the privilege of handing up the money. Syracuse slugged Columbia for fear that Hayden's nerve would fail before their bets were placed.

Pop Hayden became the only cool man in the ring. As rapidly as possible, he scribbled off the tabs, "thirty bet to win ten," or whatever the amounts might be, and sprawled his signature at the bottom. That signature was all the security the students asked. They had known Pop in other years, and they had heard of "the Hayden millions."

"It is to laugh!" the man of weight chuckled to himself from time to time as the bills piled up in his satchel. "It sure is to laugh!"

When the betting sagged, he would prod them vigorously: "Come on, you kindergarteners! You can't cut your eyeteeth on a measly dollar bill! Who's the next victim? Fly to it, you tightwads!"

The news of the betfest traveled through Poughkeepsie with the gait of

a society scandal. In half an hour every visiting student knew that Hayden was defending the honor of Cornell at ruinous cost to himself. The one pawnshop in the place that was open at night did a thriving business in watches, fraternity pins, overcoats, and what not, all pledged to provide additional funds.

News of the excitement reached the Nelson House, and among the couples who sallied forth to witness the fun were Miss Morton and Van Camp. They paused at the outer edge of the crowd, where they were joined by MacLane and Palmer.

"Why, it's Pop Hayden who is taking all the bets!" exclaimed Miss Morton.

"He's throwing good money away," said Van Camp critically. "Even in the best years, we've never won all three races, and this year—we'll be lucky if we get one."

"I wonder," mused Miss Morton, "I wonder if he has been drinking?"

"I wouldn't say he had been *drinking*," observed MacLane.

"No; *drinking* is hardly the word," assisted Shorty.

"What does he mean by it?" queried Van Camp, who was almost as narrow of mind as of chest, and who was most tight as to fist.

"I doubt if you can understand, Van Camp," returned Shorty acidly. "It's Pop's own original way of upholding the honor of Cornell."

"It's a way you'll never emulate, Van," laughed MacLane.

"Well, I'm going to get some of this easy money," said the junior, pulling out a considerable roll of bills, and stripping off two hundred dollars. "Look out for Miss Morton a moment, won't you, Mac?"

Van Camp plunged into the crowd and fought his way toward the amateur bookmaker.

"Now, wouldn't that frost you!" exclaimed MacLane to the girl who had been so unexpectedly thrust upon him. "That fellow would sell his grandmother's grave. Here is worthy old Pop putting up his good money on a hopeless betting proposition, just to silence the jeers of the Pharisees, and Van Camp sails in to get some of the 'easy money'!"

"I think I understand, Mr. MacLane," said Miss Morton slowly. "Won't you take me back to the hotel? I'm beginning to think I'm no judge of men."

Van Camp reached the betting box in a temporary lull of operations. The enemy had run short of cash and was scurrying for fresh funds.

"I'll take you for two hundred dollars," sneered the junior, holding up the bills.

"You'll what?" gasped Hayden.

"Bet you two hundred at the odds you've been calling that Cornell don't win all three races," elucidated Van Camp.

"Say, bo, what's your college?" demanded Hayden, glaring down at him.

"I yell Cornell as loud as you do, Hayden."

"Then you beat it!" Hayden fairly shrieked the command. "Beat it quick, before I drop my two hundred and sixty-five pounds on you. You miserable, miserly traitor! If you ever approach me again, I'll step on you, you—you—you *toad!*"

Van Camp slunk away in the crowd, wondering why a group of his classmates scattered when he tried to explain. At the hotel he was told that Miss Morton had retired and was not to be disturbed.

Arrivals by late trains bolted for the betting shed when they heard of the opportunity. Hayden continued to accommodate all comers.

It was late in the evening when little Phil Block, who particularly loved the big fellow, slipped up to him and insisted on a whispered word. Unsteadily Hayden descended from his box. The excitement was no longer counteracting the effect of the spirits he had taken. His tongue was recommencing to thicken.

"Quit this foolishness, Pop," Block urged earnestly. "I've just come from training quarters, and we haven't got a chance. Pendleton has the 'willies.' It is the last straw."

Pendleton was stroke oar of the varsity eight, and Coach Courtney's particular pride. The "willies" spelled a nervous breakdown from overtraining.

"Y'r good old fellow, Phil, but it's no matter. Jush wan' to stick it clean down their throats."

Hayden climbed back to his box, the cream-colored flannels hanging loose and bedraggled on his huge frame. Again he raised his cry:

"One to three—shweeps th' river!"

It was eleven when MacLane and Palmer ended the memorable session by dragging Pop off the betting box and navigating him back to the hotel. After putting him to bed, they counted the money he had taken in—something over twenty-five thousand dollars. This they deposited in the hotel safe in Hayden's name.

It was eleven the next morning when Pop Hayden rolled over in his bed, dimly conscious that there was a terrific noise under way somewhere in the neighborhood.

"Where am I?" he demanded of himself. The pink poppies on the wall would not tell him. "Let's see," he meditated. "Th' lash I remember—takin' drink. Yesh, taking drink."

Finally he got his eyes wide open, and enough of his senses back to cuss the noise which continued to irritate him. Suddenly it dawned upon him that some one was hammering on his door. He opened it after a series of experiments in locomotion, and MacLane and Palmer burst in.

"Time you were up, old sport!" was Shorty Palmer's greeting.

MacLane, experienced in emergencies of this sort, turned on cold water in the bathtub.

"You're going to have a hard day of it, you blooming, beloved idiot!" he said.

"Hard day?" asked Pop, with a slight show of interest. "Hard day? Why—what hard day?"

"Don't you remember that you bet eight thousand on the races?" gasped Palmer.

"Eight thousand doughnuts or pinwheels?" asked Pop, with a weary smile.

"Eight thousand dollars, you bloated bondholder!" Shorty explained. He turned to MacLane. "He don't remember a thing, Mac. Did all that betting running on his subconscious gear."

"Here, you can read about it in the *World*," said Mac, handing him a morning paper. "Somebody wired a story."

Slowly, with some difficulty, for the lines of type were trying to play leapfrog, Hayden went through the dispatch. His face pictured blank amazement when he looked up.

"Pinch me, Shorty!" he commanded. "I desire to wake up."

"You're wide awake," they assured him.

"Do you mean to say that I bet eight thousand in real money against twenty-five thousand in real money that Cornell would win all three races this afternoon?"

"That's what the ticket calls for," said Mac.

"Where did I get the money?" Hayden asked then.

"You made book, and gave out tabs," explained Shorty. "The twenty-five thou' you took in is downstairs in the safe."

"It sure is to laugh!" exclaimed Pop; and laugh he did.

"That's what you kept muttering last night," observed Shorty. "Eight thousand is a goodly sum to chuck to the Pharisees for the honor of the school."

"Again we laugh!" chortled Pop, as he rolled out of bed. There was an interlude of squeals, groans, and grunts as he lowered himself into the icy bath. Then much puffing as he rubbed himself dry. His physical recovery was complete. A fresh suit of flannels, this time blue with cream stripes, and new linen made him as immaculate outwardly as is possible for one of his weight.

He did not really believe the betting story until he saw the bundle of bills. Then he wrote a short note, which he left with the proprietor of the hotel. "Open this," he said, "if I'm not in the lobby by eight o'clock to-night.

"Welsher!" he muttered to himself. "Maybe!" he added.

"I go to hold communion with the gods of sport," he said, by way of dismissing his human alarm clocks.

He sought the river front, where he found a launchman who would charter for the afternoon for ten dollars.

"The last of the Hayden millions," Pop remarked, under his breath, as he handed over the gold certificate that closed the charter. He was all but "broke."

It was perfect regatta weather. Train after train poured capacity loads into the stations on either shore. A mighty fleet of yachts, large and small, were anchored near the finish line. A United States monitor held the center of the fleet. On the west bank, an observation train of nearly forty flat cars, with seats arranged in tiers, awaited the crowd.

By three in the afternoon this train was animate with thousands of rowing enthusiasts, and ablaze with their colors. On some cars many colors rioted, indicating that the seats had been sold to the general public. In others was solid yellow, indicating a Syracuse delegation, or light blue and white, designating a Columbia squad. The prettiest girls from a hundred small towns, and a regiment of the same from New York and Philadelphia wore the colors of the men who had brought them.

Miss Morton went to the races with her mother. Unable to stand the gaff which is flung without mercy at college traitors, Van Camp had returned to New York. The note he left said that sickness in his family had called him home.

In the lonely state of his chartered launch, Pop Hayden crossed the river to the observation train. He ordered the launchman to tie up at the ferry pier, and under no circumstances to change his moorings until further orders. "If I need you at all, it'll be in a hurry," he said.

The passing of the president of the United States could not have attracted more attention than did Hayden as he waddled over the ties in front of the waiting train. Some one on every car knew him and hastened to tell his mates.

"There he goes!" ran a sample description. "That's the Cornell millionaire who bet every one in Poughkeepsie last night that his crews would sweep the river. If they lose one race he's wiped out of thousands."

As Pop ambled up to the first Cornell car, the passengers rose en masse. A cheer leader leaped to the tracks, and shouted: "Now, fellows, a long one for the nerviest Cornellian Ithaca ever bred!" They answered with the Cornell "locomotive" yell, with Hayden's name as tiger.

The big fellow's face reddened, he shook his head as if to silence them, and at last would have hidden under the car had not strong arms hauled him on board.

Hayden watched the freshman race—as impassively as a disinterested rowing critic. The youngsters rowed brokenly for two-thirds of the two-mile course, and only nosed out Pennsylvania in a finish so close that those on the train did not know who had won until the smoke bombs signaled "Cornell" from the high bridge.

Passing the ferry dock on the train's return to the starting point for the four-oared race, Hayden smiled grimly when he saw his waiting launch tugging at the agreed moorings.

Syracuse had been widely touted to win the four-oared, but there was an unaccountable reversal of form. The Salt City men rowed like love-sick swains on a park lake. It wasn't a race, but a runaway, and the crew that carried Hayden's fortunes did the running.

This made two out of three to Hayden's credit. Was it possible that he was going to win those outlandish bets? The question was asked nervously by youths who had plunged so heavily that they scarcely had car fare home. "If Cornell could only win the varsity!" thought Pop's fellows. But, pshaw! it was out of the question. It never had been done—three races in a row! It never would be done. The rowing game didn't go that way. Besides, hadn't

Pendleton, the stroke oar, who was worth two or three men—hadn't Pendleton fallen for the "willies"? *Poor* Pop Hayden! They never would forget his gameness, but he certainly was going to lose a lot of cash!

The start of the varsity eight-oared race is four miles up the Hudson. Being the premier of the regatta, it is always rowed last, that the prize crews may have the benefit of the quieter water that comes with the setting of the sun. There were six starters in the event, the navy having sent a crew from Annapolis to compete with the civilian colleges.

The shells were on the mark when the observation train brought up with a jerk and prepared for the thrilling reverse trip, on which it would keep abreast of the leaders in the race. Rowboats, firmly anchored, furnished moorings at equal distances for the podlike craft in which the oarsmen sat like so many peas. Into each pod a tense little coxswain pea was thrown for good measure.

With the flash of the brass cannon from the starter's launch, forty-eight sweeps caught water almost together, moving downstream like a fleet of overgrown water spiders. The Cornell boat was fourth from the west shore, so that glasses were necessary to bring out the first pleasing surprise that had come to Hayden in this race. Pendleton had mastered the "willies," after all, and was pulling the stroke oar with his usual form. One suspicious soul wondered if by some possible mischance Pop Hayden had had advance information.

It was anybody's race for the first three miles. Each coxswain seemed afraid to order a spurt. There was some jockeying for position, in which the river's countertides helped and dangerously bunched the shells. Those who found time to glance at Pop had little reward for their pains. They considered it marvelous that he could look on so calmly at this crucial race. They were thinking of the thousands he stood to lose. Pop was thinking "To be or not to be a welsher!"

At the three-mile buoy, the whistle of the Pennsylvania launch shrieked an order to hit up the pace. The red-blue shell shot ahead as if some unseen hand had installed a motor and propeller.

Syracuse and Wisconsin moved up without delay.

But Cornell clung to the long, swinging stroke, the easy-going Courtney slide, without a hint of acceleration.

Then Pop Hayden woke up.

"Hit it up, you red devils!" he bellowed, springing to his feet and leaning toward the river over the rail of the swaying observation car. "Why don't you hit up the stroke?" he begged.

He fumed and fretted like a caged beast when his count showed that there had been no increase.

He made a megaphone of his hamlike hands. "Boost the stroke, Midget!" he howled at the coxswain, though he knew that the little skipper's ears had been stuffed with cotton to keep out just such sounds.

"Stroke! Stroke! Stroke!" Pop had discovered he could let off steam that way. The cries came from him in staccato voice. Then, by way of variation, he clapped his hands to indicate the speed of oars he desired. With a groan, he gave it up at last, and sat down again.

Columbia and the navy, falling behind with every sweep of the oars, were by now out of the running.

There was a moan from the Syracuse car when No. 4 in that boat keeled over on the oar of the man behind him. A spill was narrowly averted, and the shell dropped out of the race.

Hayden's eye, quickened with desire, was the first to notice that Cornell had increased her stroke. "That's the stuff!" he shouted, clambering again to his feet.

Gradually the red shell closed up on Wisconsin. When their noses were even, both spurted to overtake the flying Quakers.

"Go it, you hearties! Bend your backs!" cried Hayden, now quite beyond control. "Row, you speckled hyenas! Drink it up!"

At the high bridge, a quarter of a mile from the finish, the three shells were on even terms, with Pennsylvania seemingly enjoying the easiest going.

"Make some noise, you mutes!" Hayden assailed his fellows. "D'you expect a crew to win without noise?"

As he turned again to the river, the unexpected happened. The Pennsylvania shell, which had the middle course, swerved suddenly to the right. This forced Wisconsin, to prevent a collision, to leave the course in a like degree. The Pennsylvania coxswain, it was afterward learned, had made out dead ahead a pair of half-submerged berry crates, which, if struck at top speed, would have cut the bottom out of his paper craft.

Slight as was the deflection, it was enough for Cornell. There were a few seconds of almost superhuman effort by the eight at the sweeps. Then the red shell shot across the line, a winner by a length. For the first time in rowing history, one college had made a clean sweep of the river.

After the crew had been cheered and tigered, both collectively and individually, and the college anthem sung to the last verse, the rooters looked about for Pop Hayden. There was some wild idea of carrying him on shoulders, if shoulders of sufficient strength could be found. But Pop was missing.

Over at the ferry pier, about that time, he was saying to a puzzled boatman:

"Thanks to a derelict berry crate and the Courtney stroke, I won't need you after you set me on the other shore."

Hayden went directly to the Nelson House. "It is to laugh!" he chortled, as the proprietor handed over an armful of paper money.

"Here's the note you left, to be opened if you didn't show up," said the hotel man. "Say, what did you think might happen to you?"

"I wasn't sure that—that the gods of sport were really with me," laughed the fat man, as he tore the only evidence of the illegitimacy of his coup into small bits.

By chance, he glanced up at the parlor balcony, and saw Grace Morton beaming down upon him. Her white-gloved finger moved ever so slightly, and he was at her side.

"I couldn't start home, Pop," she said, with feeling, "without telling you how brave and fine I think you were to stand up for your college as you did last night. It was bully! I'm glad, mighty glad, you won; but I'd have been just as proud of you if you had lost."

"Would you, now?" he grinned, without conscience. "No, I don't think you would have been so proud if I had lost. But we'll let her go as she lies."

Some day he will tell her.

In the next POPULAR you will get another rowing story, an intimate yarn by Jack Brant, who knows the rowing game from the "inside." In the first August POPULAR. On sale July 7th.

THE DANGERS OF A GREAT CITY

A YOUNG man who had been born and reared in the backwoods went to Chicago and made a lot of money. Then he returned to his native village and asked his father to take a trip to the Windy City. The old man, however, was not enthusiastic over the proposition. He had read of the fires, automobile accidents, and other catastrophes in big cities. Finally, after much argument and persuasion on the part of his son, the father reluctantly agreed to undertake the journey. At the little country station he was panic-stricken and tried to get permission to go back home. Once on the train, his nerve began to revive, and all went well until the train dashed into a tunnel black as night. When this happened, the old man grabbed his umbrella, hit his son a whack on the head, and cried out:

"I knew something would happen. I've gone blind!"

The Quest of the Golden Table

By Ralph D. Paine

Author of "The Stroke Oar," "The Heart of Peter Burnham," Etc

SYNOPSIS OF PRECEDING CHAPTERS.

At the close of their college course Peter Burnham, Jim Stearns, and Hector McGrath start for the West Indies in quest of a reef on which a Spanish galleon containing vast treasure in gold and silver was wrecked. Burnham has learned of the whereabouts of the wrecked vessel from an ancient history which he has stumbled upon. Taking with them Julius Cæsar Jones, an elderly negro, as mascot, they ship aboard the *Esmeralda*, with Captain O'Shea, former filibuster, but now in the service of the Consolidated Fruit Company. The *Esmeralda* is bound for a port in the republic of Salgada, on the border of which is the Galleon Bank, where lies the treasure. On arrival at port they learn that the president of the neighboring republic of Oriente, Emilio Martinez, has been dangerously wounded by an assassin. Martinez' son, Bolivar, was once at Yale and a good friend of the three treasure seekers. They are greatly distressed by the news. The captain is forced to reload his ship, and sails for New York leaving the collegians behind. They go up to Valencia, the capital, for news of the war which seems to be imminent, and there they meet a brisk young salesman who is also a friend of Bolivar Martinez and sides with Oriente in the coming struggle. The four decide to go to a little seaport and sail to Oriente. While Hector McGrath is detained in a distant town, the others seize a schooner and put to sea. They are pursued by a gunboat which fires upon them, but escape. After a hazardous voyage they reach Miraflores, on the coast of Oriente, and are welcomed by General Pons, governor of the city. Meanwhile Hector McGrath offers Captain Tottenham of the *Flamborough* four thousand dollars—the assets of the Galleon Bank Exploration Company—to be landed in Oriente. The captain accepts, and Hector arrives at San Pablo, where he meets Bolivar Martinez. Hector joins Bolivar's army on the march to Independencia where they proceed to build earthworks in preparation for a fight.

CHAPTER XI.

THE fleet of Salgada made a gallant show. Leading the transports was the handsome *Libertad*, with smaller armed vessels, coastwise gunboats, on the flanks of the line. They moved abreast of the harbor, well out to sea, and then the *Libertad* swung slowly in toward the old Spanish fort. The maneuver was performed with the most insolent deliberation. As it were hardly worth while to waste good ammunition over a matter so trifling, Captain Calixto opened the engagement by firing one shell at the fine target of a stone fortress. It fell short, and kicked up a cascade of foam.

Another followed it, after a leisurely interval, and knocked the corner from a crumbling parapet with a great shower of dust and fragments. Instead of running up a white flag, a squad of real live defenders touched off an obsolete bronze muzzle-loader, which hurled a shrieking collection of railroad spikes, coupling pins, and other junk, and then they retired to a bomb-proof cellar, to smoke cigarettes and wait for orders to return to the trenches.

The dummy defenders, whose straw hats were visible at the embrasures, stuck to their posts with the greatest spirit and pertinacity, and the *Libertad*, as if annoyed by their resolution, showed more interest in the bombardment, and pounded the gray walls with several broadsides.

Having silenced the fort, and dismounted two bronze pieces of ordnance, the cruiser moved nearer, and the transports edged in after her like sheep behind a vigilant collie. Captain Calixto was not entirely hoodwinked. As if suspecting that Oriente had not been altogether taken by surprise, he signaled

This story began in the first June POPULAR. Back numbers may be obtained through any news dealer.

the transports to keep well astern of him. But their captains were stubborn and dull-witted, and persisted in huddling close to the harbor mouth.

The *Libertad* turned her guns on the slope back of the town and swept it with shell, but there was no response, no sign of life. At this, Bolivar Martinez, standing in a pit in the center of his lines, said to a staff officer who was in charge of the range finder:

"We cannot coax them much nearer. How far away are the troopships?"

"Nineteen hundred yards from our batteries."

"We will wait a little longer."

The little gunboats, less cautious than the *Libertad,* began to push ahead of her. This drew the transports closer in, until the fleet was fairly inside the wide harbor. It may have been surmised that the military leaders of Oriente had concluded to withdraw their forces inland and join battle in defense of San Pablo. The landing promised to be an absurdly easy affair.

Bolivar Martinez was ready. Summoning his chief of artillery, he told him:

"Open fire with your two batteries, and use shrapnel. Aim all your guns at the *Libertad* until I give another order. That Calixto is a fine fellow, but he must take a dose of medicine. I do not wish him to feel so gay when Captain O'Shea comes in with the *Esmeralda.*"

The artillery gunners knew their distances by the harbor marks. At the word, they loosed a storm of shrapnel which pelted through the fragile upper works of the cruiser. Her men were fairly blown from their gun stations. The bridge was riddled and twisted, but Captain Calixto clung, unhurt, to a stanchion and tried to extricate his vessel from her dreadful situation.

Shell followed the shrapnel. One of them penetrated the engine room. Clouds of steam poured from the hatches, but somehow the *Libertad* managed to pick up steerageway and limp very slowly toward the open sea. Two of her guns were pluckily brought into action, but the shells harmlessly buried themselves in the earth protecting the shore batteries.

"I am afraid those poor sailors had no chance to spend my four thousand dollars," mused Hector Alonzo.

The little gunboats now opened a furious fire, under cover of which the transports, peppered with shrapnel, began to withdraw in disorderly formation. Then the eight hundred infantrymen in the trenches galled them with disconcerting volleys. Retreating to open water, the transports behaved with more discretion.

"Oriente wins the first touchdown," said Bolivar to Hector, "but the game is only just begun. How do you feel?"

"Rather queer in the pit of my stomach. And my legs fairly beg me to run away."

"There will be more sport pretty soon, my Hector. Ah, see there! It is what I have been afraid of."

Bolivar nodded toward the transports, which were separating into two squadrons of three steamers each. The *Libertad* hovered within long-range distance, while the smaller armed craft accompanied the transports. The hostile fleet was, therefore, reformed in two divisions. The distance between them slowly increased until it was evident that the plan of landing on the water front of the town had been abandoned.

The transports were feeling their way toward either side with the intention of flanking the trenches and throwing two columns ashore while the gunboats tried to smother the fire of the Oriente artillery. If the fleet contained four thousand men, then, against each column of two thousand, if the attack were simultaneous, General Bolivar Martinez could oppose no more than four hundred men, who, however, were uncommonly well intrenched.

"Maybe some reënforcements will come to us by train," thoughtfully muttered Bolivar. "But I guess not. We have all the good troops that were in San Pablo, and as fast as the others come in they will be made into the main army of the second line of defense. It is up to us, Hector, my boy. We play this game without any substitutes."

Hector gulped, and nodded, without speaking. From his sheltered position he could glance along the line of straw hats in the nearest trench. The broad brims were upturned in front, and he could see the dark, scowling faces of the veteran infantrymen who preferred the heavy-bladed machete at close quarters to the magazine rifle at two thousand yards. Life had been a pastime to Hector. Confronting its sternest, most primitive realities, he felt dazed and frightened. Bolivar happened to notice that his lips twitched and his cheek was pale. Plucking him by the sleeve, he said:

"It is the hardest part, Hector, to stand still and look at the show. Better come with me."

The gunboats and the batteries were busily engaged, without serious damage to either side. Clouds of sand and clay spouted from the earthworks like geysers. A lucky shot struck the muzzle of a fieldpiece, kicked it end over end, exploded in the trench, and killed and wounded a dozen artillerymen. Hector shied at the sight like a frightened colt as he crept past on hands and knees. He remembered afterward that a man with one hand clipped clean off at the wrist was sitting up and petulantly demanding a cigarette.

At the southern extremity of the harbor, the configuration of the hills was such that the three transports which were about to attempt a landing there were slightly sheltered from the fire of the forces on shore. The tide was almost at the ebb, and a reef extending perhaps two hundred yards from the beach was no more than washed by the waves. Beyond this, the depth dropped boldly, and the transports were maneuvering to lie along the outer edge of this reef and lower boats from the seaward side of their hulls, which would protect and screen the difficult process of disembarkation.

The other division of transports, which was creeping in to the northerly side of the harbor, had a more exposed and perilous position, and must remain farther out to sea. It was apparent that these could be dealt with later. The most urgent business was to harass the troopships of the southern division.

To face this danger, Bolivar Martinez rapidly shifted his men until six hundred of them were crowded in the southernmost trenches with two fieldpieces, which had been held as a mobile reserve. The army officers aboard the transports knew something of their trade, for along the deck sandbags were piled breast-high. Behind them, part of the force could be held to help clear the shore while the rest landed and gained a foothold.

The stage was set, and now the curtain rose for the second act. Boats crowded with men began to appear from behind the transports. They came in a furious stream. A dozen of them were afloat at once. They charged full-tilt at the edge of the reef, stopped abruptly, and the soldiers leaped out. They splashed to the knees in the surf, stumbled, and sprawled over the jagged ridges of coral, yelling and firing as they made for the beach. The boats returned to the transports for more men. The reef was a scene of madly jumbled activity.

The troops in the trenches had withheld their fire until now. Their rattling volleys were aimed at the reef. The water was flicked up in a multitude of tiny jets as when falls a heavy shower of rain. The Salgadans dropped here and there. One might have thought they stumbled, but they did not rise, and the washing waves moved them gently to and fro, like mere bundles of clothing. Those nearest the beach halted, but the oncoming crowds from the boats pushed them forward by sheer momentum. There could be no retreating.

From the decks of the transports, behind the ramparts of sandbags, several hundred Salgadans returned the fire. The force of Oriente was using smokeless powder, but the enemy could catch glimpses of their straw hats in agitated motion along the green line of intrenchment. The mob on the reef continued to advance. The fire of their comrades, directed over their heads, somewhat checked the rapidity of the fusillade from the trenches. Bolivar Martinez's

men were less reckless of exposing themselves, now that the bullets were storming around their ears, and casualties were frequent.

A couple of hundred Salgadan infantrymen crossed the danger zone of the reef and dived into the cover of the undergrowth. The water was red with the blood of their dead and wounded, but the transports still spewed forth more men. Of the two fieldpieces, one was disabled by the jamming of a shell in the breech, but the other hulled a transport through and through and smashed a boat filled with soldiers. The two batteries were still engaged in preventing the gunboats from aiding the landing operations.

"I hoped that I could stop them on the reef," anxiously observed Bolivar Martinez, "but they are too many. Now we will try another scheme."

He ordered his troops to slacken fire, and be careful of their ammunition. He had swiftly reasoned that if the Salgadans were permitted to advance up the long slope toward the trenches, the force left on board the transports must cease firing for fear of killing their own men. And before these others could be landed, he could engage the column already on shore, and the odds would be fairly even. In a word, he hoped to whip the enemy by sections.

Concluding that the way had been cleared for them, the Salgadans on the beach cheered lustily, and waited until several hundred of their comrades from the boats had joined them. Then they surged up the gently rising incline.

As Bolivar had foreseen, the fire from the transports almost ceased. As if discovering that they had been outgeneraled, the officers on board were seen to be driving the men from the sandbags to the boats.

Now it was that wise young Bolivar, who had been taught warfare by his father, drove his strategy home to the hilt. Roughly ordering Hector McGrath to stay behind and keep out of danger, he drew his machete, leaped from the trench, and was followed by two hundred picked men.

At their head, he scampered down the slope, across a clearing, and made as if to meet the Salgadans in a countercharge. The latter were firing as they ran, wildly, without aim, and few of Bolivar's men were hit. Instead of continuing down the slope, he turned sharply to the left, his veterans at his heels, and dashed toward the ruined buildings and stone walls of an abandoned coffee estate which he knew to be concealed among the young trees a few hundred yards from the enemy's flank.

There his men flopped on their stomachs and emptied their magazines. The Salgadans wheeled to face this little force, when above the trenches the straw hats bobbed into view, and the main body of the defenders caught them with a terrific fire. The twofold attack was demoralizing. The Salgadans had to take one punishment in flank, and they chose the lesser. They moved irresolutely ahead, in the direction of the trenches.

The two hundred veterans debouched from the ruins of the coffee estate, fiercely shouting *"à la machete."* At almost the same instant, their comrades in the trenches, dropping their rifles, uttered the same savage war cry, and drove pell-mell down the slopes.

Bolivar and his men fetched a little circuit so that they struck the Salgadans in the rear, while the men from the trenches, in larger force, delivered their charge straight ahead. Between them, the Salgadans were crumpled up as one wrings a piece of cloth in his two hands. The bright machetes cut them down while they were wondering which way to turn. Bolivar and his men slashed through the wavering mob until they met their fellows from the trenches. The combats were isolated, detached. They did not affect the main issue. It was a surprise and a rout. Some fled back to the beach, while others surrendered, and were disarmed and driven into the trenches.

Meanwhile the transports had been sending more men ashore in wild haste. Their officers planned to avoid the deadly slope, and make such a detour as should take the southern trenches in flank before the troops of Oriente could

rally from the first engagement. One of the officers knew the situation of the stout stone walls of the coffee estate. It was agreed that they should try to occupy and hold this place until the other division of transports had made a landing on the northern side of the harbor.

It was in the mind of Bolivar Martinez to throw a small body of men behind those vine-covered stone walls, but until now he had not dared to withdraw them from the trenches.

Hector Alonzo McGrath had been a wide-eyed, breathless witness of the desperate machete charge. Forsaking the trench where Bolivar had left him, he moved out to one side of the works and stood in the open field at the crest of the slope. He was in a kind of trance, oblivious of his own danger. He kept repeating to himself in a manner wholly automatic:

"Oh, you Bolivar! You shrimp of a Yale coxswain. You'll be killed. You can't help getting killed."

He painfully tried to distinguish Bolivar in the swirling, bloody mêlée. When the youthful general came limping back, wiping a red smear from a gash in his forehead, Hector cried brokenly, sobbing in spite of himself:

"You ought not to have done it, Bolivar. You ought to stay out of a mess like that. Your country can't afford to lose you."

"It is the fashion of my country," was the smiling reply. "If the leader stays behind, the men will think he is afraid. *Caramba!* but that was a fine fight. How did you like it? Better than football, only not so dangerous, eh?"

"It was easily worth the price of admission," said Hector, getting a grip on himself.

"You think I have plenty of Yale sand?" cried Bolivar, with boyish vanity. "Now we must get busy some more."

Gruesome fascination impelled Hector to move nearer the scene of the fight, an area of trampled grass and broken shrubs, all littered with weapons and clothing and the bodies of men dead and alive. Surgeons were doing what they could with emergency bandages, and such of the wounded as could walk were being helped to reach the trenches. There was no time for anything else.

His heart wrung with pity, Hector was about to lend what aid he could, when he happened to glance in the direction of the coffee estate. A wounded man half raised himself from the tall grass, and fell back, crying faintly for help.

Hector hurried to the place, and found a mere boy, in the uniform of Salgada, who, shot through the leg, had dragged himself clear of the machete charge. One could feel no enmity toward this hapless young soldier. He smiled wistfully at Hector, and begged for water. Giving him a canteen, Hector tore his own shirt into strips and made a clumsy tourniquet to check the pulsating flow of blood.

Absorbed in his task, Hector was startled by the sound of firing and the shrill buzz of bullets overhead. Salgadan soldiers were breaking out of the woods at some distance beyond the stone walls of the coffee estate. Behind him, the troops of Bolivar Martinez just then caught sight of the advancing enemy, who had come sooner than expected, and from a most inconvenient angle.

For the first time, the men of Oriente showed signs of confusion. They hesitated to advance, and returned the fire from where they were, scattered in front of the trenches. They were wasting precious seconds. If the Salgadan reënforcements should be first to reach the stone walls, they would hold a position immensely difficult to retake. Indeed, they might be able to hold it until joined by fresh troops from the other division of ships.

Hector Alonzo McGrath was fairly caught between two fires. His friends, no doubt, sorely regretted his predicament, but the battle could not well be suspended until he could scurry out of the middle ground. In fact, his whereabouts was unobserved until he popped up from the grass and discovered his excessively awkward situation.

If the truth must be told, this amiable young man completely lost his wits. His previous training had not fitted him for such an emergency. With a very manly

impulse, he tugged and dragged the wounded boy into a dry ditch, where he was comfortably sheltered. Then, instead of dropping into this providential ditch, in which he would have been fairly safe from the bullets of friend and foe, Hector jumped up like a frightened rabbit, his one thought to run as fast as his legs could carry him.

The distance back to the trenches looked to be miles and miles. To run in that direction was to be bowled over by Bolivar's men. A little way this side of the ruined walls he spied the rusty shell of a large boiler half hidden in the grass. In the end nearest him was a manhole, which beckoned him to enter. It offered an armored shelter. It was a small fortress in which he would be secure against the swarming bullets.

Clutching a discarded rifle and cartridge belt, he ran for the boiler. His flight was straight toward the enemy, but the boiler was the nearest refuge. It was the most hospitable, luxurious-looking boiler he had ever seen in his life.

Unable to read his thoughts or fathom his purpose, the soldiers of Oriente beheld him, with emotions of intense admiration, and were profoundly ashamed of themselves. Instantly they comprehended that this magnificent American volunteer, the intimate friend of their general, had seen them hanging back. He was leading them, as a forlorn hope. He was showing them the way. He was inexpressibly superb.

No need to urge them forward now. They yelled ferociously, and followed the peerless Hector Alonzo McGrath. It was more like a landslide than a charge. They beheld Hector, their heroic inspiration, run without faltering, nearer and nearer the foe. They strove to overtake him, but he moved on the wings of the wind. He was bent on flinging his life away as an example. It was magnificent, but it was profoundly tragic.

Then he vanished with uncanny abruptness. It required a quick eye to detect that he had flown headfirst into the boiler without touching the sides of the manhole. He was a human projectile. He had scored a bull's-eye. The soldiers whose vision was bothered by the tall grass, supposed that Hector had fallen, laid low at the very zenith of his glory.

They would avenge him. Sweeping past the boiler, they raced to the stone walls, heedless of the fire of the enemy, whose foremost ranks were no more than a hundred yards from this goal.

Not an unwounded man had been left in the trenches. Because of their desire to show themselves worthy of Hector Alonzo McGrath, there were no reserves. Their swift onrush in force drove home the telling blow at precisely the right moment. They held the key to the situation. Behind these stone walls, in their sublimely desperate mood, an army would have been required to dislodge them. They caught the Salgadans in the open and mowed them down at point-blank range.

And while they fought, Hector sat curled up in his beloved boiler and contentedly popped away at the enemy. The incessant patter of bullets against the sheet-iron plates gave him a curiously comfortable feeling as when one listens, snugly tucked in bed, to the sleet driving against the windowpanes on a stormy winter's night.

The commander of the shattered Salgadan reënforcements comprehended that his venture was lost. His men had no more fight in them. They made one attempt to carry the stone walls by assault, but Bolivar and his veterans shot them down, and then poured over the barrier with the fearful cry of "*A la machete!*" There ensued a straggling retreat to the beach and a return to the transports.

The victors did not pursue. Their task was only half done. There were those other transports which intended landing troops across the harbor. Fortune sometimes favors the brave. The other division of steamers had bungled its enterprise. One of them was hard and fast aground on a shoal half a mile from land. The two others, with perhaps fifteen hundred men on board, had lost heart. This force was too small to throw on shore without supports. The

plan of a simultaneous attack had miscarried.

With whirlwind energy, Bolivar Martinez rallied his men to the dragropes of the two batteries of artillery which had been shelling the gunboats. They were hauled out of the trenches and shifted to sweep the northern beach and the transports still laden with troops.

The gunboats had withdrawn seaward. One was convoying the crippled *Libertad*. The others were endeavoring to haul the stranded transport into deep water. From its new position, the fire of the artillery compelled them to forsake the attempt. Slowly the fleet moved away from the harbor, leaving the helpless transport to hoist the white flag of surrender, with her seven hundred troops and a valuable cargo of supplies.

Sorrowful, even in this great hour, General Bolivar Martinez returned to the area of the trenches and the coffee estate, to search for his fallen comrade, Hector Alonzo McGrath.

"It is what you expect of a Yale man," he reverently observed to a sympathizing major of his staff. "He saw that my men were not ready to follow me. He showed them the way. It was he who won the victory and saved the day for our beloved country. My heart is broken. It was not his war. Such friendship is more than words can express."

"Perhaps he is not dead," said the other, as they moved across the field. "I saw him running very swiftly, and then he disappeared, yonder, near that old boiler. He may be wounded, in the grass. No one has reported finding him."

They slowly searched the rank growth, and had come within a few yards of the boiler, when a rust-begrimed face was framed in the manhole, and the voice of Hector Alonzo McGrath was heard to inquire in weary accents:

"Hello, Bolivar, old man! Is it all over? Has the enemy gone home yet? I am playing safe."

"By the twelve apostles, it is a miracle of miracles," roared Bolivar, in Spanish, and then he hauled the hero from his hiding place and clasped him to his breast, rapturously exclaiming:

"The enemy has vamosed. They have gone away. The glory is yours. And you are alive, my Hector. Oriente shall never, never forget your name."

"Thanks! I was so scared that I couldn't remember it myself," Hector grinned sheepishly. "You flatter me. I made a lovely ass of myself. You need not be so confoundedly polite about it. I left a real hero in a ditch, yonder, but some of your men just found him, and carried him into camp. I decided to stay in my cozy little retreat until peace should be officially declared."

"You are modest. My army wishes to cheer you," declared the enthusiastic Bolivar. "You would always poke fun at yourself, Hector. Let us go to my headquarters in the town. You led the charge in the grandest of styles."

"So I led the charge, did I?" quizzically observed Hector Alonzo. "Well, if your men kept up with me, they were going some. Do I get a medal for valor, or will it be for breaking all records for the hundred-yard dash? By Jove, Bolivar, no more joking! I congratulate you, with all my heart. You have really beaten off that fleet? I can hardly believe it. What next?"

"The Salgadans will not try to make another landing here. It is my idea that they will try to make a base of operations at the bay of Miraflores. I shall soon go to San Pablo for a council of war."

CHAPTER XII.

In the cool and comfortable mansion of General Rafael Pons, in the town of Miraflores, sat Peter Burnham and James Montgomery Stearns. They were weary and battered, after the tussle with the sea in the sinking schooner *Paloma*. The pains of rheumatism had seized hold of the water-logged frame of Julius Cæsar Jones, and he was stretched upon his bed. That energetic salesman, Marcus V. Paoli, of Newark, New Jersey, had sallied forth to explore the local marts of trade on the

chance that a little cash business might be done in behalf of the Matchless Safety Razor.

"We must brace up and hit the trail for San Pablo, Peter," said Jim Stearns. "It is too late for our information to do Bolivar Martinez any good, but we want to lend him our moral support. And if there is any chance that Hector McGrath really arrived ahead of us, we must find him as soon as possible."

"I ought not to have let him get out of my sight," growled Peter. "As his guardian angel, I have made a failure of it. He may be in seventeen kinds of trouble by this time."

"A long journey through the jungle on the quarter-deck of a sawed-off mule doesn't appeal to me, Peter. My bones ache like fury, and I should like to sleep for a solid week."

"What about that schooner we sma-hed up? Can she be mended?"

"I think so, but it will cost a lot of money. The work will have to be done here. We shall have to discuss it with our genial host. As for footing the bills, it seems to be up to the treasury of the Galleon Bank Exploration Company, if we can ever catch Hector Alonzo McGrath. I am afraid our five-thousand-dollar capital will look pretty sick when we have finished with the wrecked *Paloma*. We found the Galleon Bank, all right."

"We surely did, and what we need is a banker," said Peter, whose jests were of a very simple description.

They were interrupted by the entrance of General Rafael Pons, that fat, noisy, inexplicable ex-butler of New Rochelle. To hear him laugh banished all thoughts of war and tribulation. Merely to look at him was to forget anxiety. Stearns and Burnham brightened instantly. They gave him smile for smile. He was irresistible. Plumping himself into a chair, he wiped his beaming face, which continually ran rivers of perspiration, and cried explosively:

"I make you wonder. You have talk' about me. Ha! ha! I was a very good butler. I can show you my recommends in writin'. Now I am a brigadier, and governor of a province. And I am a very good one, too. Me an' my soldiers an' my people is all one big family."

"You have read our thoughts," confessed Stearns. "It requires a high order of intelligence to be a first-class butler. It is said to be a most exacting profession. We honor you for it, but, of course, we are a bit puzzled."

"It is no puzzle, not a bit," affably returned General Pons. "I buttled because I were broke. My father, he was governor of this province. He sent me to school in the city of New York, and I runned away. And he was very mad, and gave me no more money. So I work, and bimeby I have the chance to buttle. At the death of my father, I come home, back to Oriente, and step myself up from one thing to the nex' —clerk, secretary, lieutenant, captain— and now you behol' me. I have remove' the puzzle from your mind. Now let us enjoy ourself."

"But the war has begun by this time," strenuously protested Peter. "We saw the Salgadan fleet of steamers pass when we were stranded on the reef. The army may have landed, and be marching on San Pablo by this time."

"So you have tol' me," calmly observed General Pons. "Will you smoke some more cigar? It is the bes' tobacco in Oriente. I am a terrible man when I fight, but there is nobody yet to fight with. I must wait for the orders from my government. Maybe those rascally Salgadans will come to my town, after a while. *Quien sabe?* Then my brave *soldados* will chase 'em into the ocean."

"And how much of an army have you?" queried the interested Stearns.

"I have not count 'em lately. To-day I will send for all, and tell 'em they must pretty soon be ready to die for their glorious country. *Viva Oriente!* Hip, hip, hooray, boys!"

"We are sorry we can't stay and see them win glory," said Jim, "but we must leave you to-morrow. I'm afraid we shall have to put Julius Cæsar Jones in your care for the present. It would be a crime to pack him aboard a mule until his rheumatics let go of him. Will it

be too much trouble for you to send him on to San Pablo a little later?"

"I will be good to that fine old man, you bet," was the cordial response.

"What about the Spanish sailor of the *Paloma?*" Peter asked Jim.

"Oh, we can leave him in charge of the schooner until further notice. We'll have to pay his wages. He has found a girl he used to know, and is perfectly contented with the town of Miraflores. Paoli will want to go with us. That thousand-dollar bill of goods looks like a bad asset, but he will be anxious to hold a post mortem over it."

The news that he was to be left behind made Julius groan dismally. "'Pears like my good luck has plumb petered out," he lamented; but a little reflection convinced him that the cloud of his grief might have a silver lining. His old bones were sore, and his muscles ached with rheumatic kinks innumerable. It was apparent that those masterful young men, Stearns and Burnham, were bent on finding more trouble and danger. In fact, they were heading for the very thick of it. To remain in the care of General Rafael Pons meant jollity and fat living.

Julius had been rather spoiled by his flock of Jamaican admirers in Port Catalina. In these latitudes he was a person of importance. As soon as the rheumatism should permit, he looked forward to strolling among the populace of Miraflores with his medals on. He had found a new world to conquer, and, with Stearns and Burnham out of the way, there would be no one to poke fun at him.

"I'se suttinly shirkin' my 'sponsibilities," he told them, with a dubious shake of his gray head. "My spirit is willin' but th' flesh is powerful weak. If you-all finds Mistah Hector Alonzo McGrath, please 'splain to him how I couldn't keep up with you. As soon as you young gen'lemen gets through with projeckin' around in this yere war, you'll find me ready to go look for the golden galleum."

"Our pace *is* a bit too speedy for you at present," tactfully agreed Stearns. "You have been a good, sandy Yale man all the way through, Julius, and we are proud of you."

"I am complimented more'n tongue can tell, Mistah Stearns. Those are high-soundin' words of praise. I'll suttinly try my bes' to live up to 'em."

It was planned that the three young men, including Paoli, should set out for San Pablo very early next morning in order to cover as much ground as possible during the cool hours. But the dominion of General Rafael Pons was accustomed to move at the leisurely gait to be expected of such a jolly monarch, and the departure of his guests was in the nature of a fiesta.

While they waited for the mules and the guide, the military band assembled itself in front of the official residence, and, after a long delay, in which several stragglers were rounded up, including the bass horn and the big drum, there brayed forth a weird, discordant rendition of "There'll be a Hot Time in the Old Town To-night." It was a happy-go-lucky, slipshod, jovial kind of a band.

Presently an escort of soldiery came loafing along, talking and laughing among themselves, carrying their rifles at all angles. General Pons, in full uniform and with ponderously dignified bearing, inspected them frowningly and thundered:

"My children, I shall have to scold you. Officers, do not trip your feet over your swords. Soldiers, hold your guns erect, as you have been taught. Do not chatter like monkeys. You will march behind the distinguished visitors from North America as far as the road beyond the city. You are a guard of honor. Your commander will closely observe you. If you acquit yourselves well, there will be music and dancing in the plaza to-night."

Jim Stearns heaved a sigh of genuine regret, and murmured to Peter:

"I hate to leave this merry village. It has made a hit with me."

"Don't talk like a foolish freshman. We have a war on our hands."

"It doesn't seem to worry the ex-butler of New Rochelle."

"Say, he is all right," broke in the

voice of Marcus V. Paoli. "I take off my hat to this General Pons. He has promised to take a gross of safety razors for his soldiers. He says they will face the enemy with more pride and courage if they shave themselves clean every morning."

"I do not wish my brave children to be foun' dead on the field of battle without no shaves," explained General Pons, who had come within hearing. "The dead soldier, he mus' look calm an' splendid, which he cannot do with whiskers where whiskers hadn't ought to be. The parade, it is formed. Let us march on."

The band exploded violently. The escort presented arms. The travelers mounted their mules. General Pons, lacking a charger up to his weight, walked beside his guests. The town spontaneously abandoned its affairs. The populace, which seemed to have nothing in particular to do, forsook dwelling, shop, and schoolhouse, and trailed in the wake of the procession.

Jim Stearns doffed his hat and bowed to right and left. Peter Burnham imitated him with less ease and geniality. Astride a sturdy runt of a mule, his long legs were so difficult to dispose of that he was uncertain whether he was riding or walking.

Paoli outshone them both, for he was able to scatter flowery compliments in Spanish and to hail the señoritas with gallant sallies which made them hide their faces in their rebozos.

"Ah, if you could stay with me, we will have the good times together," General Rafael Pons told them, and his accents were wistful. "This war, it is a jolly nuisance. Please to give to Major General Bolivar Martinez my mos' gracious and humbles' respects. Tell him I wait for a message from my country, if she need me. He has reorganize' most of the army, but he has not yet found time to reorganize me. I am not sorry."

"We hope he will leave you alone to enjoy yourself," smiled Stearns. "The rest of the world takes life too seriously. My friend Peter Burnham, here, is a fair sample."

Peter was too busy to reply. Inadvertently straightening his legs, the mule had walked out from under him. The band and the escort halted among the small farms beyond the edge of the town. General Pons embraced the departing pilgrims. The soldiers aimed their rifles skyward and fired a volley. The guide whacked his mule, and moved ahead into the path which led through the jungle. The three Americans followed him in single file, and were soon lost to view.

With a sorrowful countenance, as of one bereft of playmates, General Rafael Pons trudged back into Miraflores at the head of his brass band and his ragged soldiers. There was so much of his countenance that it expressed sorrow for two or three ordinary men. The sight of it subdued the spirits of his affectionate battalions. The band played in a minor key, as many of them as could find the key. But it would not do to let these, his children, be sad-hearted for his sake. With a shrug of his mighty shoulders, as though he were casting aside a burden, General Rafael Pons spoke jocularly to one of his officers, and his laugh boomed through the streets and echoed against the walls of the houses. The soldiers smiled again. The band struck up a clashing quick-step. The town of Miraflores was itself again.

Having cared for the departed guests with all possible courtesy, General Pons now felt himself free to consider the grave problems which might arise from the war with Salgada. The invasion would be directed against San Pablo. The enemy was not likely to trouble itself with this remote, inconspicuous town and province. Still, the harbor might tempt a foray from the sea, and it would be well to make preparations even without orders from the government.

Before dismissing the two hundred troops, their general grandiloquently addressed them from the piazza of his residence. Later, he sent messengers to the fields and huts along the coast, summoning the remainder of his forces from their peaceful avocations.

Having ascertained that there were rifles and ammunition sufficient to make plenty of noise, the thoughtful brigadier, wearied by his warlike toil, sought the pleasing society of that derelict of fortune, Julius Cæsar Jones. The question of color was not permitted to obtrude itself. It gratified Julius to find that he could meet his host on a footing of unhampered social equality. Toward the collegians his attitude was nicely adjusted, familiar but never presuming, something like that of a privileged body servant or family retainer of ante-bellum days. He did not expect them to take him seriously. They laughed at his medals. Even in his rôle of a campus mascot he suspected that he was a source of amusement.

When General Rafael Pons, sympathetic and effusive, insisted that he hobble into the dining room for the noon breakfast, the invitation was a cure for rheumatism. Give the old man a chance to be consequential, and he could forget his bodily infirmities.

General Rafael Pons was a bachelor. How else could it be otherwise? His heart was big enough to love a province. To him were confided the family affairs of Miraflores and the hamlets round about. He lived in the happiness of others. He was by no means a fool. Only a wise ruler can make contentment and happiness prevail, even in a land where wants are few and tastes simple. Already he had discerned possible usefulness in Julius Cæsar Jones. He confided over an excellent meal, and his servants showed the training bestowed on them by a former butler of New Rochelle:

"Señor Julio Jones, you have a gran' name. It is that of the greates' soldier. I admire Julio Cæsar, although I runned away from school in New York before I could read him ver' much. Will it afflict your sufferin' aches if you ride out in a carriage with me this afternoon, after the hour of the siesta?"

"My miseries ain't hurtin' me so much, thank you, General Rafael Pons. I shall be pleased to go ridin' with your excellency."

"It is what I am thinking about," explained the other. "You will put on yourself all your medals. My people will be mos' anxious to know who you are. They will talk about you. 'Who is this illustrious ol' gentleman? Why do he honor our city? There is war with Salgada. Ah, ha, he mus' be a big general, from Nort' American, what Uncle Sam have sent to help us.' So they will say. We mus' let 'em think so. It will make them feel terrible proud. They will not be scared any more. It is a good bluff."

"Of cou'se, I don't aim to go round deceivin' folks," said Julius, with his gentle, whimsical smile, "but stratagems is 'lowable in war, same as they is in Yale football. I'se sorry my high hat an' long-tail coat was lef' behind in Port Catalina, but I'll try my best to make your people think I'se th' black Napoleon of these yere hot countries."

"Bravo! After we ride in the carriage, we will go see the cockfight," cried General Pons. "I have the braves' roosters in Oriente."

The days passed in this pleasant fashion, until there came a rude interruption. Into the harbor of Miraflores steamed a small gunboat, flying the colors of Salgada. General Pons girded on his sword and called his soldiers together. The gunboat anchored off the quay and sent a cutter ashore, a white flag as large as a tablecloth, hoisted in the bow.

Regardful of the dignity of his position, General Rafael Pons remained on the piazza of his residence, his brass band and his army paraded in front, and awaited the deputation. To him came the commander of the gunboat and an escort of sailors. The greetings in Spanish were cordial.

"I am delighted. I trust that you enjoy excellent health, my dear captain," exclaimed General Pons. "It is a year since you were last welcomed to my city and danced with the pretty girls. Ah ha, that was a night!"

"The hospitality of your enchanting port will never be forgotten," said the young commander of the gunboat. "I suffer a thousand regrets that I have come this time on a different errand."

"You will first enter and enjoy a cigar and something to drink?" was the solicitous query.

"Thank you. The sun is hot, and I am much fatigued."

They walked into a spacious, darkened room which might have been called a state parlor, while the squad of sailors amiably fraternized with the cheerful soldiers of Oriente. General Pons was inwardly perturbed, but his laugh was none the less hearty as he suggested:

"And this errand of yours which causes you so many regrets?"

"It is to demand the surrender of your city. The army of my country will soon arrive. They wish to land in your bay. I have come in advance of the steamers so that you may understand."

The eyes of Rafael Pons no longer twinkled. He had ceased to laugh. He was breathing hard. Steadfastly regarding the commander in a long silence, he clasped his fat hands together in his lap lest a gesture might betray his emotion.

"Why does your army wish to make a landing here?" he asked, at length and quite softly. "It is a long distance from San Pablo. Is it possible that the splendid army of Salgada has failed to effect a landing at Independencia, which is so much nearer to San Pablo than is Miraflores? There has been a battle?"

The commander looked uncomfortable. His gunboat had been roughly handled in the attack on Independencia, and he had witnessed the disastrous repulse of the troops that had tried to take the trenches manned by the veterans of Bolivar Martinez.

"Yes, there has been a battle," he reluctantly confessed. "It was decided to withdraw our forces. But I have not come to discuss the affair of Independencia. It will be the greatest madness if you do not accept my invitation to surrender. I am generous. I offer you the opportunity of withdrawing your soldiers inland before the arrival of our army. Nobody will be hurt. Otherwise, and it causes me the greatest grief, my dear General Pons, I must bombard and clear the way for the troops."

"Pardon me, captain, but the little guns of your ship can bombard nothing," was the genial reply. "Have I not seen them before? Did I not have the pleasure of dining in your cabin? I must deliberate how to save my honor. You will grant me two hours to consult with my staff? To surrender my city is a matter of some importance to me."

"As we are old friends, I am willing to wait two hours," the commander assured him.

"To save you the trouble of seeking me again, I will send a message to your ship," and General Pons hoisted himself to his feet and bowed, to signify that the interview was closed.

"What a pity that we cannot have another dance to-night! The pretty girls have said many nice things about you."

"I drink to them," said the commander, raising his glass. "*Adios,* my dear General Pons."

Julius Cæsar Jones had limped as far as the sea wall, where he was baking the rheumatism out of his bones, when the gunboat came into port and sent ashore the flag of truce. He hobbled to the general's residence as rapidly as possible, and waited without, in a disturbed state of mind, until the commander and his sailors marched back to the beach. Then he shuffled indoors and came upon General Rafael Pons, who sat with his head in his hands, three hundred pounds of painful meditation.

"When does this yere war begin to commence, if you please, suh?" plaintively interrogated Julius.

"I am thinking mos' serious," vouchsafed the general. "To surrender is the wors' disgrace what can happen to brave soldiers. But can two hundred and sixty men fight a whole army? It is too much."

"A whole army comin', huh? My good luck ain't geared quite high enough to wrastle with all these yere discombobalatin' problems that come a-happenin' along. Does you reckon we gwine to take to th' tall timber, bag an' baggage?"

Before the general could reply, there entered the room at this moment a scarecrow of a man who bore marks of a cruel struggle with the jungle. His face, haggard with exhaustion, was scratched and bruised. His muddy clothes, once white, hung in tatters. Instantly divining that he was a messenger, Rafael Pons grasped him by the shoulders, as if he would shake the tidings out of him.

The man slumped into a chair, fumbling in the small saddlebags which hung over his arm. He uttered something huskily, and offered the impatient Rafael a slim packet wrapped in oiled cloth. Hastily ripped open, it disclosed two letters.

One of them was from the minister of war, conveying the information that the enemy would probably make a landing in force at Miraflores, and hold the harbor as a base of operations. Inasmuch as the place was unfortified and the garrison few in numbers, General Pons would not be expected to resist, and permission was granted him to evacuate the city. He would retire in the direction of San Pablo and await the forward movement of the Oriente army.

The other letter had been written by Major General Bolivar Martinez, and was less formal in tone. In fact, it was slangy and affectionate, and Rafael Pons laughed as he read it. There was a footnote in English, which he fairly roared at Julius:

"Now that we have licked the stuffings out of them in the first fight, my jolly old gamecock, I expect you to make it as hot for them as you can."

As he translated aloud the letter itself, his huge face shone like a full moon. Bolivar disrespectfully referred to the minister of war as an old woman, who ought to know better than to advise such an indomitable warrior as Rafael Pons to take to his heels. The vanguard of the army of defense, composed of Bolivar and his veterans, would soon be in motion. It would be of the greatest possible service to Oriente if the landing of the Salgadan forces could be hampered and delayed, even for three days. The first repulse of the invaders had shaken their courage. They were no longer terrible. General Pons had but to show himself and doubtless they would hesitate.

"He calls me a fat rascal!" thundered the warrior, in huge delight. "He has not forgot me, though he finds no time to reorganize me. What you say, Julio Jones? He advise' me to bother them naughty Salgadans all I can. Again he says to please bother 'em three days. How you think we can do it mos'? I am ready to disobey the minister of war. If Bolivar Martinez tell me to stay an' fight, not even huge, big elephants can make me budge myself."

"I realize th' force of his remarks," answered Julius. He spoke with grave dignity. He was living in a world of make-believe, having convinced himself that he was a competent military adviser. "General Bolivar Martinez was a sagacious young man when I knowed him on th' Yale campus. If we-all kin pester an' hinder them trashy Salgada soldiers, our army will get more time to line up an' bump 'em clean off th' map, uh? How is we fixed for stayin' where we is?"

Rafael Pons confessed that he had no strong forts and no cannon, and his lineaments were rather lugubrious for a moment. He had not studied the science of intrenchments, and the situation was certainly awkward.

"I wish I was reorganize' to be an up-to-date general," sighed he. "Ha, you know what we will do? The old church, it is ver' thick and strong—mos' six feet thick in the walls, an' next door is the big house where the Spanish friars lived—two, three hundred years ago. I will put all my soldiers in them buildings. Perhaps it will bother the Salgadans to get us out pretty quick."

"I heartily indorses th' plan," declared Julius. "You see, General Rafael Pons, it kind o' seems like to me that I'se messin' in where I don't belong. But Mistah James Montgomery Stearns, th' very las' thing he told me, was that I had behaved myself like a good, sandy Yale man, an' he an' Mistah Peter Burnham was proud of me. An', such

bein' the case, I reckon I'se 'bliged to live up to them recommendations. An' no fust-class Yale man ain't gwine to quit before he's licked, you hear me!"

The fat Spanish American and the loose-jointed, grizzled exile from New Haven shook hands.

"I go to tell my children, my brave soldiers," solemnly quoth Rafael. "There mus' be plenty of eats put in the church. Like me, they will not fight desperate on the empty stomach."

They were a pair of absurdities, in a way, but somehow an observer would not have felt like laughing at them. Separately, their behavior might have been farcical. United, they fused the elements of sublimity. Alone, Rafael Pons might not have hesitated to withdraw his little force. Alone, Julius Cæsar Jones would never have thought of defying an army. Neither one could bear to lose the admiring esteem of the other.

Precisely two hours after the summons to surrender had been received, Rafael Pons sent a letter to the commander of the gunboat. It expressed effusive regret that inconvenience should be caused. One might have inferred that the writer had shed apologetic tears. Surrender was impossible. The army of Salgada would have to drive out the defenders. In this decision the renowned soldier from North America, the venerable General Julio Cæsar Jones, the adviser of the undersigned, fully concurred. The pretty girls would be disappointed, but the dance in honor of the commander must be postponed.

The commander perplexedly twisted his black mustache. Here was a difficulty unforeseen. He had expected the garrison to scamper promptly into the jungle. It seemed a dastardly proceeding to shoot shells into this pleasant town where life was one perpetual round of fiestas and siestas.

As he paced his small quarter-deck, he observed the soldiers of Rafael Pons trotting through the streets and vanishing into the church. As a matter of duty, he accelerated their progress with a shell or two, which did no perceptible damage. With the *Libertad* disabled, none of the Salgadan fleet had big enough guns to smash that ancient edifice. It was a nut for the army to crack.

To turn the church and monastery into a stout fort was no great undertaking. The windows, tall and narrow, were soon barricaded with stone blocks pried from the church pavement, with roofing tile, with bricks carried from the cloister, which had been suffered to decay. Rafael Pons petted his "children" and gustily upbraided them by turn. Julius Cæsar Jones supported himself with a cane, and inspected the work. He wore an air of owlish wisdom. The soldiers eyed him with profound respect. A man of his years who displayed such a dazzling array of medals must have survived many campaigns. In fact, and to some extent, General Pons shone in the reflected luster of General Julio Jones.

The band played lustily, pausing only for breath. With a fine touch of the theatrical, the flag of Oriente was nailed beneath the gilded cross upon the top of the lofty bell tower.

It was near sunset when the Salgadan transports came creeping in from the sea. Miraflores was to be held while the forward movement was organizing, and it would serve as a base for the reënforcements expected from Port Catalina. The report of the commander of the little gunboat greatly annoyed the general of the forces. He had suffered heavy losses at Independencia, and his men were discouraged. Most of them had been seasick, and the transports were dirty, crowded, and unhealthy. They wished no more fighting for the present.

That night the occupants of the church watched the twinkling lights of the hostile shipping, and listened to the shrill, sweet calls of the Spanish bugles. Next morning, the troops began leisurely to disembark at the quay. There was no opposition. They trundled several pieces of artillery into the town, but found difficulty in placing them so that they might open fire on the church.

The streets were both crooked and narrow, and to drag the guns within range of the religious buildings meant to

expose them to the fire of the men behind the barricaded windows. General Pons was able to cause the enemy a good deal of trouble. Salgadan infantry was posted in the houses facing the plaza and upon the roofs, but the plans of their commander appeared to be somewhat vague. He was like a man trying to open his first oyster.

His men briskly peppered at the church, and the bullets spatted futilely against the stout walls. The artillery rashly ventured nearer, being unable to shoot around corners, but was compelled to retreat. The "children" of Rafael Pons were no sharpshooters, but they could pull trigger as fast as the next man. And when the air is full of steel-jacketed bullets at three hundred yards' range, the climate is apt to become debilitating for the targets.

After several hours of desultory tactics, a frontal attack against the church doors was ordered. It would have been more effective if the attacking troops had not vividly recalled the dire results of a frontal assault on the works of Bolivar Martinez. They advanced with too much caution, giving Rafael Pons time to shift his force and meet them with so much spirit that the attempt was a fiasco.

It was now evident that the church could not be taken without considerable bloodshed. More troops were hurried ashore. Houses were blown up and torn down to open avenues of fire for the artillery. The infantry attack must be delivered from two or three sides at once. This bothersome devil of a Rafael Pons was seriously delaying operations. His defense was attaining the dignity of a siege. He must be disposed of. It would never do to leave this hornet's nest in the rear of the advancing army of Salgada.

At the end of the day, Rafael smote Julius Cæsar on the back, and formidably cried:

"We have pester' them pretty good, so far. General Bolivar Martinez tell me if we can busy them three days, he is much oblige. Twenty-eight of my brave children is dead and hurt, but no matter. Some is lef' for to-morrow."

"Those poor wounded men seem to set a heap of store by my fussin' over 'em," said Julius. "I reckon we can open up for business to-morrow."

There was no sleep for the little garrison. The besiegers kept up a steady fire through the night, and succeeded in placing one gun where it could batter at the great mahogany doors, which were reënforced with wrought iron. Thirty men made a desperate sortie from the church, and routed the gunners, but were unable to spike or capture the piece before they were driven back, with heavy loss.

Had the commander of the Salgadan forces been an abler and more experienced strategist, he would have gone about the business by organizing his main force, and pushing it inland, leaving a small body of infantry to surround the church and starve the garrison into surrender. He was a stubborn and hot-headed individual, however, and it was his mental habit to chew no more than one idea at a time. He was in the mood of an enraged bull with a banderilla sticking in its flank. It was against all rhyme and reason that Rafael Pons should refuse to surrender his contemptible little town.

On the second day, fifteen hundred men surrounded the church. They stormed up to the walls again and again, but the shattered doors had been barricaded overnight, and the slits of windows so protected the defenders that they were able to beat back the assaults with clubbed rifles and machetes. To explain it in another way, the charges were like surf beating against the impregnable walls, and only the spray dashed into the doors and windows.

The shells of the artillery no more than dented these walls, and only now and then a lucky shot entered a window or struck the doorway low enough to damage the barricade. In checking the infantry assaults, the defenders suffered grievous losses. When the second day ended, more than a hundred of them were dead or wounded. The bodies had to be buried at once. The survivors were compelled to endure the immensely fatiguing labor of tearing up

the stone pavement and digging graves thereunder.

Loss of sleep, exhaustion, nervous strain, must soon conquer this magnificent resistance. But still Rafael Pons laughed, and bullied and petted them, and still the band, or what there was left of it, tootled and banged away whenever there was a lull in the storm.

Midway of the third day, a sufficient number of houses had been leveled so that the enemy's guns could be massed against the front of the church. It was inevitable that a breach could be made in a short time. The Salgadan infantry ceased firing, and withdrew to prepare for the final assault.

"It is almos' the finish," said Rafael Pons. "To oblige General Bolivar Martinez, we mus' fight till the sun goes down. Then it will be three days."

"I agrees with your opinion, general," responded Julius Cæsar Jones, a weary, broken figure of a man whose spirit was undaunted. "At Yale College we is 'customed to fight in th' las' ditch. An' your soldiers suttinly has got Yale sand in their gizzards. I misjedged 'em at first sight. They 'peared kind o' triflin', an' no-account to me. But if my time has come, I'se surely goin' to glory in good company, you hear me."

"My soldiers adore you very much," was the simple tribute of Rafael Pons.

"Pshaw! I'se a crippled-up old nigger that nobody never took serious before," and Julius wiped his smoke-reddened eyes with a trembling hand.

A Salgadan officer crossed the plaza, with a white handkerchief tied to the machete which he held above his head. From a distance he shouted a demand for surrender. If General Pons insisted upon continuing the fight, no quarter would be given.

"It is mos' unfortunate," muttered Rafael, glancing at the sun. "I have promise' myself to hold the church three days. What you think, General Julio?"

"I'se anxious to 'blige General Bolivar Martinez," said the old man, with a wistful smile. "You reckon we can stick it out till sundown?"

"It is better to try, I think."

As if Julius were, in truth, a harbinger of good fortune in this great game as well as in the mimic warfare of the college campus, the final attack of the enemy was strangely delayed. The defenders waited, and wondered, until a watcher sent into the church tower descended, to inform Rafael Pons that mule carts were hurrying to the water front and boats were moving between the quay and one of the steamers.

"They have shot themselves out of ammunition," said Rafael. "The shells for the guns were gone sooner than they thought."

The tide was low, and when the laden boats attempted to land, they grounded a hundred feet from the quay. The heavy packages had to be carried ashore on men's backs, a slow, laborious undertaking.

The sun dropped lower and lower toward the jungle which fringed the western horizon. The watcher in the tower gazed across the belt of forest and could descry a wide savanna in the direction of the road to San Pablo. In this open, grassy space moved a number of dots. He shaded his eyes, and stared, a wild hope in his heart.

The dots became larger. They moved rapidly nearer. They took the semblance of mounted men. They could be nothing else than a scouting party of Oriente cavalry.

The watcher yelled the news to his comrades in the church. With immense exertion, General Pons clambered to the belfry. He blubbered when he caught sight of the horsemen. He need not sacrifice the rest of his men. He could honorably surrender before they were exterminated.

Crawling down the rickety ladders, he ran along the aisle of the church, shouting the great tidings. He implored his men to shoot as fast as they could, he dragged several of them to the bell ropes, and they rang the chimes in a mad tintinnabulation. The remnant of a brass band played for all it was worth. Huzzas filled the place.

If the cavalry came near enough to the town they would hear, and know that Brigadier General Rafael Pons was holding the church.

The Salgadan outposts took alarm, and the grand assault was further delayed. Just at sunset the cavalry emerged from the belt of jungle and engaged the Salgadan pickets in a brisk skirmish fire. The crackle of carbines carried to the beleaguered church.

Rafael Pons mustered his handful of men. Their work was done. Julius Cæsar Jones limped beside him, as they marched from the battered church into the sweet, dusky air of the plaza, and formally surrendered to the commander of the Salgadan forces.

CHAPTER XIII.

For three days after leaving Miraflores, Jim Stearns and Peter Burnham followed the wilderness trail which led toward the railroad by which they expected to reach San Pablo. The heat, the plague of insects, the rough fare, and the insufferable slowness and obstinacy of the mules made Marcus V. Paoli swear that he would no more travel in such adventurous company. For him the exploitation of the Matchless Safety Razor in the beaten paths of commerce. His companions began to regret that they had veered away from the quest of the golden table. Peter Burnham grumbled in characteristic fashion, and swore to spank Hector Alonzo McGrath on sight, as the cause of these discomforts.

A few hours before they hoped to find the railroad, the trail ascended a hill, and as they were dipping down the other side they saw, across the valley, a line of men on horses and mules filing toward them. The guide shouted with delight, and announced that these were soldiers of Oriente. As they came nearer it was observed that in advance rode a troop of well-mounted and trimly uniformed men equipped with carbine and machete, while the main body appeared to consist of hastily mounted infantry. As the vanguard forded a brawling river that ran through the valley, Jim Stearns waved his hat in air, and exclaimed to Peter:

"See that chesty little chap in khaki, in front of the cavalry troop? By Jove, it is Bolivar Martinez as sure as I live!"

"Right you are, Jim, and do you get the lad in white clothes, riding at Bolivar's right, and looking just as cocky? That is Hector Alonzo McGrath. We are about to have a class reunion, my boy."

Peter abandoned his mule, and dashed down the hill with prodigious strides, Jim Stearns bounding close behind him. As Bolivar Martinez recognized them, he emptied his revolver skyward by way of salute, put spurs to his horse, and clattered up the hill. Reining in, he dismounted like an acrobat, and was picked up bodily by Peter Burnham, who most disrespectfully shouted:

"You blessed runt, you! What do you think of him, Jim? Here, take him and muss him up. You may never have another chance to stand a real live major general on his head."

Hector McGrath, riding more cautiously, had drawn near, and Peter Burnham, making good his threat, plucked him from the saddle, laid him across his knee, and spanked him earnestly.

"Here, you big Indians, you mustn't get so gay with me," sputtered Hector. "I am a life-sized hero, I want you to understand. You football and rowing champions look like mighty small potatoes to me."

"What has he done?" demanded Burnham and Stearns, with one voice.

"He has won the first battle of the war, at Independencia, and defeated the army of Salgada," gravely affirmed Bolivar, a version somewhat larger than the facts might seem to warrant.

"A mere trifle," carelessly exclaimed Hector. "I was really hiding in a secondhand boiler while the conflict raged, but the soldiers of Bolivar would have it otherwise."

"He is as modest as all great men," cried Bolivar. "Where were you fellows going? To find me? Have you come from Miraflores? Is there any news of the enemy?"

"Life was a glad, sweet song in Miraflores when we left it," replied Jim. "No signs of trouble, except poor old

Julius and the rheumatics. We had to leave him there. What are your plans, Bolivar?"

"We are marching to Miraflores to see if the Salgadan army is going to land there. We will try to hold them in the town until our main army advances for the big battle. Turn around and go with us. There will be something doing. I can give you bigger mules to ride."

"Your suggestion pleases us," said Jim. "That is, I am game for it if Peter is."

"Give me a mule that will keep my feet from dragging, and I'll go anywhere," growled the unterrified Peter, who was easier in mind now that he had found Hector Alonzo. Paoli thereupon declared his intention of proceeding to San Pablo with the guide. He hated to part company with such good friends, but they were still seeking trouble, and he was trying to dodge it. They wished him good luck in the matter of the "thousand-dollar bill of goods," and hoped to meet him in San Pablo after the campaign.

When the column resumed its march, Bolivar explained that the cavalry troop was composed of the best young men of San Pablo, fellows of wealth and education for the most part, the crack organization of the city. They were acting as his personal escort, and would be of service as scouts. The mounted infantrymen trailing behind were the veterans fresh from the trenches of Independencia. With this mobile force, Bolivar should be able seriously to impede the enemy before an invasion could be organized on a large scale.

It was news to Peter Burnham and Jim Stearns that the idyllic town of Miraflores, the happy realm of General Rafael Pons, was regarded as the probable landing base of the enemy. They anxiously bethought themselves of Julius Cæsar Jones, and felt that they had abandoned him. And after Hector and Bolivar, in excited outbursts, had described the battle of Independencia, Jim was moved to say:

"It is the greatest story I ever heard. But what about that jolly fat sport of a General Pons? He can't whip any army. He may have been a good butler at New Rochelle, but I have my doubts about his military genius."

"And he has no Hector Alonzo McGrath to lead a charge and save the day," was the ironical comment of Peter Burnham.

"I suppose he will have to move out of Miraflores," said Bolivar, "although I sent him a letter telling him to give the enemy a run for their money if he felt like it. He is bully good company, that fellow Rafael Pons, but I do not expect he will fight. It is asking too much."

"Well, I hope we meet him pounding along the trail with Julius all intact," sighed Stearns.

Halting for a few hours by night to bivouac under the stars, the column made the most of the daylight hours to push on to Miraflores and pick up information concerning the movements of the enemy. They came at length, late in an afternoon, to the wide savanna, or rolling, grass country, from which it was possible to see the church tower of Miraflores. Between them and the town remained only a wide belt of jungle, which offered excellent cover for a reconnoissance.

If the enemy had landed in the bay, Rafael Pons and his retreating garrison should have been met on the trail before now. Therefore Bolivar Martinez was inclined to believe that the coast was still clear. Nevertheless he was anxious and wary, and ordered a halt in the savanna while scouts could be pushed forward to feel the way.

Just then the wind from the sea brought a faint, confused noise of church bells furiously jangled, a discordant fanfare of trumpets, and an incessant rattle of rifle fire. His officers crowded about Bolivar, and the men who had been easing their mounts climbed into the saddles. It was incredible, but there was fighting in Miraflores. And the only troops of Oriente that could possibly be engaged were the few ragged rascals commanded by that fat patron of mirth, General Rafael Pons.

"He has called my bluff," cried Bolivar. "They must have seen us, or they would not ring the bells. *Viva Rafael Pons!* I pray to the blessed saints that we are not too late to save what are left."

The column hurried forward, ready for action, and plunged into the jungle. As the cavalry troop emerged from the heavy growth, and looked across the little farms adjoining the town, the firing ceased. They could see the transports clustered in the harbor, and they saw also the flag of Oriente still nailed below the cross on the bell tower of the church.

The silence was ominous. The bells, the trumpets, the rifles were still.

Then the Salgadan outposts discovered the advance of the mounted column, and opened fire across the fields. The enemy's infantry came pouring out of the town.

The sun had set, but a lingering radiance in the western sky still revealed the gilded cross of the bell tower. The figure of a man, blackly outlined, was seen to climb from the belfry and tear down the flag.

"They have surrendered, or there are no more of them left," mournfully exclaimed Bolivar Martinez. "We can do nothing to-night. And we are not strong enough to attack the town."

He withdrew his men into the jungle, leaving a skirmish line extended along the edge of the clearings toward the town.

A little before midnight a sentry brought to Bolivar Martinez a wounded man who said he belonged to the remnant of the garrison of General Rafael Pons. When his comrades had marched from the church to surrender, he had hidden in a cell of the monastery. After dark he had crawled out and slipped into the house of a friend from whence he stole over roofs and through alleys until he came to the outer line of Salgadan sentries. They had fired at him, and shot him in the shoulder—he had also been slightly wounded during the fight—but he managed to crawl across the fields until found by a friendly outpost.

The news flew from lip to lip. The silent camp became astir. The rude brushwood shelter of Bolivar Martinez was ringed about with a throng of dark figures anxious for tidings of the garrison. The fugitive talked in husky whispers. His broken words, repeated from one to another, were accompanied by a subdued chorus of ejaculations from the gloom.

General Rafael Pons and his men had done their best, said he. They loved their general, and he had told them it was the will of the good God and of their country that they should go into the church and fight as long as they could. Yes, General Pons was alive, and some of his men, not many, and with them was the noble leader from North America, the old black man with the many medals for wonderful deeds in war. He had shown unfaltering courage. The soldiers regarded him with awe. It had been apparent to them that General Pons strongly relied on him, and listened respectfully to his advice.

The survivors had been made prisoners. The fugitive had learned from a friend of his that the commander of the Salgadan army was very angry, and threatened to shoot them all for being so stubborn. This friend had seen the prisoners disarmed and taken to the prison of the town.

The Salgadan commander had established his headquarters in the governor's mansion. General Pons and the black man, General Julio Jones, had not been confined in the prison, but were under guard in small, separate buildings of the grounds of the governor's mansion. This the fugitive had learned from the friend aforesaid, who, because he held a position in the government employ, had been led before the commander and questioned. There was much drinking and revelry among the Salgadan officers, and doubtless they were making free with the good wines of General Pons.

"That will break the heart of poor Rafael," said Bolivar Martinez. "But I am thankful he is still living, and also Julius Cæsar Jones. So Julius is a great general! What do you think of him,

fellows? You did not know what kind of a man old Julius was until you brought him to Oriente. It is in the air of my country to be brave. Is it not so?"

"Yes, indeed! Look at me," blandly suggested Hector Alonzo. "After a few days of your climate, even I am a hero."

They ceased their persiflage, and discussed in low tones the story of the wounded fugitive. At length Hector Alonzo, worn out by the arduous campaigning, was overtaken by sleep. Bolivar Martinez a little later returned to his blanket, with his saddle for a pillow, and his veterans stretched themselves upon the damp, rotting vegetation beside their tethered animals.

Jim Stearns and Peter Burnham remained awake, seated with their backs against a fallen tree, and their discourse took this turn.

"I suppose it has occurred to you," said Jim, "that you and I haven't amounted to shucks during this whole expedition. The fact is that we are a pair of two-spots."

"We have rather made a mess of things," glumly agreed Peter. "But our intentions have been excellent."

"Our intentions be hanged!" was the impatient retort. "Here we are, men with reputations to live up to, fellows who are supposed to take the lead when there is something doing. We tried to get to Oriente and help Bolivar Martinez. What happened? We ran away with a schooner, and smashed her up. That is the sum total of our achievements to date. Hector McGrath, a flighty, irresponsible little cuss, whom we are supposed to be taking care of, beat us to it. And then he, in some mysterious way, which I can't make head or tail of, turned himself into a real, gorgeous, grand-stand hero. Why, all these soldiers worship the ground he walks on. He led them in a desperate charge, and won the day, and all that sort of thing."

"Yes, and there is also Julius Cæsar Jones," growled Peter. "We lugged that old relic along to amuse us, and now *he* turns himself into a full-blooming hero. It makes my head ache. Where do we come in?"

"We haven't come in at all so far. We are a pair of flat failures, Peter. I am ashamed to go home."

"Worse than that. I shall never dare to show my face in New Haven again. We have been bumped off our pedestals, Jim."

"Bumped off by Hector Alonzo McGrath and Julius Cæsar Jones. I hear sounds of uproarious laughter from the campus."

"Speaking of Julius," and Jim's accents were both sorrowful and earnest, "we are a pair of selfish swine to be talking about ourselves. Poor old Julius is a prisoner of war, taken redhanded. We are responsible for him. We left him in Miraflores to recover from his rheumatism. We abandoned our faithful mascot. He may be taken out and shot full of holes."

"You feel no meaner about it than I do. What can we do about it?"

"I think we ought to rescue him. It is distinctly up to us."

"Rescue him? You're dreaming!" exclaimed Peter. "Why, Bolivar Martinez hasn't the nerve to tackle it, with all his men."

"I mean precisely what I say," Jim doggedly affirmed. "It isn't Bolivar's affair. Julius belongs to us. We undertook to steer his destiny. Of course, we couldn't foresee that he was going to be a hero. It is high time that you and I did something. Let's get busy."

Peter Burnham yawned, but he was interested, nevertheless. When Jim Stearns declared himself there was apt to be an idea, more or less definite, sizzling in the back of his head. And, moreover, there was no denying the fact that Julius Cæsar Jones belonged to them. They had mislaid him, and it was their bounden duty to try to recover him. The possibility that he might be shot while in captivity was very disconcerting.

"Name your scheme," said Peter.

"I propose that you and I try to sneak into the town to-night. I think we can pass the Salgadan outposts. And then we ought to be able to make our

way to the house of General Pons by climbing walls and dodging sentries."

"It sounds insane enough to put us in the hero class," agreed Peter. "And honestly if I don't qualify as a hero pretty soon I shall fret myself to death."

"Same here. We can't shoot our way into town. We'd have the whole army on our necks in a jiffy. Our tactics must be all on the gum-shoe order."

"Come on, then. Let's go as far as we can."

With this Peter Burnham moved in the direction of the small stream, where the horses and mules were watered. Groping on hands and knees, he carefully selected, by the sense of touch, a number of rounded stones, which he dropped into his pockets. Jim did likewise, chuckling as he whispered:

"I'll hold my ammunition in reserve for you. And you ought to be as deadly as a rapid-fire gun. The beauty of it is that your action is noiseless."

"My pitching arm is still fairly good," observed Peter, "and I used to be able to hit a knot hole at fifty feet. And they do say I had some speed."

These rash young men moved with long strides through the jungle, and came to the advance line of their own force. The fantastic sequence of events had gone to their heads. Anything was reasonable. Nothing seemed impossible. Hector Alonzo McGrath turning the tide of battle! Julius Cæsar Jones the dominant figure of an episode fairly Homeric! Was it any madder, any more absurd, that Jim Stearns and Peter Burnham should undertake a night invasion of a town held by the enemy? Their sense of proportion had been lost. It was their turn to attempt something sublimely ridiculous.

TO BE CONCLUDED IN NEXT ISSUE, ON SALE JULY 7TH.

THE AUTO DRIVER

WITH my motors all a-drumming, you can hear me coming, coming,
Till in smoke and dust and vapor I go swirling madly by,
While the wheel my hands are gripping, as around the turns we're whipping,
And I toss the miles behind me as the vivid seconds fly;
For I know the others follow, swooping over hill and hollow,
With their motors' sharp staccato keeping rhythm with the race,
And my racer leaps and lurches as I fling past towns and churches,
Where a blur of trees and fences marks the swiftness of the pace!

Every nerve and muscle's straining as in speed I'm gaining, gaining,
And the wind that rushes by me makes a roaring in my ear,
And the car is rocking, jolting, in its frenzied thunderbolting,
And I pray my lucky angel that the course is free and clear;
For the slightest break or faulting sends a racer somersaulting,
Turns the snapping, snorting engine to a heap of smoking scrap,
And although I take my chances under any circumstances
I am not exactly yearning for my everlasting nap!

Yet it's great to have the making of a record record-breaking,
And to feel the car responding as you "throw 'er open wide."
With the motor singing cheerful, though the pace is something fearful,
And you're running like a cyclone that is roaring as you ride;
If you lose, or if you win, you feel the fever throbbing in you,
And you never will recover from the motor-racing thrall,
With its chances—glad or tragic—with its glamour and its magic,
With its stress and strain and danger and the glory of it all!

BERTON BRALEY.

High Finance in Cromarty Gulch

BEING THE SECOND IN THE SERIES OF RAILROAD MYSTERIES INVESTIGATED BY CALVIN SPRAGUE, SCIENTIST AND CRIMINOLOGIST

By Francis Lynde

Author of "The Taming of Red Butte Western," "The Fight for the G. V. & P.," Etc.

IT was a warm night for altitude five thousand feet, and the last few lingerers in the dining car on the Flying Plainsman had their windows open. Midway of the car a quartet of light-hearted young people were exchanging guesses as to the proper classification of a big man with laughing eyes and a fighting jaw who was dining alone at one of the end tables.

"He looks like money—large ready money—to me," sniffed the prettiest of the three young women. But her seatmate, a handsome young fellow with the athletic badge of his college association worn conspicuously in his buttonhole, thought differently. "You're off this time, Kitty," he dissented. "If he isn't the champion of all the amateur heavyweights, you can put him down as a football coach out scouting for talent. Lord, what a 'back' he'd make under the new rules!"

"Vaudeville is my guess," chimed in the next to the prettiest girl mockingly. "The strong man who swings the big dumb-bells and all that, you know."

A little later the big man in the far corner took his change from the waiter and left the car. As he passed the joyous party at the double table, there was a good-natured twinkle in his gray eyes, and he dropped a neatly engraved card at the collegian's plate.

"Heavens! He heard us!" gasped the prettiest girl. And then, feminine curiosity overcoming shame: "What does it say, Tommy?"

The young man held the card so that all could see, and admitted himself a loser in the classification game:

CALVIN W. SPRAGUE,
Chemist, Agricultural Department,
Washington, D. C.

This was what they read; and the fourth member of the group, a young woman with fine eyes and a rather masculine chin, took the card, and studied it thoughtfully.

"The queer thing is how he contrived to overhear us at this distance," she commented musingly. And then, addressing the vanished card owner through his bit of pasteboard: "So you're a chemist, are you, Mr. Sprague? You don't look it—not the least little bit—and I'm sure you'll forgive me if I say that I doubt it—doubt it very much, indeed."

While the young people were debating among themselves as to whether there was an apology due, the big man who had dined alone passed quite through the string of vestibuled Pullmans, and went to light his cigar on the rear platform of the combination buffet and observation car.

Shortly after he had seated himself in one of the platform camp chairs, the train, which had been rocketing down a wide valley with an isolated ridge on one hand and a huge mountain range on the other, came to a stand at one of the few and far between stations. The pause, one would say, should have been only momentary; but after it had lasted for a full minute or more

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the solitary smoker on the rear platform got up to lean over the platform railing for a forward glance.

Looking down the length of the long train, he saw the lights of the small station, with other lights beyond it, which seemed to mark a railroad crossing or junction. On the station platform there were a number of lanterns held high to light a group of men who were struggling to lift a long, ominous-looking box into the express car.

A little later the wheels of the train began to trundle again, and as his car end passed the station the smoker on the observation platform had a fleeting glimpse of the funeral party, and of the heavy four-mule team which was its single equipage. Also he remarked, what a less observant person might have missed—that the lantern bearers were roughly clothed, and that they were armed.

A hundred yards beyond the station the train stopped again; and when it presently began to back slowly the platform watcher saw that it was preparing to take on a lighted coach standing on a siding belonging to the junction railroad. When the coupling was made and the Flying Plainsman, with the picked-up car in tow, was once more gathering headway in its eastward flight up the valley of a torrenting mountain river, the big man read the number "04" over the door of the newly added coach. When he made out the number, he coolly put a leg over the barrier railing, brushed the guarding porter aside, and pushed his way through the narrow side corridor of the trailer.

In the rear half of the car, the corridor opened into a comfortable working room, fitted with easy-chairs, lounges, and a desk; in short, the office in transit of the Nevada Short Line's general superintendent, Mr. Richard Maxwell. Maxwell was at his desk when the big-bodied intruder shouldered himself into the open compartment; but he got up joyfully when he recognized his unannounced visitor.

"Why, Calvin, old man, where in thunder did you drop from?" he demanded, wringing the hand of greeting in a vain endeavor to match the big man's crushing grip. "Sit down and tell it out. I thought you'd gone East over the Transcontinental a month ago."

The man whose card named him as a government chemist picked out the easiest of the lounging chairs, and planted himself comfortably in it.

"Jarred you, did I? That's nothing! I've jarred worse men than you are in my time. Your thinking machinery is all right; I was due to go back a month ago, but I got interested in a little laboratory experiment on the coast, and couldn't tear myself away. How are Mrs. Maxwell and the kiddies?"

"Fine! And I'm hurrying to get home to them. I've been out for a week, and had begun to think that I'd never get back to the Brewster office again. I've been having the busiest little ghost dance you ever heard of for the past week."

The big man settled himself still more comfortably in his chair, and relighted the cigar, which, being of the dining-car brand, had sulked for a time and then gone dejectedly out.

"Will the busy story bear telling?" he asked.

"Yes—to you," was the prompt reply. "You'll be interested when I tell you that I'm inclined to believe that it is 'a little more of the same'—a continuation of our round-up with the 'wire devil' that you helped us out on six weeks ago."

The listener nodded. Six weeks earlier in the summer he had made a short stop over at Brewster to visit Maxwell, and had alighted in the midst of a lawless attempt on the part of some New York high-finance buccaneers to wreck Maxwell's railroad. "Begin back a bit," he said; and Maxwell did it.

"After you went West, we put our wire devil through the courts, and President Ford served notice on the New York pirates—told them that he had the evidence on them, and that they'd better let up on us. That was the end of it until about a week ago, when I got a hot wire from Ford, telling me to secure voting proxies on every pos-

sible share of Short Line stock held locally, firing the proxies to him in New York by special messenger, who should arrive not later than the night of the fifteenth."

"Um!" said the smoker thoughtfully. "Much of the stock held out here in your Timanyoni wilderness?"

"A good bit of it, first and last. When the Pacific Southwestern, with Ford at its head, took over the Red Butte Western, the R. B. W. was strictly a local line, and the reorganization plan was based upon an exchange of stock—the new for the old. Then, when we built the extension and issued more stock, quite a block of it was taken up by local capitalists, bankers, mine owners, and ranchmen—not a majority, of course, but a good, healthy balance of power."

Again the big man in the lounging chair nodded. "I see," he said. "There is doubtless a stockholders' meeting looming in the near future—say, on the day after the all-important fifteenth—and the Wall Street people are going after Ford's scalp again, this time in a strictly legal way. He will probably need your Western proxies, and need 'em bad."

"I've got them right here," said Maxwell, tapping a thick bunch of papers on his desk. "And, believe me, I've had a sweet time getting them. Every moneyed man in this country is a friend of Ford's, and yet I've had to wrestle with every one of them for these proxies as if I were asking them to shed their good red blood."

"Of course," was the quiet comment. "The fellows on the other side would stack cards on you—or try to. What is it this time—just a stock-breaking raid for speculation, or is it something bigger than that?"

The young superintendent shook his head doubtfully.

"I don't know certainly; I haven't had a chance to talk with Ford since early in the summer. But I have my own guess. If the Transcontinental could control this five-hundred-mile stretch of ours from Copah to Lorchi, it would have the short line to southern California."

"Therefore and wherefore, if Mr. Ford doesn't happen to have the votes in the coming stockholders' meeting, you'll be out of a job. Is that about the size of it?"

"Yes," said Maxwell. "Not that it makes any special difference to me personally. I have a mine up on the Floria that beats railroading out of sight. But I'd fight like a dog for Ford, and for my own rank and file here on the Short Line. Of course, Transcontinental control would mean a clean sweep of everybody; there wouldn't be baskets enough this side of the main range to hold the heads that would be cut off."

"I suppose not. But, as you say, you have the 'come-back' right there under your hand in those proxies. How will you get them to New York?"

"My chief clerk, Calmaine, will deliver them in person. He'll meet us at Brewster, and go right along on this train, which, by the way, is the next to the last one he could take and make New York on time. It's all arranged."

The guest smoked on in silence for a little time, and when he spoke again it was to ask the name of the junction station at which the last stop had been made.

"It's Little Butte—where our Red Butte branch comes in."

"You'd been stopping over there?" Sprague asked.

"No; I had my car brought down from Red Butte on the local, which doubles back on the branch."

"Um! Little Butte—good name. You people out here run pretty persistently to 'Buttes,' don't you? Did I, or didn't I, see a funeral at this particular Butte as we came along?"

"You did. It's Murtrie, a mining engineer, who has been doing a sort of weigh-master's stunt at the Molly Baldwin Mine. Died pretty suddenly last night, they said."

"Large man?" queried the government chemist half absently; and Maxwell looked up quickly.

"Yes; how could you tell?"

Sprague waved his cigar as if the question were childish and the answer obvious. "It took a dozen of them,

more or less, to put him into the express car."

Maxwell turned back to his desk. "Metallic casket probably," he suggested. "They had our agent wire Brewster for the best that could be had. Said they were going to ship the body to some little town in Kentucky. They're rather a queer lot."

"Who—the Kentuckians?"

"No; the Molly Baldwin outfit. The mine was opened by a syndicate of New York people four years ago, and after the New Yorkers had put two or three hundred thousand into it, without taking anything out, they gave up in disgust. Then a couple of young fellows from Cripple Creek came along and leased the property. There was a crooked deal somewhere, for the young fellows began to take out pay—big pay—right from the start. Then the New York people wanted to renege on the lease, and dragged the thing into the courts."

"And the courts said 'No'?"

"The court straddled. I didn't follow the fight in detail, but the final decision was that the lessees were to keep all they could take out each month up to a certain amount. If they exceeded that amount, the excess was to be shared equally with the New Yorkers."

"Lots of room for shenanigan in that," was the big man's chuckling comment. "Unless these young Cripple Creekers are better than the average, they'll stand a good bit of watching, you'd say."

Maxwell laughed. "That's what the New Yorkers seem to think. They secured a court order allowing them to keep an expert of their own on the job. Nobody seems to care for the watchdog stunt. They've had to send a new man every few weeks."

"Do the Cripple Creekers kill them off?"

"No; they buy 'em off, I guess. Anyway, they don't stay. Murtrie was the last."

"And apparently he hasn't stayed," said Sprague reflectively; and just then a long-drawn bellow of the locomotive whistle announced the approach of the train to Brewster. At the signal, the guest rose and tossed the remains of the bad cigar out of the window. "Here's where I have to quit you, Dick," he was beginning; but Maxwell would not have it that way.

"Not much you don't, Calvin, old man," he protested. "You're going to stop over one day with me, at least. No, I won't listen to any excuses. Give me your berth check, and I'll send my boy up ahead to get your traps out of the sleeper. Sit down right where you are, and take it easy. You'll find a box of cigars—real cigars—in this lower drawer. I'll be back as soon as I've seen Calmaine."

Apparently the man from Washington did not require much urging. He sat down in Maxwell's chair as the train was slowing into the division station, and was rummaging in the desk drawer for the box of cigars, when an alert, carefully groomed young man came in through the forward corridor and met the superintendent as he was going out. There was a hurried conference, a passing of papers, and the two—Maxwell and his private secretary—went out together, leaving the big man to go on with his rummaging alone.

Shortly afterward came the bump of a coupling touch. The private car, in the grip of a switching engine, raced backward through the yards; backward and forward again, and when it came to rest it was standing on the short station spur at the end of the railroad headquarters building. From the open windows Sprague could see the long through train, with its two big mountain-pulling locomotives coupled on, drawn up for its farther flight. It was after it had steamed away into the night that Maxwell returned to his private car, to find his guest half asleep, as it seemed, in the depths of the big wicker easy-chair.

"I hope you didn't think I'd deserted you?" he said, drawing up another of the wicker chairs. "I took time to telephone the house. Mrs. Maxwell's dining out with her sister, and, if you don't mind, we'll sit here a while, and——"

There was enough to talk about. The

two, who had been college classmates, had seen little of each other for a number of years. Maxwell told how he had gone into railroading under Ford, and how, in his first summer in the Timanyoni, he had acquired a mine and a wife. Sprague's recounting was less romantic. After leaving college, he had coached the varsity football team for two years, and had afterward gone in for original research in chemistry, which had been his "major" in college. Later he had drifted into the Washington bureau as an expert, taking the job, as he explained, because it gave him time and frequent leisurely intervals for the study of his principal hobby, which was the lifting of detective work to the plane of pure theory, treating each case as a mathematical problem to be demonstrated by logical reasoning.

"You ought to drop everything else and go into the man-hunting business as a profession," laughed Maxwell, when the hour-long talk had come around to the big man's pet among the hobbies.

"No," was the instant objection. "That is where you're wrong. A man does his best work as an amateur—in any line. As long as the man hunting comes in the way of a recreation, I enjoy it keenly. But if I had to make a business of it, it would be different." Then he changed the subject by asking after Tarbell, Maxwell's ex-cowboy division detective, who had served as his understudy in the "wire-devil" case a few weeks earlier.

"Archer is all right," was the reply, "only he'd like to break away from me and go with you. He thinks you are at the top of the heap—says he'd like to take lessons of you for a year or so."

Sprague was gazing absently out of the near-by window. "Speaking of angels," he broke in, "there is Tarbell now, coming down your office stair three steps at a jump." And a moment later the young man in question had dashed across to the private car and was thrusting his face in at the open window.

"Trouble, Mr. Maxwell!" he blurted out. "The Plainsman's just been held up and robbed at Cromarty Gulch! Connolly's getting the wire from Corona, and he started me out to see if I could find you."

The superintendent leaped as if his easy-chair had been suddenly electrified.

"What's that you say?" he demanded. "A holdup?" Then he went into action promptly, like the trained emergency captain should. "Get Sheriff Harding on the phone, and tell him to rustle up a posse and report here, quick! Then get the yard office, and turn me out an engine and a coach for Harding's men. Hustle it!"

While he was closing his desk, he made hurried explanation to Sprague: "It's probably Scott Weber's gang. They held up a train on the main line ten days ago. Come on upstairs with me, and we'll get the facts."

When the superintendent, accompanied by his broad-shouldered guest, burst into the dispatcher's office, a fat, round-faced young man was rattling the key at the train-sheet table. He glanced up at the door opening.

"I'm glad Tarbell found you," he said, with a gasp of relief. "I was afraid you'd gone home." And then he recognized the square-shouldered one. "How are you, Mr. Sprague? Glad to see you again!"

Maxwell went around to the wire table.

"Whom have you got?" he asked.

"Allen, night operator at Corona. The train is there, and I've been holding it to give you a chance to talk with McCarty, the conductor."

"Tell me the story as you've got it; then I'll tell you what to say to Mac," was the quick reply.

"It was in Cromarty Gulch, just at the elbow where the track makes the U curve. Cruger's on ahead, and Jenkins is running the train engine. Cruger saw somebody throwing a red light at him. They stopped, and four holdups climbed on the engines and made them cut off the postal and express cars and pull on around the curve. Then a bunch of 'em broke in the door of the express car and scragged little Johnny Galt, the messenger. While they were doing that, another bunch went through the train and

held up the passengers. After they'd gone through Galt's car and taken what they wanted, they made Cruger and Jenkins couple up again and go on."

"What did they take?" Maxwell asked.

"Some little money and jewelry from the passengers, McCarty says—not very much."

"But from the express car?"

The fat dispatcher made a queer face and wiped the sweat from his forehead.

"That's the part of it that's hard to believe. Galt was carrying considerable money, but they didn't try to blow his safe. They—they smashed up a coffin and took the dead man out of it!"

"What!" ejaculated the superintendent. "Murtrie's body?"

"I don't know who it was—Mac didn't say. But that's what they did. When the boys got together and pulled Galt out from under the express stuff where they'd buried him, they found the coffin open and the body gone."

Sprague had been listening intently.

"This seems to be something worth while, Maxwell," he cut in. "How much time do we have to waste here?"

"Just a minute. Go on, Connolly."

"That's all," said the fat dispatcher. "They're at Corona now, and they've put Johnny Galt off; and—and the coffin. Mac's asking for orders."

"Let them go, and then clear for my special. I've sent for Harding and a posse, and we'll get after this thing while the trail is warm. You'll go along, won't you?" turning to the stop-over guest.

The man from Washington laughed genially.

"You couldn't drive me away with a fire hose—not until I have seen this little mystery of yours cleared up. Let's be doing."

Five minutes farther along, the two-car special train had been made up and was clanking out over the switches of the eastern yard. While the last of the switch lights were flickering past the windows, a big, bearded man came in from the car ahead, and Maxwell introduced him.

"Sprague, this is Sheriff Harding. Harding, shake hands with my friend Mr. Sprague, of the agricultural department, Washington, and then sit down, and we'll thrash this thing out. You've heard the story?"

The sheriff nodded. "I've heard what Tarbell could tell me. He says the biggest part of the haul was a dead man. Is that right?"

"It seems to be. The dead man is Murtrie, who was supposed to be representing the New York owners of the Molly Baldwin Mine. The report goes that he died last night, and his body was put on the train at Little Butte, to be taken East to some little town in Kentucky. What's your guess?"

"I guess that the whole blamed outfit was locoed—plumb locoed," said Harding. "You couldn't carve it out any other way, could you?"

It was Sprague who broke in with a quiet suggestion. "Try again, Mr. Harding," he said.

The big sheriff put his head in his hands, and made the effort. When he looked up again there was the light of a new discovery in his eye.

"Say!" he exploded. "Murtrie's the last of a string of five or six 'watchers' they've had up at that cussed hole in the ground—and he's dead. By gravy! I believe they killed him!"

Maxwell's smile was grim.

"It seems to me we're just about as far off as ever," he commented; "unless you can carry it along to the body snatching in some way. Why should they——"

"Hold on!" Harding cut in. "I wasn't through. It's one thing to kill a man, and another to get rid of the body so it won't show up and get somebody hanged. Murtrie was sick; that much I know, because Doc Strader went out to the mine to see him day before yesterday. I was talking with Strader about it, and he said it looked like a case of ptomaine poisoning."

"Well?" said Maxwell.

"Supposin' it wasn't a natural—supposin' it was the other kind o' poison? They'd have to get rid o' the body some way or other, wouldn't they, or run the

risk of havin' it dug up and looked into after Murtrie's friends took hold?"

"Go on."

"That bein' the case, they'd have to call in some sort of outside help; they couldn't handle it alone. Two or three of Scott Weber's gang've been seen hanging around in Brewster within the last few days. Supposin' these fellows at the Molly Baldwin put up a job with Scott to make this play with Murtrie's body?"

"By Jove, Harding, I half believe you've got it!" Maxwell exclaimed; but the chemistry expert said nothing.

"We can tell better after we get on the ground, maybe," the sheriff went on. "I had Follansbee bring his dogs along. There's a trail up through the head of Cromarty Gulch leadin' out to the old reservation road on the mesa. If they had anything as heavy as Murtrie's body to tote, that's about the way they went with it."

Maxwell had been absently marking little squares on his desk blotter as Harding talked. The sheriff's theory was ingenious, but it failed to account for all the facts.

"There's more to it than that," he said, at length. And then he appealed to the silent guest: "Don't you think so, Sprague?"

"I'm waiting to hear how Mr. Harding accounts for the raid on the passengers," said the big man modestly. "One would think that a gang of body snatchers would have been willing to do one thing at a time."

"By George, that's so!" the sheriff acknowledged. "I hadn't thought of that. But then," he added, after a second thought, "a gang that was tryin' to cover up a killin' wouldn't be any too good to throw in a little holdup business on the side."

"No," said Sprague; but he made no further comment. So far from it, he sat back in his chair and smoked patiently, while Maxwell and the sheriff went on with the theory building, a process which continued in some desultory fashion until Maxwell, glancing out of a window, said:

"We're coming to it; this is the gulch."

A few minutes later the two-car train slowed down and came to a stand on a sharp curve at the head of a densely wooded ravine in the foothills. Harding ran forward to get his posse out, and by the time Maxwell and Sprague had debarked, the ground at the track-side was black with men. Sprague laughed softly.

"It's lucky we're not depending upon the old Indian method of 'reading the sign,'" he said. "Whatever the ground might have told us is a story spoiled by this time." Then he laughed again when a man broke out of the crowd, with a couple of dogs towing him furiously at the end of their leashes. "We gabble a good bit about civilization and the advances we've made," he went on. "Yet in the comparatively simple matter of running down a criminal, we haven't got very far beyond the methods of the Stone Age. The idea of a man, with a human brain to rely upon, falling back upon the instincts of a couple of brute beasts!"

"Oh, hold on!" Maxwell protested. "Those dogs have run down a good many crooks, first and last. Follansbee will take any bet you want to make right now."

"And he would lose," was the confident answer. "But come on—let's see what's going to happen."

The chase, with the dogs running upon a comparatively fresh scent, led up through the pine wood at the head of the gulch. Beyond the wood was a bare, high-lying mesa tableland, with its summer-baked soil dried out to almost rocky hardness. A hundred yards from the gulch head an indistinct road skirted the mesa edge, and here the dogs began to run in circles.

Sprague was chuckling again, but Maxwell counseled patience.

"Wait a minute," he said. "The body snatchers probably had a team here. The dogs will get the scent of the horses presently."

"Think so?" queried the expert. Then he drew his companion aside. "Do you know anything about this road, Dick?"

"Yes; it's the old wagon road from the reservation into the park."

"Which way would you go toward Brewster."

"That way," said the superintendent, pointing.

"All right; let's go a little way toward Brewster, and perhaps I can show you why Mr. Follansbee would lose his bet on his dogs."

When they were well out of the dog-circling area, the chemistry expert stopped and struck a match. "See here," he said; and Maxwell, squatting beside him, saw the broad track of an automobile tire. Sprague gurgled softly. "Do you think the dogs will get the scent of that?" he inquired.

Maxwell stood up, and shoved his hands into his pockets.

"Calvin, the way you hop across and light upon the one only sure thing comes mighty near being uncanny at times. How the devil did you find out that those fellows came in an auto?"

"If I should tell you that it was pure reasoning, you'd doubt it. But never mind the whys and wherefores just now—they can come later. Tell me how long we're going to stay here losing time on Follansbee and his dogs."

"Not a minute longer than you care to stay. What do you want to do?"

"I want to see that crippled express messenger who was put off the train at Corona. Also, I'd like to have a look at the dead man's coffin."

"You shall do both. If you're taking the case, you are very pointedly the only doctor there is in it," Maxwell asserted. Then he called to the sheriff: "Oh, Harding!" And when the county officer came up: "I'm going to take the train and run on to Corona after Galt. We'll stop here for your orders when we come back."

During the short run around the hills to the small mining-town station, Sprague sat solidly in his chair, and puffed steadily at his cigar, saying nothing. When Maxwell announced their arrival, he got up and followed the superintendent into the Corona office.

Galt, the express messenger, was lying on the night operator's cot in the main office. Some physician passenger on the held-up train had dressed his wounds, and he had fully recovered consciousness. His story was a mere amplification of the wire report which had gone to Brewster. He had remarked and wondered at the unscheduled stop at the gulch curve, but before he could open his door to look out, the postal and express cars had been pulled ahead, his end door had been battered in, and he had found himself trying to fight back a couple of masked men who were forcing an entrance. Then somebody hit him on the head, and that was the end of it, so far as he was concerned.

Following this, the Corona night operator was put upon the question rack. He knew only what the trainmen had told him. No; there was nothing missing out of the express car save the dead man's body. While the train was waiting, he—the operator—and the conductor had made a careful check of the contents of the car from Galt's way bills, and with the single exception noted everything was undisturbed. No, there was no panic; the scare was pretty well quieted down by the time the train reached Corona. Of course, a good many of the passengers had gotten out at the station stop, and everybody was curious to see the coffin.

"You took the coffin off?" Maxwell questioned.

"Yes; it's in the freight room."

Sprague had taken no part in the examination of the man, and had listened only cursorily to Galt's story. But now he became as curious as any of the morbid passengers had been. Allen, the operator, lighted a lantern, and led the way to the freight room. The coffin was lying upon a baggage truck. It was incased in an ordinary shipping box, half of the cover of which had been torn off. The lid of the coffin had been broken—split into three pieces, and one of the pieces was missing. It was a rather expensive affair, of the kind known as a "casket," silk-lined, and with a sliding glass face plate. The glass had been broken, and the fragments were lying inside on the small silken pillow.

Sprague bent to examine the silent witness of the mysterious robbery, and the operator offered his lantern. But the government man found a small electric flash light in his pocket, and made it serve a better purpose. Only once while he was flashing the tiny beam of the electric into the coffin's interior did he speak, and then it was to say to Maxwell: "I thought you said it was a metallic coffin?"

"I thought it might be when you spoke of the weight and the number of men it took to handle it. Of course, I didn't know anything definite about it."

Once more Sprague peered into the silk-lined interior, stooping to send the light ray to the foot of the casket, which was still hidden under the undestroyed half of the outer case. Then, snapping the switch of the flash light and carefully replacing the broken box cover, he nodded briskly to Maxwell.

"That's all for the present. If I were you, I'd have this coffin nailed up in its box, just as it is, without disturbing anything. You can do it, can't you, young man?" turning short upon the operator.

Allen said he could, and proceeded to do it, after which, under Sprague's direction, the case was trundled out to the platform, and the three of them, with Maxwell's private-car porter to help, loaded the coffin upon the front platform of Maxwell's car.

"We'll take it back with us," said the government man, with a queer twinkle in his gray eyes. "It's a perfectly good coffin, you know, and, with a little repairing, it will do to use again—say, when we have found the man it belongs to."

While the night operator, with the porter and the two enginemen were carrying the wounded express messenger to the private car and making him comfortable in Maxwell's own stateroom, the superintendent's curiosity got the better of him.

"You're not saying much, Calvin," he offered. "Have you found any clew to the mystery?"

"Clews? Yes; I've found plenty of them. They're a little tangled yet, but we'll get hold of the proper thread in a little while. When do we start back?"

"Any time, if you've seen all you want to. I'll have Allen get orders for us right now if you say so."

The big-bodied government man stood aside while the Corona operator called up the dispatcher and obtained the order for the return of the two-car special to Brewster. But when the bit of routine was finished he made another suggestion.

"I'd like to know, in so many words, exactly what was taken from the passengers on the train, Dick," he said. "Can't you have this young man catch the train somewhere, and instruct the conductor to find out for us?"

Maxwell nodded, and gave Allen the necessary directions. "Tell McCarty to wire his answer direct to me at Brewster," he added; and then, as the train was ready, the start was made for the return.

At the curve in Cromarty Gulch, they found only Tarbell awaiting them. When the ex-cowboy had climbed aboard and the homeward run was resumed, Tarbell made his report. Harding and his posse were following the automobile tracks on foot. It was the sheriff's theory that sooner or later the men in the machine would have to stop and get out, whereupon the dogs would once more be able to take up the trail. Harding was convinced now that he was trailing the Weber gang, and he believed that the start toward Brewster was only a blind.

Sprague smiled again at the mention of the dogs.

"How far is it to Brewster?" he asked.

"About thirty miles by the wagon road," Maxwell guessed.

"Good! We're safely rid of Mr. Harding and his people, and of Follansbee and his dogs, for some little time, I take it. Now we are free to do a little business on our own account. I want to know everything you can tell me about Murtrie; what he looked like, what he did, and all the rest."

"It's a sort of thankless job to backcap a dead man," Maxwell demurred.

"Just the same, Murtrie always looked to me like a hired assassin—the kind you see on the vaudeville stage, you know. He was a big, beefy fellow, with a puffy face and a bad eye."

"Light or dark?"

"Dark; black eyes and a heavy drooping mustache. To tell the truth, he looked as little like an expert mining engineer as anything you can imagine. Wouldn't you say so, Tarbell?"

The sober-faced young man who had made his record running down cattle thieves in Montana nodded gravely.

"What time he put in up at the Molly Baldwin wouldn't count for much," was Tarbell's comment. "Mighty near any hour o' the day or night you could find him tryin' out his 'system' at Bart Holladay's faro game; leastwise, when he wasn't hangin' round the railroad depot."

"Yet you say, Maxwell, that he was sent out here by the New York mine owners to keep cases on the gold output?" questioned Sprague.

"Why, yes—that is what everybody said."

"It's what he said himself," Tarbell put in.

"But you don't believe it?" queried Sprague, turning upon the ex-cowboy.

"I didn't know just what to believe," was the frank admission. "He was mighty thick with Calthrop and Higgins, the two fellows that are operatin' the Molly Baldwin under the lease; but, as I say, he didn't stay there none to speak of. And about his bein' a mining sharp—I don't know about that, but I do know that he was a brass pounder."

"A telegraph operator, you mean?" said Sprague quickly. "How do you happen to know that, Archer?"

"'Cause I caught him more than once 'listening in' at the commercial office downstairs in the depot."

"How could you tell?" demanded the chemist shrewdly.

"If you was an operator yourself, you'd know, Mr. Sprague. You can take my word for it, all right."

The man whose recreative hobby was the application of scientific principles to the detection of crime smoked in reflective silence for a minute or two. Finally he said: "You are a much better spotter than you think you are, Archer. It is a pity that this man Murtrie is dead. I'd like to have you shadow him a bit more for us. Where did you say he kept himself chiefly—in Brewster, I mean?"

"At Bart Holladay's road house, about two miles beyond the western edge o' town. It's a tough joint, with faro and roulette runnin' continuous in the back rooms, and half a dozen poker games workin' overtime upstairs."

"I see," said Sprague thoughtfully; "or, rather, I'd like to see. Maybe before I go home you'll take a little time off some evening, Archer, and chase me out to this road house. It's a free-for-all, isn't it?"

Tarbell grinned. "All you got to do is to give the barkeep the high sign and go in and blow yourself. Anybody's money's as good as anybody else's to Bart."

"All right; we'll put that down as one of our small recreations, after this dead-man muddle is straightened out for Mr. Maxwell. Is this Brewster we're coming to?"

It was; and when the train shrilled to a stand at the station, the company ambulance was waiting to take the wounded express messenger out to the hospital. Also, there was a young man from the *Tribune* office, who was anxious to get the latest story of the sensational holdup of the Flying Plainsman. Tarbell was detailed to give the reporter the facts in the case, so far as they had developed, and Maxwell and his guest climbed the stair to the dispatcher's room in the second story. Connolly was rattling his key in the sending of a train order when they entered, but he "broke" long enough to hand the superintendent a freshly written telegram.

It was from McCarty, the Plainsman conductor, and it was dated from Angels.

To R. MAXWELL, G. S., Brewster.

Can't find that anybody lost anything. Holdup in Pullmans was probably meant to keep passengers bluffed while the others went through express car. McCARTY.

Sprague nodded slowly when the telegram was handed him. "That is what I suspected; in fact, I was morally certain of it, but I thought it would do no harm to make sure." Then he turned to the chubby dispatcher, who had finished sending his train order. "Mr. Connolly, has any one been here to ask questions about this holdup—since we left, I mean?"

Connolly looked his astonishment, and nodded an affirmative.

"Two men from out of town, weren't they?" Sprague suggested.

Again the dispatcher nodded, and it was only his respect for the big man that kept him from asking how the incident could possibly be known to one who had been thirty miles away at the moment of its happening.

"Go on and tell us about it," Sprague directed; and at this Connolly found his tongue.

"It was them two fellows that are operating the Molly Baldwin Mine—Calthrop and Higgins. They'd heard of the holdup through the operator at Little Butte, they said, and they drove down in their auto. They seemed to be a whole lot stirred up about the taking of Murtrie's body; said they felt responsible to his friends in the East. They wanted to know particularly what we were doing about it, and if there was any chance of our catching up with the body snatchers."

Sprague waved his cigar in token of his complete satisfaction. Then he went abruptly to something else:

"Mr. Connolly, where can you catch that eastbound train again for us by wire?"

Connolly glanced at his train sheet.

"She's due at Arroyo in eight minutes. It ain't a stop, but I can have the operator flag her down."

"Good! Do it, and send this message to McCarty, conductor. Are you ready?" And when the dispatcher, quickly calling the station in question, signaled his readiness, Sprague went on, dictating slowly:

"Hold your train and have Calmaine, chief clerk, come to the wire.

"Sign Mr. Maxwell's name—that's all right, isn't it, Maxwell?"

"Anything you say is all right," was the quick response.

"It won't ball things up—holding your train a few minutes at Arroyo?"

"Connolly will see to that. It's off time now, and running on orders, anyway."

"Then we can sit down quietly and wait to hear from the exceedingly capable-looking young man who has the honor to be your chief clerk," said the government man; and he calmly planted himself in the nearest chair.

"Calmaine will probably be abed and asleep in the Pullman," Maxwell suggested. "I suppose your call is important enough to warrant his getting up and dressing?"

"It is—fully important enough, as I think you will be ready to admit when we hear from Arroyo." Then he extended a handful of cigars. "Have a fresh smoke—oh, you needn't look cross-eyed at them; they're your own, you know. I swiped them out of your private box in the car when you weren't looking."

Maxwell took a cigar half absently. His mind was dwelling upon the mystery surrounding the unexplainable holdup, with the surface current of thought directed toward Connolly's sounder, through which would presently come the expected message from Arroyo.

It was while he was holding the lighted match to the cigar that the sounder began to click. He translated for Sprague:

"Train here. McCarty gone to wake Mr. Calmaine."

After that there was a trying wait of perhaps five minutes. Then the sounder began to chatter rapidly, and Maxwell bounded from his chair.

"Good heavens!" he ejaculated. "He says Calmaine isn't on the train!"

"Ah!" breathed the big-bodied expert, rising and stretching his huge arms over his head. "Again we get the expected precipitation in the test tube. Connol-

ly, ask McCarty if Mr. Calmaine has been on the train at all."

Connolly hastily tapped out the question, and a moment afterward vocalized the answer:

"He was on the train when it left Brewster. Nobody seems to remember seeing him after that."

Sprague turned to his host.

"I think we can let Mr. McCarty go in peace now, with a promise that we shan't bother him again to-night. Tarbell is the man we shall need from this on. Where has he gone?"

Tarbell was at that moment opening the corridor door, having but now gotten rid of the newspaper reporter. Sprague began on him briskly:

"Archer, the muddle is cleared up, and I'm minded to take that bit of recreation we spoke of a while back—at this Mr. Bart Holladay's show place, you know. How far is it?"

The ex-cowboy looked dazed, but he made shift to answer the question:

"About two mile, I reckon."

"Outside the city limits?"

"Yep."

"Then we can't take a policeman along for protection—I'm a tenderfoot, and all tenderfoots are nervous, you know. That's too bad. And Mr. Harding isn't here to let us have the backing of the county officers. Dear, dear! Are they *very* bad men out there, Archer?"

Tarbell grinned sheepishly, being sure that the big man was in some way making game of him.

"They'd eat you alive if they thought you was an officer headin' a raid on 'em. Otherwise I reckon they wouldn't bite you none."

"Well, I suppose we shall have to risk it—without the policeman," said the big man, with a good-natured laugh. "Perhaps we can persuade them that we are just 'lookers,'" he suggested. And then: "I suppose you have your artillery with you?"

Tarbell nodded. "A couple o' forty-fives. I'd hardly go huntin' train robbers without 'em."

"Of course not. Suppose you divide up with Mr. Maxwell here, and then go and find us an auto—just the bare car—we'll manage to drive it ourselves. And, Archer, get a good big one, with easy springs. If there is one thing I dislike more than another, it is to be jammed up in a little, hard-riding car. I need plenty of room. I guess I grew too much when I was a boy."

The young man with the sober face went away, still more or less dazed; and Maxwell dropped the weapon that had been given him into the outside pocket of his topcoat.

"I am completely and totally in the dark as yet, Calvin," he ventured. "Did you mean what you said when you told Tarbell just now that the muddle was cleared up?"

"I did, indeed. And it is as pretty a bit of offhand plotting as I have ever come across, Dick. Don't you see daylight by this time?"

"Not a ray. It may be just natural stupidity, or it may be only a bad case of rattle. I blew up and went to pieces when that wire came about Calmaine. Why, good heavens, think of it, Calvin! If the boy's gone, those proxies are gone, too!"

"Quite so. And you are wondering why a good, steady, well-balanced young fellow like your chief clerk should get himself lost in the shuffle when his mission was so vitally important. What do you suppose has become of him?"

"I can't begin to guess. That is what is driving me mad. Of course, the supposition is that he got mixed up in this body-snatching business in some way. But why should he? Why the devil should he, Calvin, when he had every possible reason for dodging and keeping out of it?"

"I don't know," rejoined the big man, with a head wagging of doubt, real or simulated. "One of the most difficult things to prefigure—you might say the only one which refuses to come under the test-tube formulas—is just what a given man will do under certain suddenly sprung conditions. It is the only problematical element which ever enters into these puzzle solvings of mine. I haven't the pleasure of an intimate acquaintance with your chief clerk, but,

from the little I've seen of him, I should say unhesitatingly that he is a young man for an emergency, quick to think, and fully as quick to act. I'm banking on that emergency, and hoping that he hasn't disappointed me."

"Then you know what has become of him?"

Sprague smiled impassively. "I shouldn't be able to convince you that it is knowledge," he admitted. "You'd call it nothing more than a wild guess. Isn't that our auto that I hear?"

Maxwell stepped to a window, and looked down upon the plaza.

"It's somebody's auto," he said. "There are two men in it." And a moment later: "They are coming up here."

The demonstrator of scientific principles hooked his elbows on the counter railing, and laughed gently. "Our two nervous friends from the Molly Baldwin," he predicted. "They are still worrying about the loss of their corpse." And even as he spoke, the two young lessees of the mine came tramping in, their faces sufficiently advertising their anxiety.

Maxwell nodded to the file leader of the pair. "Hello, Calthrop!" he said. "What do you know?"

"Nothing more than we did. We heard that you'd got back from Cromarty, and thought maybe you could tell us something."

"Not anything definite," was the superintendent's brief rejoinder. "You know the facts: Murtrie's body was taken out of its coffin and carried off. There are auto tracks on the mesa at the head of Cromarty Gulch, and Harding and his posse are following them. That's all."

"Wh-where is that coffin now?" It was the younger of the two who wanted to know.

Without looking around, Maxwell felt that Sprague's eyes were signaling him; but he could hardly tell why he told only part of the truth:

"It was taken off at Corona."

The one who answered to the name of Calthrop swore morosely. "It's the Scott Weber gang, ain't it, Mr. Maxwell?" he asked.

"I think so; and Harding thinks so. But why they should steal only a dead body is beyond me—or any of us."

The two young men exchanged a whispered word or two, and went out, with the anxiety in their faces thickly shot with fresh perplexity. At the door Higgins turned for another asking:

"If we pay the freight on it, can we have that coffin back, Mr. Maxwell? We bought it and paid for it."

This time Maxwell caught Sprague's eye and read the warning in it. "We'll see about that later," he said.

When the door slammed at the outgoing of the pair, Sprague was laughing again.

"After those two young fellows have turned a few more sharp corners in the rather crooked course they're steering, they'll learn to take their medicine without making faces over it," he remarked. "Any signs of Archer yet?"

Maxwell turned back to the window.

"Yes; he's coming. He's pulling up on the other side of the plaza—doesn't want to run into these mining friends of ours, I suppose."

"Archer has a head on him, all right, and I like him. You want to swing onto that young fellow, Dick. He'll make a good man for you some day. Let's go down and join him."

Tarbell waited when he saw the boss and his guest coming across the plaza, and when his two fares were stowed in the roomy tonneau of the big car he let the clutch in for the short run to the western suburb. The night was clear and starlit, but there was no moon. Since the hour was close upon midnight, the streets were practically deserted. Beyond the crossing electrics, the western road led away through a forest of dwarf pine, a broad white pathway roughly paralleling the railroad as it wound among the trees.

At one of the many turns in the pike, they came upon the brilliantly lighted road house. In appearance, it was a modern roadside tavern, so many of which owe their sudden recrudescence to the automobile. It was withdrawn a

little from the highway, and it was surrounded by ample stables and shelter sheds opening upon a great square yard with carriage gates. Tarbell backed the auto to a stand among a number of others in the yard, and a man with a lantern came ostensibly to offer help, but really to make sure that the newcomers were harmless.

"It's all right, Jerry," said Tarbell, hopping out. "Mr. Maxwell and a friend o' his from the East. Games goin'?"

The man nodded, and held his lantern so that Maxwell and his guest could get out of the tonneau. Then he turned away and left them.

Tarbell led the way to the porch entrance, and on the step explained the sight-seeing process to the one who was supposed to be inexperienced.

"It's an open game, as I said," he told Sprague. "You go into the bar and buy. After that you do as you please."

Sprague paused for a single question.

"What do we find?" he asked.

"A lot of young bloods from town mostly," was Tarbell's reply. "Holladay's got sense enough to keep his own gang in the quiet and take his rake-off as it comes—from the bank and the tables and the roulette wheels."

Sprague made the single question a little more comprehensive:

"I didn't mean the people so much as the place. If we should want to get out in a hurry—how about that?"

Tarbell indicated a hall door at the side of the main entrance, adding the information, however, that it was usually kept locked.

"Good! After we get to going inside, you make it your job to unlock that door, Archer, and to put the key in your pocket. Now I'm ready, and I want to see it all." And they went in.

The barroom proved to be typical of its kind—plainly furnished, with a wide country-house fireplace, and a sanded floor. As the night was summer warm, the card tables were ranged beneath the open windows; only two or three of them were occupied, and the bar itself was empty. Maxwell and his guest sat down at one of the unoccupied tables, and Tarbell ordered for the three. When the liquor was served, he said: "You don't need to drink it if you don't want to; it's none too good."

With this for a warning, the two who were warned carefully spilled their portions on the sanded floor; and Sprague ordered cigars, skillfully juggling them when they came, and substituting three of his own—or, rather, Maxwell's. Then he made a sign to Tarbell, and they began to make a slow tour of the open-game rooms.

The first-floor rooms, where a pair of roulette wheels were spinning and a faro game was running, were well filled. Brewster had lately passed an anti-gambling ordinance, and the vice had been temporarily driven beyond the corporation limits. Maxwell saw a few men whom he knew, and many who were well known to the Brewster police. Under the archway dividing the red-and-black wheels from the faro table, Sprague whispered in his ear.

"I'm looking for a man whose New York name is 'Tapper' Givens," he said. "He has a red face, black hair and eyes, and weighs about one hundred and seventy pounds. He may or may not be wearing a heavy black mustache, and has——"

Maxwell looked up with a puzzled frown. "Say, Calvin, you're describing the dead man!" he broke in.

"Am I? Never mind if I am. If you should happen to see any one filling the requirements, just point him out to me. I might overlook him in such a crowd as this, you know." And then to Tarbell, who had just found them again: "Got that key, Archer?"

The ex-cowboy showed the hall-door key cautiously in his palm, and returned it to his pocket. Sprague smiled, and whispered again:

"How about the rooms upstairs—are they open to inspection, too?"

Tarbell shook his head. "No; private poker games, most of 'em."

"Nevertheless, I think we shall have to have a look-in," said the big man quietly. "Can't you arrange it?"

"Not without riskin' a scrap."

"We don't want to start anything, but we've just naturally got to have that look-in, Archer," persisted the guest.

The grave-faced young Tennessecan thrust out his jaw. "What you say goes as she lays," he returned, and thereupon he showed them the way upstairs.

At the stair head there was a guard—a bullet-headed ring fighter, posing as a waiter, with a square patch of an apron, and a napkin thrown over one arm.

"Mr. Maxwell's lookin' for one of his men," said Tarbell, realizing that some sort of an excuse must be offered.

The ring fighter, who knew the railroad superintendent by sight, nodded, and said:

"That's aw right; who is ut?"

"Harvey Calmaine," said Tarbell, giving the first name that came into his head.

To the astonishment of at least two of the three, the bullet-headed guard stood aside, and pointed to a door at the farther end of the upper hall.

"He's in there," he grunted. "Somebody's been givin' him th' knock-out drops, an' they're workin' over him." Then he spun around and put a ham-like hand flat against Maxwell's chest. "Ye'll gimme yer wor-rd, Misther Maxwell, that ye haven't got the sheriff's posse at yer back?"

"No," said Maxwell, and he managed to say it with a degree of coolness which he was very far from feeling. "We're all here—all there are of us."

"Aw right; g'wan in. But there'll be no scrappin', mind ye. If there does be anny, I'll take a hand meself."

Sprague took the lead in the silent march to the indicated door, his big bulk looming colossal in the narrow, low-studded hallway. Reaching the door, he turned the knob noiselessly. "Locked!" he muttered, and then he drew back and put his shoulder to it.

The lock gave way with a report like a muffled pistol shot, and the door flew open. The room was lighted by a single incandescent swinging on its cord from the ceiling. On a cot which had been dragged out from its place beside the wall lay a barefooted man, gagged and securely bound with many wrappings of cotton clothesline. Standing over him, one of them with the lighted match he had been holding to the bare foot soles still blazing, were two others—a red-headed, yellow-faced man, with one eye missing, and a thick-shouldered athlete aptly answering to Sprague's description whispered to the superintendent in the room below.

Maxwell sprang forward with an oath when he recognized the man with the burning match. "*Murtrie!*" he exploded; and the torturer with the black eyes and puffy face dropped the match end and grabbed for his weapon. He was a fraction of a second too slow. Tarbell had covered him with a movement which was too quick for the eye to follow, and was reaching backward for the other gun, which Maxwell gave him, while Sprague closed the door and set his back against it.

"The jig is up—definitely up—Givens," said the government man pleasantly. And then to Tarbell: "Herd those two into a corner, Archer, while we take some of these impediments off of Mr. Calmaine."

When the chief clerk was freed, he tried to sit up—tried, and would have fallen if Maxwell had not caught him.

"They've burked me," he mumbled; "but—they didn't get—the papers."

"Take it easy," said Maxwell soothingly. "You'll be all right in a minute or so." Then, in a fresh access of rage: "They'll pay for this, Harvey, if it takes every dollar I've got in the world!"

Calmaine tried sitting up again, found that he could compass it, and reached feebly for his shoes and socks.

"The—the proxies are safe—if it doesn't rain," he quavered, his mind still running on the precious papers of which he had been the bearer. "Get—get me out of this and into an auto, and I'll find them for you. We might—might catch Number Six, if we hurry."

Tarbell, with Sprague's help, had deftly handcuffed the two men whom he had backed into a corner. It was the one-eyed man who first found speech in an outpouring of profanity venomous and horrible. "You ain't got

us out o' here yet," he spat, trailing the defiance out in more of the cursings.

"But we're going to get you out," said Sprague quietly, "if we have to throw you through the window." Then to Maxwell: "Help the boy with his shoes, Dick. We're due to have a jail delivery here any minute."

It took some little time to get the maltreated chief clerk shod and afoot, and even then he was well-nigh crippled. But he was game to the last. "They took my gun away from me," he complained. "If I only had something to fight with! Archer, give me that black devil's pistol."

Sprague's warning had not been baseless. The stair-head guard had doubtless seen the bursting open of the door, and had sprung a still alarm. There was a hurrying of many feet in the hall, marking the gathering of the gambling-house fighting force. While Calmaine was asking for a weapon, the crowd in the hall began to batter at the door, against which Sprague had once more put his huge bulk, and were calling to Murtrie to open to them.

Sprague gave his directions snappily, as if he were signaling his football squad: "Draw that cot a little this way —that's right. Now then, Archer, stand here against the wall with your two jailbirds, and when I give the word rush 'em for the yard by the stairway entrance. If they don't obey, plug 'em, and plug 'em quick. Maxwell, you and the boy get over on this side. When you're ready, turn off that light. Quick! They're going to charge us!"

The simple program was carried out precisely and to the letter. When the rush came, the room was in darkness, and Sprague stepped lightly aside. Thereupon a dozen charging men, finding no resistance in the suddenly released door, piled themselves in cursing confusion over the barricading cot.

"*Now!*" shouted Sprague; and the dash for liberty was made, with the big man in the lead, clearing the hall of its stragglers, brushing them aside with his mighty weight, or driving them before him like chaff in the fury of his onset. At the stair head there were more coming up from below. Sprague caught the bullet-headed ring fighter around the waist, and, using him as a missile, cleared the stairway at a single throw. "Come on!" he yelled to those who were behind; and a moment later the unlocked door at the stair foot gave them egress to the open air and to the yard where the automobiles were parked.

Quite naturally, the din of the battle had precipitated a panic in the unlicensed road house, and the building was disgorging through doors and windows, and even over the roofs of the shelter sheds. Tarbell drove his two prisoners into the tonneau of the hired car, while Maxwell promptly cranked the motor, and Sprague lifted Calmaine bodily to the front seat. Ten seconds beyond this, while the panic was still at its height, the hired car, leading all others in the townward rush, was leaving a dense dust trail to befog its followers, and the capture and rescue were facts accomplished.

With Tarbell at the steering wheel, the car sped silently through the western suburb and came into the deserted midnight streets of the city. Without asking any questions, the ex-cowboy drove straight to the county jail and pulled up at the curb in front of the grim, barred building. Sprague passed the two prisoners out to him, lifting even the bigger of the two clear of the auto step as if he had been a featherweight. But when Tarbell would have marched the pair across the sidewalk, Sprague called out.

"Just one question, Givens," he said coldly. "You know what you're in for; you know that you are still wanted in Cleveland to answer to the charge of counterfeiting, and you know, also, that since I've landed you twice, I can do it again. But if you'll answer one question straight we'll forget that other indictment for the present. What did you do with the swag that you lifted a few hours ago?"

For five full seconds the black-haired man kept silence. Then he spoke as the spirit moved him.

"It's where you won't get it—you n'r

them make-believe crooks up at the Molly Baldwin!' he rasped.

"Oho!" Sprague laughed. "So you planned it to give your side partners in this little game the double cross, did you? It's like you. Take them away, Archer."

"And—and hurry back!" whispered Calmaine hoarsely. "We've simply *got* to catch Number Six, I tell you!"

Thus urged, Tarbell expedited matters with the night jailer, and came running back to take his place behind the steering wheel.

"Where now?" he asked, kicking the clutch in; and it was Calmaine who gave the direction:

"The Reservation Road, east; it's the one we came in over."

Tarbell easily broke all the speed records, to say nothing of speed limits, in the race to the eastward over the dry mesa country. Twenty odd miles from the town they met the sheriff's party, and there was a momentary halt for explanations. "Camp down right where you are, and we'll go back pretty soon and send a bunch of autos out after you," was Maxwell's word of encouragement; and then the big car sped on its way toward Cromarty Gulch.

Calmaine seemed to have preserved his sense of locality marvelously. A few hundred yards short of the spot at the gulch head where Follansbee's dogs had begun their aimless circlings, he told Tarbell to pull up.

"They are right along here somewhere," he said, getting out to hobble painfully ahead of the others when Tarbell took off a side lamp to serve for a lantern. "They had me blindfolded at first, and I didn't know what they were trying to do with me. When they chucked me into the auto I tried to make a get-away. While they were knocking me silly again I managed to get the papers out of my pocket and fire them into the sagebrush. It was right along here somewhere."

It was Sprague who found the thick packet upon which so much depended. It was lying cleverly chance hidden under a clump of the greasewood bushes. "Found!" he announced. And then he gave the young chief clerk his due meed of commendation. "You're a young man to bet on, Mr. Calmaine. What we've been able to do thus far wouldn't amount to much if you hadn't kept your head." Then he turned quickly to the superintendent. "How do we stand for time now, Maxwell?"

Maxwell held his watch to the light, and shook his head dejectedly.

"Number Six, the Fast Mail, is due at Corona in five minutes. We can never make it in this world!"

"You bet we can!" shouted Tarbell. "Help Mr. Calmaine, and pile into the car—quick!"

The short race to the near-by mining camp was a sheer breakneck dash, but Tarbell made good. When the four of them leaped from the car and stormed into Allen's office, the Fast Mail had already whistled for the "clear" signal, and the operator was reaching for the cord of his semaphore to give the "go-by" wigwag. They yelled at him as one man; and a few seconds later the fast train slid to a shrieking stop at the station.

Maxwell was for sending Tarbell on to New York with the precious proxies, but Calmaine pleaded pathetically for his chance to go on and do that which he had begun.

"I'll be all right as soon as I can get into the sleeper and get these infernal shoes off," he protested. "It's my job, Mr. Maxwell—for pity's sake, don't make me a quitter!"

"Let him go," said Sprague. "He's earned his chance to stay in the game—and this time he'll make a touchdown." And so it was decided.

When the Fast Mail, with its one added passenger, had slid away among the hills to the eastward, the three who remained behind at Corona climbed back into the hired auto, and Tarbell drove another record race to town, pausing only once, when they reached the sheriff's roadside camp, to take on Harding and as many of his deputies as the car would hold.

By Maxwell's direction, Tarbell drove

first to the railroad headquarters, where the superintendent and his guest got out. At the office entrance another dusty car was drawn up; and in the upper corridor they found the two young men from the Molly Baldwin Mine, still seeking for information. Sprague disposed of them, and he did it brusquely.

"Your dead man has been found," he told them crisply. "He is at present in the county jail, with one of his accomplices, and when he is given the third degree he will probably tell all he knows. It's a weakness he has—not to be able to hold out against a bit of rough handling. If you two fellows will make a clean breast of your part in the swindle to the prosecuting attorney, and promise to play fair with your lessors in future, it is likely that you'll be let off with a fine, and you'll probably be able to bag the remainder of the gang and to recover your lost gold."

The two young men heard, gasped, and backed away. Maxwell unlocked the door of his business office, snapped on the lights, opened his desk, and pressed the electric button which summoned Connolly, the night dispatcher.

"I thought you'd like to know that we've caught up with the dead man, Dan," he said, when the fat dispatcher came in; and then he briefed the story of the chase for Connolly, winding up with a peremptory order for the division dispatcher at the Copah end of the line not to let the eastbound connection get away from the Fast Mail at the main-line junction.

When Connolly had gone back to his key, Maxwell wheeled upon his guest.

"It's late, Calvin, and by all the gods of hospitality I ought to take you home and put you to bed. But I swear you shan't close an eye until you've told me how you did all this."

The expert chemist, ex-football coach planted himself in the easiest of the office chairs, and chuckled joyously.

"Gets you, does it?" he queried; and then: "I'm not sure that I can explain it so that you will understand, but I'll try. In the first place, it's necessary to go at these little problems with a perfectly open mind—the laboratory mind, which is neither prejudiced nor prepossessed, nor in any way concerned with anything but the bare facts. Reason and the proper emphasis to be placed upon each fact as it comes to bat are the two needful qualities in any problem solving—and about the only two."

"You are soaring around about a mile over my head, but go on," said Maxwell.

"All right; I'll set out the facts in the order in which they came to me: First, I see a dozen men loading a coffin into an express car. I note the extreme weight and wonder how a dead man can be so infernally heavy. Next, you tell me about your proxy fact, which doesn't seem to have any bearing at the moment; and then you tell me about the dead man, and how his friends were shipping him to Kentucky. Then comes the news of the bizarre holdup in Cromarty Gulch. Instantly the reasoning mind—the laboratory mind, if you please—goes to work with the two foreknown facts: The heavy dead-man fact, and the fact that your chief clerk is on that train with his valuable papers, clamoring each for its hearing. Don't let me bore you."

"Heavens, you're not boring me! What next?"

"Reason, the laboratory brand of it, tells me immediately that your proxy fact has the emphasis. You had told me that your Wall Street opponents had been throwing stumblingblocks in your way in the obtaining of the proxies. Here, said I, is the last desperate resort. Nevertheless, there were complications. I was pretty sure that the holdups had taken Calmaine and his papers—that that was what the holdup was for. But in order to get track of them—and of Calmaine—other facts must be added. We added them on the trip with the special train—all we needed, and a few more thrown in for good measure."

"I don't see it," Maxwell objected.

"Don't you? When we reached the scene of the holdup, I was already doubting the heavy dead-man theory; doubting it extremely. Also, my reason told me that the robbers, carrying some

weight which was heavier than most dead people, would not trust to a team which could be overtaken, if need be, by pursuers on foot. Hence the automobile track that we found. Then we came to the coffin, and half of the mystery vanished at once. If you hadn't been excited and—well, prepossessed, you would have noticed that there was no smell of disinfectants, that the coffin pillow wasn't dented with the print of a head, that the broken glass was lying on the pillow, as it wouldn't have been if the man's head had been there when the plate was smashed, that——"

"Great Scott!" Maxwell broke in, in honest self-depreciation. "What blind bats we are—most of us!"

"Oh, no; I was bringing the especially trained mind to bear, you must remember—the scientifically trained mind. You couldn't afford to cultivate it; it wouldn't leave room for your business of railroad managing. But I'll cut it short. I saw that there had been no corpse in the coffin, and that there had been something else in it—something heavy enough to leave its marks. Also, I saw, away down in the foot end of the thing, an ingot-shaped chunk of something that looked like a bar of gold bullion; one piece of the heavy coffin load that had been overlooked in the hurried emptying. That's why I advised you to bring the coffin back on your train. There's a ten-thousand-dollar gold brick in it right now."

"Heavens and earth!" gasped the listener; but Sprague went on rapidly:

"Just here is where your machine-made detective would have missed the emphasis. But the scientist, having once placed his emphasis, for good and sufficient reasons, never changes it. The main thing yet was the stopping of your messenger to Ford. I was convinced that the gold robbery, in which, of course, not only the two young lessees, but the man Murtrie as well, must be implicated, was only a side line, intended either to divert attention from the main thing or as a double-cross theft on the part of Murtrie. When you and Tarbell described Murtrie for me on the way back to town, I had it all, simply because I happened to know the man. He is a counterfeiter, and I ran him down once; but he broke jail and got away."

"But how could you strike so sure and hard at Holladay's?"

"Just a bit more reasoning, that's all. After we had established the fact that Calmaine wasn't on the train—— But argue it out for yourself. They'd take him somewhere where he could be kept safe and out of the way until the criminals concerned were all securely out of the country. And where would they take him if not to the unlawful den out yonder on the pike, where Murtrie was best known, and from which, no doubt, he secured his helpers for the holdup job?"

"But hold on!" said Maxwell. "I haven't got it clear yet. If Murtrie put up this job with young Calthrop and Higgins——"

Sprague shook his head.

"You have no imagination, Dick. Murtrie came here to do you up in the proxy business—as the Wall Street crowd's last resort. He got in with Calthrop and Higgins, and showed them how to beat their game, meaning to put the double cross on them—as he did—when the time came. He was merely killing two birds with one stone, but your bird was the big one. I don't know what sort of a dodge he put up with Calthrop and Higgins, but I can suppose that there is a trusty confederate at the Kentucky end of the string who is doubtless waiting now for a corpse that will never come."

"Of course!" said the unimaginative one disgustedly. "Just the same, it's all mighty miraculous to me, Calvin—how you can reason these things out hot from the bat, as you do. Why, great Jehoash! I had all the opportunities you had, and then some, and I didn't see an inch ahead of my nose at any stage of the game!"

The big man rose and yawned good-naturedly.

"It's my hobby—not yours," he laughed; and then, as the telephone buzzer went off with a purring noise under Maxwell's desk: "That is Mrs.

Maxwell, calling up to ask why in the world you don't come home. Tell her all right, and let's go. It will be the biggest miracle of all if you succeed in getting me up in time for breakfast to-morrow—or, rather, I should say to-day, since it's two o'clock and worse right now."

Maxwell put the receiver to his ear, and exchanged a few words with some one at the other end of the wire. When he closed his desk and made ready to go, a little frown of reflective puzzlement was gathering between his eyes.

"You know too much—too thundering much, Calvin! As I said a while back, it's uncanny. It *was* Alicia, and she said the very words you said she would: 'Why in the world don't you come home, Dick?' If you weren't so blooming big and beefy and good-natured—but pshaw! who ever heard of a fat wizard? Come on; let's go and hunt a taxi. It's too far to walk."

Calvin Sprague's investigation of the mystery surrounding the electrocution of Tunnel No. 3 will be told in the first August POPULAR, on sale two weeks hence, July 7th.

LANGUAGE AND RELIGION

THE man who tells this story claims that its hero was an Irishman. At any rate, the language makes a fine bull.

A preacher had delivered his prize sermon, exhorting his hearers to embrace the religious life and scorn the attractions of wealth and late suppers.

He concluded with this center shot:

"My brethren, let not this world rob you of a peace which it can neither give nor take away."

THE REVENGE OF A TRAMP

IT was a cold and snowy day, cold as charity—which, it may be mentioned, is going some in the line of real freezing weather. Weary Willie presented himself at the farmhouse door and humbly requested the sharp-faced woman to provide him with enough food to sustain within him the spark of life. He explained that, while this spark was not especially useful at that time, he had ambitions and expected to fan it into a flame of industry which would fully justify any kindness on her part.

The farmer's wife was not at all impressed with Willie's plea, and emitted a long, shrill denunciation of any man who was unwilling to hurl himself out of bed at four o'clock in the morning and work feverishly until nine o'clock at night, capping off the day's recreation by finding the cat and giving her a saucer of milk. Finally, however, she indignantly flung Willie an uninviting-looking hunk of mince pie. Willie failed to catch it and it struck the snow so heavily that it stirred up a cloud of the feathery flakes. Willie fished it out and disappeared.

The next day he returned and said to the sharp-faced woman, in a tone of great respect:

"Would you be kind enough to give me the recipe for the mince pie I got here yesterday?"

"The idea!" said the woman, and launched into a terrific howl against Willie's impudence.

"Well," explained the tramp, "I just wanted to settle a bet. My partner says you used three cups of Portland cement to one of molasses, but I claim it's only two and a half."

As Foolish as a Fox

By Charles E. Van Loan

Author of "The Good Old Wagon," "Crossed Signals," Etc.

Some fellows think you can't break into the big league with a stick of dynamite and a senatorial corruption fund. Take comfort from this story of Abner Abercrombie Ziegler of Dexter, Iowa, who didn't know the first thing about baseball and yet had the audacity to ask for a job pitching ball with a big-league club.

JOHN HENRY MERRY, manager of the Dudes, a ball club noted for speed and class in a league where speed is common and class is spelled with a capital C, emerged from the dining room of a commercial hotel in a middle Western metropolis, and glanced about the lobby. Johnny's brow was bent in a thoughtful frown. When he looked like that, he was said to resemble Napoleon at St. Helena by people who had seen neither Napoleon nor St. Helena, and was commonly believed to be figuring out his chances to annex another pennant. It was no thought of a pennant which leveled Johnny's brows on this occasion; he was merely wondering whether he could hustle the afternoon game through in time to catch the fast train bound East. Johnny liked speed, even on wheels.

Through the swinging doors from the street there came a remarkable figure, which caused the ball players loafing in the lobby and swearing at the lopsided accounts of yesterday's game, in the morning papers, to sit up and gasp.

"Pinky" Hamilton, one of the club's funny men, snorted, and passed his hand across his eyes. Then he nudged "Jeff" Jones, the outfielder, who was sitting beside him.

"Do you see it, too, Jeff," he demanded, "or do I only *think* I see it?"

"Gosh!" breathed Jones. "Wonder who let it loose?"

Pinky heaved a sigh of relief.

"I thought I had 'em again," he said.

Can you imagine a man six feet four inches from socks to scalp, with a hand like a ham, and a foot that wouldn't go into a doctor's valise, rawboned, big-jointed, and awkward as a camel colt? Attire this apparition in a cheap, greenish hand-me-down suit seven years behind the reigning rage, and at least seven sizes too small, perch on the top of his head a small, black, varnished straw hat with an inch-wide brim, suspend from the immense, red-wristed right hand an old-fashioned valise of the vintage of the sixties, and you will be able to understand Pinky Hamilton's sudden attack of nerves.

Straight over to Johnny Merry marched this queer invader, dropped his valise with a crash, took off his black straw hat, mopped his brow, and spoke, in a strange, even monotone, making long stops between his words, like a child reciting a lesson.

"Mister," said the stranger, "my name is Abner Abercrombie Ziegler. I have come all the way from Dexter, I-o-way, to go to work for John Merry, Esquire, pitching baseball. They told me he stopped here. Do you know if I could see him?"

Merry did not answer at once. His first impression—and Johnny Merry received impressions as rapidly as the photographer's plate takes the light—

was that some cheap vaudeville actor was trying to "kid" him and thus secure press-agent work. In fact, it was on the tip of Johnny's tongue to "bawl out" his questioner, when he caught sight of the stranger's face, and hesitated. A man less mentally alert than Johnny Merry would have paused at the sight of the face of Abner Abercrombie Ziegler, of Dexter, Iowa. It was the sort of a face to choke utterance and stagger the intellect—a collection of facial adornments to be examined closely, reverently, and with thankfulness that the said collection had been wished upon Abner rather than the beholder. And the dominating note of that remarkable countenance was honesty, with stupidity running second. When Johnny got a good look at that face, the "bawl out" slipped from his memory, and he found himself thinking:

"Well, whatever it is, it's *real!*"

Far be it from me to attempt to describe the singular unhandsomeness of Abner Abercrombie Ziegler. It is enough to say that most men, after beholding that strange assortment of facial idiosyncrasies, believed that, at least, it was *real!* Every man who saw Ziegler at close range and recovered from the shock carried away with him the recollection of one predominating feature which gave a sense of solidity and permanence. That feature was the nose—the long, solemn, honest nose, which somehow made one think of a horse. Not a high-grade horse, either. Just a plain, faithful, hard-working, simple-minded delivery-wagon horse.

"No," thought Merry rapidly, as his eyes traveled over Ziegler's astounding regalia, "no actor ever had a mush like *that*. This fellow is a small-town 'bug' from somewhere. I'll string him along for a while."

John Henry Merry excelled in several things, but in none was he greater than in his handling of the queer characters who swarm after a man of note in the community. Everything which gets into the papers day after day will in time breed its freaks. Every great championship fight uncovers dozens of harmless lunatics; every murder trial develops them; every pennant race brings them to the front. All big-league managers can tell scores of stories about the vagaries of these unfortunates—many laughable, some pathetic, and others simply annoying. No "bug" ever annoyed John Merry. He was interested, entertained, and diverted by them, and he took them as a part of the great study of human nature—life's continuous variety show. No matter how wild or improbable the story, Johnny found time to listen to at least a portion of it, and with a grave countenance, though the practical jokes which he played upon some of his callers will live when a new generation of diamond stars has risen. To him Abner Abercrombie Ziegler was simply another "nut," but a new one, and, therefore, worth studying. Johnny shot one eye at the clock, and then put out his hand as he spoke.

"Mr. Ziegler," said he pleasantly, "*my* name is Merry. I'm delighted to meet you. Sit down."

The stranger sat down on a low sofa, which gave him the appearance of a spider, all elbows, knees, and shins.

"So you want to play baseball?" asked Merry. "Is that it?"

"I do, and I don't," answered Ziegler slowly. "I might like it all right after I get started, but I ain't sure."

"After you get started!" said Merry. "Haven't you played anywhere?"

"Not yet," said Ziegler complacently. "If you can spare me a few minutes, Mr. Merry, I will explain why I came here to meet you from Dexter, I-o-way. You see, all my life I have dreamed dreams, and they come true. All kinds of dreams about weather and elections and things of that sort. They always happen the way I see them in my dreams. A month ago I had a dream that I was to meet you here and get a job pitching baseball with your club."

"Maybe you were laying on your back," suggested Merry gravely. "You ought to turn over once in a while."

Ziegler continued as if he had not heard the remark.

"I dreamed I would bring this club luck," said he, "and through that I

would get to travel and see the country. I have never been out of I-o-way before, Mr. Merry, and I like traveling."

"Oh, you do?" said Merry, looking again at the clock. He was loath to leave this strange person; many a laugh was in him, but it was time to repair to the ball park for the afternoon struggle.

"I'll tell you what you do," said John suddenly. "I've got to go to the ball yard now, and you come right along. We'll see how lucky you are."

"Shall I pitch to-day?" demanded Ziegler anxiously.

"Well, maybe not to-day," said Merry; "but you can warm up in case I have to take Cartwright out of the box. Got a uniform?"

"No, sir," said Ziegler; "but I've got some other clothes in my valise."

"We'll rig you up somehow," said Merry. "Bring your grip."

The manager and the man from Dexter left the hotel together, followed by the players, wondering out loud.

"John's got a new bug," said Hamilton. "He's framing up something for him. Did you ever see such a thing as that before?"

"Not even with Barnum & Bailey," said "Doc" Culver, the pitcher.

"Boys," said Merry, while the group waited for a street car, "this is—what did you say your name was?"

"Abner Abercrombie Ziegler."

"Too long," said Merry. "We'll call you 'Major Boots' for short. Boys, this is Major Boots, and he's come all the way from Dexter, Iowa, to bring us luck."

Ziegler was introduced to each member of the team in turn, bowing awkwardly and shaking hands as he murmured:

"Glad to make your acquaintance."

"The major is going to warm up today in case we want to put him in the box," said Johnny, with a wink. "He hasn't got a uniform, so we'll fix him up the best we can."

They did fix up the major, and when the practical jokers of the club were through with him he was a spectacle to startle a baseball fan and send a player into hysterics. The shirt which they found for him was so short as barely to escape embarrassing exposure; the trousers reached barely to the knee, and between trousers and stocking tops was a slight expanse of red skin. The cap was the largest one which could be found, and came down well over the eyes. As to shoes, the Dudes, with all their devilish ingenuity, could do nothing. Mulligan, famed for the size of his feet, and sometimes called "Trilby," in delicate recognition of this distinguishing feature of his make-up, had an old pair of spiked shoes; but Zeigler could not get into them, so he appeared in congress gaiters.

Ziegler drew a roar of laughter as he marched ponderously upon the field, surrounded by the trim athletes of Merry's team. His actions, when Merry lined him up with the other pitchers, kept the crowd in a gale of merriment. His ludicrous attempts to imitate Doc Culver's deliberate wind-up and delivery produced wild cheers.

Merry drew further salvos of ironical applause when he paused behind Ziegler, as if to study his style.

"Oh, Merry, where'd you catch that?" "Who's the new pitcher?" "Who left the gate open?" and other questions rained down from the grand stand. Abner Abercrombie worked away industriously, throwing every ball as if his life depended upon it, and making Hen Richards cover a great deal of ground retrieving wild pitches. Abner paid not the slightest attention to the crowd.

"I'm doing pretty well, ain't I, Mr. Merry?" he asked. "I don't quite get the hang of it yet, being new to the job, but I will in time. Maybe I better not pitch to-day."

"You're doing very well," said Merry solemnly. "You've got a great wind-up there. I never saw one like it."

"Well, I'm going to quit now for a while," said Ziegler. "My arm hurts me."

He retired to the bench, where Pinky Hamilton, the first baseman, solicitously wrapped him in a heavy sweater, and cautioned him against the dangers of taking cold "in the old soup bone."

The game that afternoon was fast and close. Merry, his heart set on catching the train for home, worked his men at top speed. They ran to and from their positions in the field, and not an instant was wasted. Abner Abercrombie Ziegler, his knees drawn up almost to his chin, and the tail of his shirt shamelessly abandoning his belt, watched the contest in silence until the last half of the eighth inning. Then he opened his mouth for the first time.

"What's the score?" he asked.

"We've got one, and they've got one," said Merry. "It's all even. Come on now, you loafers! Go out there and bust this up! We've got to make that train."

"You will win in this inning," said Ziegler suddenly. "I feel it in my bones."

Sure enough, the Dudes cinched the game in their half of the eighth. A base on balls, a boot in the infield, and then Jeff Jones, the slugging outfielder, stepped into one, and drove it to the fence for three bases.

"See what I told you?" remarked Ziegler. "I knew it was coming."

After the game there was a rush for the clubhouse, and in the mêlée of bathing and dressing Abner Abercrombie was almost forgotten. Merry was on his way to the door when an immense red hand reached out and took him by the elbow.

"Am I going along, Mr. Merry?" asked Ziegler. "Do I go on that fast train?"

Even then Merry's ruling passion asserted itself. He would have his joke.

"Oh, by gee, major!" he exclaimed. "I meant to tell you about that! Your transportation is over at the hotel; the clerk's got it. Go over there and tell him I sent you for it. If you don't catch the six-forty-five train, take the next one. And another thing: Don't let that hotel clerk bluff you. Make him come through. Hurry, now!"

Abner Abercrombie dashed out of the clubhouse, his valise bumping against his flying knees. Merry looked after him with a twinkle in his eye.

"Ain't he immense?" said he. "Can you beat that for a nut? I'd give something to see that hotel clerk's face when he asks for that railroad ticket!"

"All the same," said "Shadow" Slade, the infielder, as he wrestled with a refractory collar button, "that guy said he would bring us luck—and he did. What's more, John, he called the turn on that eighth inning."

"Did he?" said John, his hand on the doorknob.

"You bet he did!" answered several of the players. "Called it before the first man went to bat."

"Well, what do you know about that?" said Merry curiously. "At that, he can't be much of a mind reader, or he wouldn't be breaking his neck to get that transportation."

The Dudes arrived at home, and scattered to their respective domiciles. In the pleasure of the return to beaten paths and friendly faces, Abner Abercrombie Ziegler was forgotten. The fast train had given them a day of grace, but on the third afternoon, when Johnny Merry arrived at the park, one of the gatemen met him with a broad grin.

"Mr. Merry," said he, "the queerest-lookin' bug in the world was here a while ago, looking for you. I would ha' kept him out, all right enough, but Pinky Hamilton and Culver came along and took him in with them. I'm just sayin' this so's you won't blame me for him being in the clubhouse."

"Oh, that's all right—forget it!" said Johnny abruptly, and passed on.

"John is a grand guy," thought the gateman, as he watched the little manager swing in behind the wall of the bleachers, "but even he will kick when he sees that queer-lookin' bug."

As Johnny opened the door of the clubhouse, a strange, monotonous voice came to his ears—a voice which he knew he had heard before.

"But I wouldn't do it again," the voice was saying, "not for all the baseball jobs in America. I don't know if any of you gentlemen have had experience, but to my way of thinking, riding blind bag-

gages and hanging onto the top of dining cars is *reckless;* that's what it is, right reckless! I lost my valise, and came near being arrested besides."

Johnny strode to the door of the rubbing room, and looked in. There, enthroned upon a table, surrounded by a breathless audience, was none other than Abner Abercrombie Ziegler, of Dexter, I-o-way! His long, solemn, honest nose was red with the rigors of outdoor traveling; his eyes were watery and bloodshot—from the same cause, we hasten to assure the abstemious reader—and his greenish hand-me-down suit was oil-spattered from collar to trouser cuff.

"Well, wouldn't that frost you!" ejaculated Johnny Merry. "How—in—the—name—of the sacred National Camish did *you* get here?"

Abner slipped painfully down from the table and offered his hand.

"Mr. Merry," he said solemnly, "I'm very pleased to see you again. I wanted to tell you that there was some mistake about that ticket you left. I saw every clerk in that hotel, and some that wasn't, but they said they didn't have any transportation for me. One of 'em went so far as to say that you were making game of me. That was the one I hit. When they sent for a constable I came away. I knew you wouldn't like it if I was arrested, and——"

"Yes, yes," interrupted Merry; "but how in thunderation did you *get* here?"

"Well, Mr. Merry," said Abner, "I don't rightly know myself. You said I was to catch the first train if I missed the fast one. I did it, but they made me get off. I explained to 'em all along the line just what you said, but it didn't do much good. I guess I got onto forty different trains and off again before I got here, and I lost my valise, and got mighty near arrested in one place. Sometimes I walked, but not much. Once I didn't eat for two days, but I had another dream—that was in a freight car in Ohio—I had another dream that I was to meet you here and pitch baseball for you, and you would win. I saw that very plain, Mr. Merry. You would win if I was here."

Merry rubbed his chin with his pudgy right hand—a hand that in its time had tagged out many a daring base runner. He looked Abner Abercrombie Ziegler in the eye.

"I will say this for you," said the manager: "You are certainly one game rooster. You ought to be lucky if you ain't! Where's his uniform, boys?"

Thus was Major Boots attached to the fortunes of the club.

Johnny Merry was a jovial soul who cared much for a joke, but in his humor there was no taint of meanness. It was no pleasure to Merry that any man should suffer through his fun, and since a little joke had resulted in the transplanting of this Iowa wild flower, Merry willingly accepted the responsibility entailed.

Then almost at once things began to happen which convinced the most skeptical of the Dudes that the club had really found a mascot who *was* a mascot.

Ball players are superstitious folk. They believe in jinxes and lucky signs and cross-eyed women and hunchbacks and all sorts of things. There is one big hitter, at present in the game, who would walk a mile rather than meet a cross-eyed woman; there is another who selects berth No. 13 in a sleeping car, and will have no other. There is a great manager who once threatened to fine members of his team for singing "Casey Jones," regarding the same as a most malignant jinx. And as ball players believe in bad luck, so they believe in good luck and the things which bring it. On the day when Major Boots rejoined the team, the Dudes won out in the fifth inning, sewing up the game with a succession of hits—and once more the laconic Ziegler "called the turn." By the time the Dudes had won five straight, no man could have convinced them that Abner Abercrombie Ziegler was not a mascot above all other mascots, and the jinx dispenser extraordinary.

"He works both ways!" said Biff Bohannon, the catcher. "He's good luck for us, and he's poison to the other fel-

lows. He puts the sign on 'em, I tell you!"

As might have been expected, Major Boots made a terrific hit in the home town. The newspapers took him up and made much of him. The fans watched his awkward attempts to copy the peculiarities of the team's pitchers, and howled with delight at his serious attitude and demeanor. He was interviewed by the representatives of the press, and photographed in a thousand poses. Whenever he talked for publication, Ziegler always insisted gravely and with all earnestness that he had come East to pitch for John Merry, and Johnny helped the joke along by encouraging Major Boots to "warm up" before every game; and after every game one of the assistant masseurs gave Ziegler a rubdown, using a preparation which would have burned holes in rhinoceros hide.

He lived at a small hotel near the ball park, and Johnny bought him a suit of clothes, but the major still retained his ill-fitting uniform. In the mornings, when certain members of the team practiced at the park, Hamilton took it upon himself to teach the major the fall-away slide, a very exacting performance for a well-trained athlete, and for Ziegler, with his tremendous height and length of limb, a veritable crucifixion.

"You see, maje," explained Hamilton, "it's this way: Baseball ain't all pitching and hitting. You've got to be able to get around the bases, and you can't do it unless you learn this slide. Now, try it again, and hit the ground a little bit harder. You're doing fine."

Ziegler continued to "hit the ground" until he was black and blue from knee to shoulder. He practiced the fall-away slide as he practiced everything else—painstakingly, earnestly, and with all his might. Serious injury might have resulted had not Johnny Merry put a stop to Hamilton's comedy.

"You let the major alone," said the manager. "You want to get him laid up? He may be crazy, and all that, but he's harmless, and he's brought us luck, and I ain't going to have a lot of mutts like you give him the worst of it! Do you get me?"

After a time, the major began gently insisting that he be given his turn in the box. Merry suavely explained that he was saving him for some big game—some game which he really felt he had to win.

"There's no hurry," he said. "Just keep your arm in shape, and practice that slow ball of yours. It's a peach."

As a matter of fact, the continued practice was having its effect. The major had developed a slow outcurve—the easiest curve ball to throw—and there were times when he could split the plate with it.

The Dudes continued their winning streak; their luck held long enough to carry them out in front in August, and the pennant seemed theirs beyond any reasonable doubt. The major continued to clamor for his chance in the box, and at last he got it—but it was in a game which was hopelessly lost at the beginning of the ninth, by a score something like twelve to three. The opposition had developed a terrific batting streak, hammering the ball to all corners of the lot, and the fans jeered sarcastically.

"This game is a joke!" said Merry, with disgust. "That being the case, we'll make it a good one."

A little later he signaled Ziegler, and the major ambled over and sat down by the manager, very proud of the secondhand white uniform which he had received after sliding through the first collection of misfits.

"You're going to pitch the ninth inning," said Merry. "Get out there and show 'em that slow ball of yours."

Johnny had expected some sort of a remonstrance from Ziegler—some complaint at being sent into the box with such overwhelming odds against him. Nothing of the sort. The major at once began to peel off his sweater, his face wreathed in smiles.

There were only a few disgruntled fans remaining in the grand stand when Umpire McGee whipped off his mask and bellowed the announcement:

"Ziegler now pitching! Ziegler!"

The runways leading out of the park

were choked with the backs of disgusted patrons, but at the yell which went up from the remaining handful these deserters paused, recognized the tremendous bulk of Abner Abercrombie Ziegler striding into the diamond, and then, with joyous yells, scurried back to their seats. The bug was going to pitch, after all!

There followed ten minutes of delirious comedy—the sort of a spectacle seldom seen on any diamond. The opposition team entered into the spirit of the thing, and helped it along. Man after man bunted that slow curve straight down toward the pitcher's box, and Abner Abercrombie threw the ball all over the park in his anxiety to head off base runners. At last the side was out, and the comedy was over. The opposition had secured four more runs which were totally unnecessary.

Then Ziegler did a peculiar thing. He walked straight toward the grand stand, and halted in front of the official scorer. That gentleman, who knew him well, smiled into the serious, honest countenance of Major Boots.

"You did well!" said the scorer. "The way you went after those bunts was immense!"

"I thank you," said Abner Abercrombie simply. "All I ask is that you will insert into the box score the name A. A. Ziegler, and put the letter 'p' after it."

"That," said the official, "has already been done."

"And it will be in all the papers?"

"It surely will."

"I thank you again," said Ziegler, and then, with measured steps, he paced back to the bench, where he sat down and took his head in his hands. He seemed the very picture of woe.

"Don't feel so bad about it," said Merry sympathetically. "These fellows had their batting clothes on to-day, and they'd hit anybody. You looked great out there!"

But Major Boots refused to be comforted; nor did he insist on a rubdown that night. He donned his street clothes in haste, and left the clubhouse at a swinging pace. Twenty minutes afterward he was in a telegraph office, filling out three blanks.

The next afternoon Abner Abercrombie Ziegler was missing. The Dudes were greatly concerned about him. Biff Bohannon voiced a fear which was general.

"John," said he, "you never oughta let the maje get showed up that way. It's just broke his heart likely, and there ain't no tellin' what a bug will do when his heart gets broke. Most probably he's gone and turned on the gas. It ain't no good thing to go upsetting loony folks' ideas. They get desperate."

"You ought to know," was Merry's only comment; but later he sent a messenger boy over to Ziegler's hotel. In twenty minutes the lad returned with startling information.

"The clerk says he left last night with his grip," panted the boy. "Said goodby to everybody before he went, and opened a bottle of wine for the owner of the place. Yes, he's gone, all right."

"Gone!" repeated Merry. "Why, where could he go to? He didn't have any money to speak of, and it's a long way back to Iowa. Gone! Why, the poor, miserable chump will starve!"

"Yes, and he's gone with our luck!" lamented Slade, who had been the first man on the team to recognize Boots' wonderful powers as a mascot.

"Forget it!" snapped the little manager. "We've got this pennant pretty near sewed up for keeps, and I guess we can go the rest of the way without depending on a bug like the major. Quit thinking about luck, and play ball!"

But at the same time Merry's heart was troubled. In a way, he had become attached to his gentle, simple-minded protégé; and more than once that afternoon, while hopping about in the coacher's box, he found himself wondering what had become of Major Boots, the official jinx to the opposition, and the best home-team mascot on record. More than once that evening he thought of the major, sitting on the bench, with his head in his hands.

"If I had kept him out of the box,"

thought Merry, with regret, "this thing wouldn't have happened. That's a *cinch!*"

That season, the Dudes, with the pennant cinched beyond possibility of misadventure, made a flying trip to Chicago to play two games just before the close of the annual schedule.

As the little manager paused at the desk in the hotel, the clerk handed him an envelope. It was marked "Private and Important." Johnny retired to a corner, and broke the seal. The message was short, but intensely interesting:

Mr. John Merry.

DEAR SIR: If you would like to know what became of your mascot, Mr. A. A. Ziegler, of Dexter, Iowa, otherwise known as "Major Boots," come to Hotel La Salle at six-thirty this evening and ask for Philip Warburton. There will be a little dinner, and I believe I can promise you something in the nature of a genuine surprise.

Very truly yours,
PHILIP WARBURTON.

Merry rubbed his chin.

"I'll be there," he said, "with bells on!"

The hall boy rapped on the door, a voice answered, and Merry entered a luxurious apartment, in which two young men were smoking. Through half-drawn curtains, Merry caught a flash of white and silver, and smelled flowers.

"A banquet!" he thought. "Why didn't I wear my moonlights?"

The young men were in dinner jackets, and one of them, rather short, fat, and good-natured in appearance, rose at once, and offered his hand.

"Mr. Merry," he said, "my name is Warburton. You do not know me, but I feel that I know you, having been a baseball fan for the past fifteen years. This is my friend, Mr. George Hollister."

Merry shook hands, removed his coat, accepted a cigar, commented upon the weather, and sat down, wondering what in the world was coming next.

"I suppose I have aroused your curiosity somewhat?" said Warburton. "We are waiting for the fourth guest, and as soon as he arrives I promise to explain matters. In the meantime——" Mr. Warburton tapped a small bell, and a young man appeared.

"Cocktails, Frank," said Warburton. "What will you have, Mr. Merry?"

When the glasses arrived and the beverages were poured from silver shakers, the men arose, and Warburton lifted his glass in the air.

"Here's to you, Mr. Merry!" he said. "To you and your club!"

Johnny thanked him, and was just raising his glass to his lips when there came a hurried rap at the door; it opened suddenly, and a tall young man, in an overcoat and silk hat, stepped hastily into the room.

"I know I'm late, Phil," said the newcomer; "but I——"

Johnny Merry whirled at the sound of the voice. True, good clothes and silk hats and patent-leather boots do make a difference; but nothing could have altered that face. Nothing could have disguised that long, sober, horse-like nose. That was just as real as it had always been. The glass slipped from Merry's fingers and thudded softly on a Persian rug, aged some hundreds of years, and one perfectly good Bronx cocktail seeped slowly into that priceless fabric, for the young man in the high hat was none other than Abner Abercrombie Ziegler, alias Major Boots, late mascot of the Dudes!

After some time Johnny Merry recovered his breath, the control of his lower jaw, and with it his sense of humor.

"Another drink, quick!" he said. "I'm seeing things!"

The newcomer stepped over, and offered his hand.

"Mr. Merry," he said, slipping easily into that monotonous droning voice Johnny knew so well, "I have come here from Dexter, I-o-way, to say that I am glad to see you again, and——"

Merry backed away.

"You strung me once," he said, "and strung me plenty; but you can't do it again. The thing I can't get at is this: *What was the idea?*"

A servant drew back the curtains, and Warburton motioned toward the dining room.

"It's really very simple when you hear the explanation," he said. "I'll tell you about it as we go along."

But Merry was firm on one point.

"Suppose you introduce me first," said he, "to *him*." And he nodded at his late mascot.

"Oh!" said Mr. Warburton. "Mr. Merry, this is Billy Ziegler. His father makes soap. You may have heard of him."

"The devil!" was Johnny Merry's acknowledgment. "Old man Ziegler's son, eh?"

When they were seated at table, and, as Merry expressed it, squared away for business, Warburton began the promised explanation.

"You see, Mr. Merry," he said, impaling an oyster upon a fork, and indicating Ziegler with a gentle wave of the bivalve, "Billy here and I often make bets together, and he has the devil's own luck winning them. At the present time I suppose he is about twenty thousand ahead of me."

"A mere trifle," murmured Ziegler. "*His* father pickles hogs and things."

"Shut up, Billy!" said Warburton. "Who's doing this? Well, as I said, we have a habit of getting into arguments and making bets on all kinds of things. Billy is a wonderful man to argue. All you have to do is make the commonest sort of a statement, and Billy takes the other side, and starts showing you where you are wrong. We are both pretty much interested in baseball, and one night I made the statement that it was a very hard thing for an unknown player to break into the big league. Billy here said it wasn't hard at all, if you only knew how to go about it. The first thing I knew, we were at it hammer and tongs. I'll leave it to you if I wasn't right; but Billy got excited—he always gets excited—and when he made a most preposterous statement, I called him. He said that he had never played baseball in his life, but that if he wanted to he could get his name into a big-league box score as taking part in a game. Do you follow me?"

Merry was staring hard at Ziegler.

"So *that* was it, eh?" he said, at last. "He did it on a bet!"

"Sure!" said Mr. Warburton, signaling the waiter to remove the oyster shells. "I said 'Bet you five thousand you can't do it!' and he said 'You're on!' Five thousand dollars, Mr. Merry, and you are here to see the money paid over. Because he *did* get his name in the box score."

"He surely did!" said Johnny Merry. He rose from his chair, stepped over to Ziegler, and offered his hand.

"Young man," said the manager of the Dudes, "I want to say to you that I've been around this country some in my time, and I've met all sorts of high-class kidders, but I'm beginning to think I never ran into one till I saw you!"

"No," said Warburton plaintively, "it's only his confounded luck! I'd have given him two to one that he couldn't break into a big-league box score with a stick of dynamite and a senatorial corruption fund; but he just puts on a lot of rube clothes and waltzes into my five thousand as easy as rolling off a log. He's lucky!"

"Not entirely," said Johnny. "Let me tell you about him: The first time I laid eyes on him I thought to myself that here was some hick vaudeville performer trying to work me for press stuff, and I was just going to give him the bum's rush when I got a look at his face—and that stopped me. I knew no actor ever had a mush like that." Here Mr. Ziegler bowed low, and said that he was flattered. "And," continued Merry, looking at Warburton, "you'd have won your bet, too, if this fellow hadn't beat his way fourteen hundred miles, and showed up, looking as if he had been through a thrashing machine. After that I didn't have the heart to turn him down."

"What's that?" demanded the silent Hollister, who up to this point had taken no part in the conversation. "What's that about beating his way? Billy never told us anything about that."

Ziegler explained:

"Mr. Merry here tried to shake me with some talk about a ticket. When I showed up over on the other side, I looked pretty tough, and I told him that I beat my way over. I knew that would touch his heart—and it did."

"Well," said Merry, after a pause, "how *did* you get over with your face in that shape?"

"Easy," said Ziegler. "I drove most of the way in my new car. If you've ever been out in the wind for three or four days, Mr. Merry, you know what it does to your face. All I had to do was to take that rube suit out of my trunk, squirt oil on it, and then drag it in the dirt for a couple of miles, and —there you are. A hobo complete to the last detail."

"Murder!" said Merry solemnly. "And him with a face like that—an honest face, too!"

"My face," said Mr. Ziegler softly, "has often been my fortune—in poker games and elsewhere."

The fish was on the table before Mr. Merry had another idea.

"You ought to be on the stage," said he. "Worse actors than you are getting rich."

"I may be some day," said Ziegler. "I may be, if the soap business peters out."

Then Johnny Merry stood up and proposed the very good health of that prince of real people, "Major Boots."

But it will be a long time before another "rube ball player" gets a chance to step into the box for the Dudes.

Van Loan tells about "The Pitch Out" in the next POPULAR; on sale two weeks hence, July 7th.

THE REAL THINGS IN SMALL BEGINNINGS

JIM HEMENWAY, who used to be a United States senator from Indiana, and Frank Hanly, who used to be governor of the same State, once made a speech on the same evening in the Academy of Music, at Evansville. There was nothing particularly striking about the speeches, but the environment was interesting.

Across the street from the academy was the livery stable where Hemenway once worked as a hostler, and a short distance from that was the main gas pipe of the Evansville Gas Company. Hanly dug in the ditch for seventy-five cents a day when this pipe was laid.

TEMPERAMENT AND THE TEAPOT

WHEN Henry Miller is rehearsing a new play he works hard and long, remaining sometimes on the stage for twenty-four hours at a stretch. Naturally, such a strain makes him nervous, and the combination of nervousness and artistic temperament occasionally produces an outburst, a flare-up, a blow-off. During the rehearsals for his last play, several things had gone wrong and Miller had exhibited his impatience in gesture and words.

He went on with the work and was in the midst of a scene in which he had to pick up a teapot. As he did so, the handle came off, the pot fell to the table, and the tea—real tea—trickled down on the actor's legs. The stage manager immediately was seized by a trembling fit, and every member of the company began to wish for a cyclone cellar. They knew the star was about to cut loose.

But this last ill of fortune had been too much for him. Holding the handle in his hand and regarding the property man with sorrow, he said gently:

"Can't you fix this teapot? I've got to scrub the floors!"

The Red Lane

By Holman F. Day

Author of "The Gashing Fiddlers," "The Captain Sproul Stories," Etc.

SYNOPSIS OF PRECEDING CHAPTERS.

The Red Lane is neither road nor route. It is an institution—it is smuggling. Its thousand avenues are now here, now there. This night it monopolized the highway through Monarda Clearing. On the line, half in Canada, half in the States stood Vetal Beaulieu's place, a tavern where the excise laws of both great nations were openly defied. Here the smugglers of live stock and farm produce rested and celebrated, while the customs officers were led astray on a false rumor. Into the midst of this revelry at midnight comes Evangeline Beaulieu, the convent-bred daughter of the innkeeper. Believing that her father has been making an honest living, the truth appalls her. She begs him to give up the tavern, but backed up by the moral support of the leader of the smugglers, Dave Roi, the man to whom Beaulieu has agreed to marry his daughter, he refuses. As Roi is driving the last of a huge flock of sheep across the line, a customs officer, Norman Aldrich, chances on them and at Roi's order is shot. He comes to the tavern for aid. Against her father's orders, Evangeline unbars the door, and for the second time in their lives the officer and the girl come face to face. Evangeline binds the deputy's wounds. After he has left the house Roi renews his protestations of affection for the girl, but when her father again refuses to close the tavern, she leaves them and begins her journey back to the Northland. On the road she meets the fiddler, Billedeau, a quaint old man beloved throughout the region. He agrees to carry her in his little wagon to the new school up north where they are in need of teachers. And so together they travel from settlement to settlement, at last arriving at Rancourt Clearing where Billedeau is to play at a wedding. There she meets Aldrich, who tells her he loves her. Vetal Beaulieu comes upon them and upbraids his daughter and commands her to return and marry Dave Roi. She refuses and he vows vengeance. With the fiddler she resumes her journey. At Attegat Father Leclair gets her a position in the school and places her in the care of Madame Ouillette. Meantime political troubles arise. Louis Blais, an attorney, denounces Representative Clifford and condemns the building of the new school. Roi arrives and works with Blais. The school is set on fire. Aldrich is on the scene at the time and comforts Evangeline. Later Aldrich confronts Blais and calls him a traitor. Father Leclair interposes when a fight seems imminent. Schoolmaster Donham declares that though the school building is destroyed the school will go on and the young people will be taught in the fields.

CHAPTER XII.

THE SACRIFICE OF PERE LECLAIR.

SO the folks of Attegat Parish came to church!

Sagging buckboards rumbled down from the north, with the clans of the Cyrs and the Pelletiers. Up from the south rode the Archambeaults, the Heberts, the Daignaults, and all the rest. They came by families, following the lanes which led to the river road, straggling across the fields. Here and there a rusty top carriage distinguished some habitant farmer, but buckboards brought most of the people.

An average congregation at Père Leclair's church comprised one thousand men, women, and children.

There were many more this day. From distant clearings, where the sheriffs had done their work of eviction, families had come to crowd the little houses of the river valley. These folks came to church, too. They were eager to assemble with others of the border in conference. There were great matters to be discussed, there were wrongs to be canvassed. The holy day gave opportunity, the church was a convenient rallying point, the greensward before it offered suitable arena for a mass meeting.

Many were there before the dew was off the grass. Hundreds of others came early. Men talked in low tones. They were tense, they were mournful. The poisoned word had gone among them—that was plain.

Had they not been betrayed by those

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in power? They asked each other that. True, this and that had been given to the poor people in the past, but now much—very much—homes and lands were taken away. They had not been beggars or paupers. They had worked hard. But, after feeding all the mouths, and clothing all the backs, there was little money left for building roads and bridges or hiring teachers or erecting schools. So they had taken the money of the State with gratitude. And now the State allowed men to come and drive them away from their homes—and the men said it was according to the law. What good were the roads and the schools and the bridges to men who had no homes?

Ere the sun was high, the broad, turfed space before the church was thronged, and the hum of voices was like the angry buzzing from a giant hive.

The men looked into each other's tanned faces, muttering despondently, or growling threats. The women murmured their forebodings, and the children listened wistfully.

Was it, after all, a fact that the Acadians were not like the other citizens of the State—that they were serfs instead of free men, that the Yankees considered them aliens in citizenship and children in importance? That was the burden of much of the talk.

Well, there had been a lesson for the Yankees in one affair which had happened! The men who said this pointed furtively to the blackened, fire-scarred chimneys which marked the site where the big school had crowned the hilltop. There were only a few of these men who boasted sullenly in this way. They were rough-looking men. They went about through the throngs, and the tenor of their discourse was that it was time for the Acadians to show some of their old-time spirit.

When Attorney Louis Blais came he had with him a young man who wore gaiters and a corduroy riding suit. Men who knew said that this was David Roi, the richest of the border smugglers.

The two young men strolled on the edge of the greensward, arm in arm, with a word now and then for one of the rough and surly men.

They did not enter the church until the others had filed in past the font, and had taken their seats in the dim interior. The two lurked in the vestibule until Père Leclair climbed slowly to his pulpit. Then they went in and took seats behind a pillar.

It was still in the church—so still that all the people heard the priest's crucifix tinkle against the reading desk as he leaned over it to speak to them. His face was pale, and he wore the look of one who was bravely inviting the fate of the martyr. The people did not understand the expression of his face. They did not know of that letter from the bishop. They did not realize that their little father had walked out to them that day, after a sleepless night of prayer and vigil before the altar in the sacristy, where he had offered up his own interests as a sacrifice for what he believed was the best good of his parish. He was disobeying the diocesan head. He understood the enormity of such action, viewed from the standpoint of the church. He could not justify himself before the church—he could only justify himself before his own conscience. He felt that he understood his own people better than even those high in authority could understand. The bishop had never seen those people. He had never visited Acadia. Father Leclair understood how hard it would be to explain to one who lacked intimate sympathy.

So his face was pale. His wrinkles were deeper. His voice quavered when he began to speak. He talked to them as a father to his children—with simple words from the heart.

"Do not be led into error," he entreated them. "Remember that you are citizens of the good State where you live—though the rest of your fellow citizens are far away over the mountains to the south. They will understand pretty soon. There are good men there—good men make the laws. They will not allow other good men to be persecuted or wronged, as soon as they understand. But if you are not good—

if you forget yourselves and follow men who counsel riot and rebellion, then the men to the south will not think that you are good men. You will be punished as bad men. Your children will suffer because their fathers have broken the laws. Very soon you will be called on to vote. You must not vote for a man who asks you to forget the country in which you live. You will not vote for Louis Blais, for he advises wrong things. You will vote for a good man, who has done much in the past, and who will do much good for you in the future. Do not forget honest service. You can be true to your religion, and can remember, always, that you are Acadians. But let us strive to be of one tongue with our brothers of the south. They gave us the big school in order that our boys and girls might learn much, and go out into the world with useful trades—so that they may be just as smart as the Yankee boys and girls. Don't you understand that our brothers to the south have been generous? They are lifting us up—they are not making slaves."

His voice grew firmer. His tones rang through the church. He was then defying all except his own conscience; he was obeying what he believed to be his duty.

"I counsel you to send your boys and girls to the school where they can best be fitted for the world. The shell of the big school has been destroyed. But the soul of it is still there, my children. Even though there is only God's sky above those who teach and those who learn, the school is still there! I believe our brothers will understand if we are loyal and obedient—and then the school will again arise from its ashes to bless us."

Much more did the good priest say to his people, leaning over the desk, pleading with them, trying to make them raise their sullen eyes to his, and survey him in the old frank and responsive way.

And all that which the priest said Louis Blais wrote down with hurrying pencil, shielded by the pillar behind which he sat.

He went away before the benediction, pausing long enough at the church door to order one of the surly men to bring the others to the law office. Thither he repaired with Roi.

While the smuggler smoked his cigar and lolled luxuriously in the sun, Blais wrought with pen on a sheet of broad, fair legal paper, and the rough men, who came one by one, stood at the sides of the room, waiting.

"Listen!" directed the attorney at last. "You men, listen!"

He read from the paper the priest's words, and they nodded affirmatively as he read.

Then, at his command, the men signed the paper, one after the other.

Standing in a row, they raised their right hands, and he asked them to make oath that the paper they had signed contained the words of Father Leclair as spoken that day from the pulpit of Attegat Parish. Blais attested the oath as a notary, and the men departed.

Blais affixed the stamp to the envelope with a vicious blow of his fist.

"I hate to fight a priest—but a priest must not get in my way after he has had fair warning," he declared.

"There's no question in your mind, then, about what the bishop will do when he gets that report?" inquired Roi.

"Father Leclair will be snapped out of this parish as quick as the machinery can work. I'm on the inside of the thing. The bishop has already warned him. I saw to it that the bishop had full information about his previous stand on this school matter. It's a touchy point at headquarters since the legislature turned down the appropriations for the parochial schools. Roi, I'm a bad man to tackle. If some other men don't keep out of my way I'll show 'em a few tricks on this border."

He shoved his hands in his trousers pockets, and strode about the room, the tails of his frock coat "winging" behind him. "Confound that Aldrich!" he blurted.

"We seem to agree almighty well in our partnership to date, Louis," observed Roi malevolently. "And we're certainly doing business together. A schoolhouse and a priest and a customs

sneak were between me and the girl I propose to marry. The first two seem to be out of the way to some extent. Get busy in regard to the last one just as soon as you can—and call on me for help."

"A girl!" sneered Blais. "I supposed you had more of a motive in this proposition, Dave. You always have been a little too strong on the girl question."

Roi scowled.

"You want to take into account who the girl is. Let me tell you, Louis, that Evangeline Beaulieu is worth more as a prize than all the picayune political jobs you can drag down for yourself. Did you ever know what it was to want a girl so much that your heart ached every time you thought of her—and you couldn't sleep for thinking of her and longing for her? Did you ever want a girl so much that when you saw her you felt as though blood was running out of your eyes? If you haven't felt that way, don't you talk to me."

"I know better than to lose my head in any such fashion."

"By the gods, if you have never lost your head that way you don't know what living is, you ice-water lawyer! I never found a girl I couldn't have. Now there isn't another girl in the world I want except this one. And you talk to me of not having enough of a motive! Louis, the motive that puts the spur to me is the motive that has tipped kingdoms upside down. The rumor has gone up and down this border that Aldrich has cut me out. I'd go out now and hunt him up and drop him if I had a way planned to get me out of the scrape. If you're the right kind of a friend and lawyer you'll tell me a way."

"Don't whip a willing horse, Roi. The thing is moving right if we don't rush it. Give me time."

"But you are giving *him* time! He is courting her. They told me he was at the fire with her."

"Oh, come outdoors and take a walk. I can argue with almost any one except a man in love. You'll get her when the time comes right," said the lawyer, starting for the door.

"I'll get her even if the priest who marries us has to be a gun—one barrel for her and one for me," said the love-crazed man. "I'll take her in my arms and make a honeymoon trip to hell. That's the way I feel, Blais. And don't try any of your funny jokes on a man with my disposition."

The buckboards were rolling away. The people were scattering to their homes. They were not shouting to each other as their wont had been in times past. They who rode and they who walked went their ways somberly. No one had helpful or hopeful suggestion for the other. Out of the conference before the church had come doubts, hesitation, more fears. Their good priest, who had been so wise in their interest in the past, who had helped the poor people to bear their burdens, now faltered advice to them to turn the other cheek, to obey cruel mandates.

Blais, walking by the side of the road, waved his hand to this one and that. He shouted brusque advice that they hold tight—cheer up—remember that Acadians should stand together for Acadians! The men nodded mournful assent. They did not understand very well, but here seemed to be one who was full of courage in their behalf, who did not falter advice to be meek, who was bold and assertive—and they felt that they needed a leader who was bold.

So they nodded to him, and some smiled.

At one place in the street the rough men had collected other men in a good-sized group, and this group cheered Lawyer Blais when he passed.

"The campaign is well under way—and the good Father Leclair will not be here to boom the goat-whiskered Clifford," Blais informed his companion, with satisfaction. "I dropped a letter into the post office just now as I came past, and if I'm any judge of how things will move, the time fuse will operate in mighty short order. It will happen plenty far ahead of the legislative convention. Cheer up, Dave! We can team love and politics in a tandem hitch—and so long as we get there I'll make love the wheel horse for your sake if you insist on it. There are slicker

ways of cutting Aldrich out of this thing than by a club or a gun. You smugglers have too much rough-and-tumble about you. Leave it to me."

Far ahead of them, Père Leclair trudged down the dusty road toward the little stone house. He was bowed. His face was careworn. His worn cassock flapped about his legs, and he was a pathetic figure of a little shepherd of a flock for whom he had sacrificed all—and they did not understand.

CHAPTER XIII.

HOW VETAL BEAULIEU MADE HIS WILL.

Dave Roi rode down the border to Beaulieu's Place—and a scowl was on his face and surly resolve was in his heart.

He carried news to Vetal Beaulieu. He told the publican that the big school in Attegat had been burned to the ground. He hinted darkly that this was the first blow in a fight in which the hateful Yankees would learn something of the spirit on the border. He drank deeply of Vetal's white rum, and then he was freer in his disclosures and threats: there were to be some grand happenings in the north, he declared. In Attegat Parish would the storm center be.

"And where is your girl, where is Evangeline, where is my promised wife in all this? She is in with the gang that's against us. You have let her run away and laugh at you."

Vetal met rage with surly protest.

"I did not let her run away. It was to teach her a lesson! You said it would be good to teach her a lesson. You said it when she left. It was the advice of a fool, Dave Roi. I went to bring her back, and I was one man against the whole settlement of Bois-De-Rancourt. Don't you blame me! They took the word of the Yankee customs sneak and the word of a fiddler against me—her father. They drove me away."

"They wouldn't drive you away now," stated the sullen smuggler. "They have found about the Yankees since then. They would not stand up for a girl who has deserted her own people and is helping the Yankees to steal our boys and girls."

He went on savagely: "A fine sight it is nowadays to see the girl of Vetal Beaulieu sitting under a tree, teaching Acadian girls to be Yankees. They point her out, and grin, and say: 'That is the daughter of the rich Vetal Beaulieu, of Monarda.' Yes, sitting under a tree since the big school has been burned, walking in the fields without a roof over her head, helping the Yankees to keep on in their dirty work."

"If you have seen her there, why did you not bring away, if you are so bold and so proud because she has been promised to you?" asked Beaulieu.

"That's a job for a father to undertake. I have come down here to give you your chance to undertake it;" cried Roi. "So come along with me, and get your daughter. She must come away. If you go up there and make her come there will be no scandal. I will help you. If you don't come I'll do it alone. Vetal, scandal or no scandal, for I'm going to have her, and have her now. I'm going to have her even if I lead fifty men across the line, and fight a pitched battle to get her. I would have brought her away long ago if it had not been for an old priest—but that old priest will be taken care of mighty soon."

He strode about the big room, clapping his gloved hands, inciting the gloomy father to action.

He rang changes upon the spectacle presented by the daughter of the rich Vetal Beaulieu, sitting under the open sky, disgracing herself in the eyes of the people by making Yankees out of Acadian children. Vetal had listened with some alarm to Roi's predictions of bitter trouble in the north. But what made his eyes sparkle at last with determination was this insistent harping on Evangeline's humiliation of herself for the sake of their enemies.

In the end, Vetal Beaulieu smote his fists together, and roared his intention to assert his authority. From the broad door he shouted orders to his stable to have his horses put to his buckboard.

"Ba gar," he declared, "I went that first time alone with my little horse to find my girl and bring her to her home. For I was ashamed. It was bad if the folks of this border should know she had run away. I was going to be the very kind father to her. Yes, I went alone, so that she would not be shamed. But now I shall make the loud noise. I shall not care who knows that Vetal Beaulieu is going to bring home his daughter, no matter how many Yankees stand in the way. She shall come to my house, and be an Acadian girl who must obey her father, and marry the man to whom she has been promised."

Dave Roi, flushed and swaggering, encouraged this new and noisy determination.

Beaulieu banged the windows down, and barred them with the shutters. He double-locked the big door. He thrust the keys deep in his trousers pockets, along with jingling coins and crumpled bills. He patted a huge pistol, and hid it on his hip.

When the two sturdy little horses were harnessed he took his seat in state on the rear seat of the wagon, and ordered his man to drive on to the north country.

Roi cantered ahead. As he rode, he wondered how he had allowed a mere girl to defy him so long—to make a fool of him—for he knew that the border people had already begun to gossip about the manner in which Vetal Beaulieu's girl had thrown over the rich Dave Roi to take up with a mere Yankee who rode the border for the customs services of his country.

But in this new exaltation of resolution Dave Roi did not forget the prudence that those who knew him well called cowardice. He rode north by the route on the Canadian side. He hurried on, but kept looking behind, to assure himself that Vetal Beaulieu was at his heels. Those same persons who knew Roi well might have said, had they known of his journey south to secure the services of the father, that Roi was not actuated solely by his desire to avoid a scandal—they would not have allowed this compliment to his sense of the proprieties where a girl was concerned; it would have seemed more probable that he needed Vetal Beaulieu for a task which he did not dare to undertake himself.

They came to Felix Cyr's tavern for the night.

Cyr's is halfway halting place for all travelers in that section. It squats flatly on a high, domed hill, and a lone Lombardy poplar tree thrusts itself high above the eaves at one corner of the house; the suggestion of bare poll of the hill, the flat house, and the tree is of a bald head surmounted by a cap with a feather in it.

Many persons loafed about the yard. A man who had eight hounds argued with Felix Cyr at the door of the house—appealed for admission, and met profane refusal. Felix Cyr had hated all dogs for many years. In the old days, when Felix was a smuggler, he owned a fighting bulldog, and once upon a time he rushed across the boundary to rescue his pet from the jaws of a dog which had come into that section at the heels of a stranger. The stranger was a United States deputy marshal in disguise, and he had a warrant for the arrest of Cyr, and had brought along an able fighting dog in order to cajole the smuggler upon Yankee territory.

The threat of the man with the hounds—that half of them were yappers, and half were howlers, and that he would post them near the house and stir them to make a whole night's riot—did not impress Cyr. He kicked one of the dogs, and shook his fist in the man's face. But he had a handclasp for Vetal Beaulieu, and gruff greeting for Roi.

"There are men who are waiting for you," he informed the smuggler. He twitched his shaggy brows to indicate that they were within.

A half dozen men were loafing in the main room of the tavern. Vetal knew most of them, for he had had abundant opportunity for making acquaintances along the border. One was the hard-faced son of "Blaze" Condon. One he knew as Zealor Whynot, who made a business of smuggling liquor into prohibition sections, and wore a tin tank

fitted to his body under his coat, like a corselet.

"I sent word to a few of the boys to meet us here," Roi informed Beaulieu. "We'll take 'em along north with us. If there's anybody who is interested in making a scrap out of this, my boys will come in handy."

Beaulieu bridled a bit.

"You take my business and run it for me, eh?"

"You have shown that you need a manager—and the girl needs one, too. There isn't going to be any more fooling about this thing."

One person in the room was not of the group of Roi's men. Vetal saw him, and seemed to lose interest promptly in the recruits. He strode across, and shook his finger under the man's nose.

"Why don't you come when you agree, and pay the money, eh?"

The man mumbled a reply, darting furtive side glances of shame at the listeners. He rubbed his palms nervously on his patched knees.

"You may as well talk loud when you tell me another lie about why you do not come and pay!" shouted Vetal. "These men, maybe, would like to learn lies about how not to pay."

"I haven't lied; I have told the truth to you. I haven't the money to pay. That's the truth. I have worked hard. The money has come slow."

"Ah, if you swallow a straight nail, you will cough it up turned into a corkscrew! No straight truth comes out of you. You have had the last warning. I shall come and take the horses —I shall take the cows."

The man was pricked into rebellion by this attack before them all.

"If you take my horses I cannot earn money to pay you. If you take my cows my children will starve."

"I shall come and take them."

The man leaped to his feet. He had cowered at first—a shrinking debtor before an accusing creditor. His shame became the sudden anger of a weak nature.

"I have already paid you two dollars for every dollar I borrowed. And I still owe you more than you gave me in the first place. I have been a slave to you. I have worked hard. My wife and my children have been without the things they need, so that you might have. It is not right."

"You borrowed—you came and begged for the money, and agreed to the interest. I did not hunt you up and force the money into your hands."

"I borrowed to send to the big city for a doctor to make my poor wife well when she was dying," declared the man passionately. He was appealing to them all now—seeking to justify this debt concerning which he had been so insolently taunted. "It's only what a man would do. He would not fight about interest rates then. He would save his poor wife. I have tried to do right. But the man who takes advantage of suffering and sorrow—that is the man who ought to be ashamed. I have paid you over and over."

"And now propose to whine and sneak out of the rest of the debt, eh?"

"No; but I ask for time. I am a slave to you—but a slave must have time."

"I shall come and take the horses and the cows."

"They are taking the lands away from the settlers across in the Yankee country," cried the debtor. "But that is not so wicked as what you are doing to me—what you have been doing on this border for years. I am going to say it out! You have made yourself rich out of drunkards, and have taken the money which ought to have gone to women and children. But even that is not as bad as piling up more riches by taking advantage of sickness and distress, and making a man a slave to you."

"I lend my good money. I have lent money for years to men who come and beg for it. I do not ask them to borrow. And all the men who borrow come back like you and make hard talk to me. I get no thanks. So my good disposition has been spoiled. I get nothing but blame because I have been good to men. If I should give away my good money—toss it out with both hands—

I should still be blamed. So I shall make men pay me."

Roi had been listening cynically—the others without special interest. The attitude of Vetal Beaulieu toward his debtors was well understood on the border. And his rates of interest and the numbers of the slaves who paid tribute to him without hope of extricating themselves were also well known.

The man realized that he had not elicited sympathy from the money lender or from the bystanders. His fires of revolt soon cooled. He fumbled in his pockets, and found a tattered bill or so and some coins.

"It is all I have," he declared humbly. "I am on my way with my horses to work on the new road through Mellicite Forest. My wife and the children have only the milk of the cows until I come home. Then I will pay with my earnings."

"How much do you have there?" asked the lender.

"Two dollars and forty cents."

"And now you owe on the interest almost ten times that! Ah, no! I shall take the horses and the cows. I cannot wait any longer. You do not intend to pay. You have given me hard words before listeners."

His eyes glittered angrily as he spoke, and his mien was unrelenting.

"There are men on this border who will give you something more than words, you man who will take the food from poor children! You will go too far with fathers who see families suffer because your heart is hard. I do not threaten you. I believe in God, and I try to do my duty," cried the man, his voice breaking. "But there are men who will forget God when they see their children starve on account of you. I warn you, Vetal Beaulieu!"

It was passionate prophecy, but the usurer wrinkled his nose and sneered.

There were audible indications outside that the man with the hounds was making good his threat to Cyr. Staccato yelps and mournful howls nearly drowned the quavering accents of the debtor.

"All those who bark at my heels, bah! I think only as much of them as I do of what is outside there," declared Vetal, snapping his finger scornfully at the window. "I shall take the horses and the cows."

He turned his back on the man, for Roi had thrust an elbow into his side. A new arrival had just come hurrying into the room. This man was distinctly of importance, Vetal Beaulieu decided. He wore a frock coat, and swaggered. He and Roi exchanged looks.

"A room, Felix!" commanded the smuggler. "Quick with you! Bring us something to eat. M'ser Beaulieu and I are tired of standing here where loafers can insult us."

The frock-coated stranger came later to the room to which the landlord had escorted his guests. He was introduced to Vetal.

"He is my closest friend," explained Roi. "He is to be the big man of all Attegat from now on. He is to go to the corps legislative, Vetal. We shall get some new laws and some rights for the Acadians. This is Attorney Louis Blais, and he is not so busy about his own great business but what he can help you and me. So I have sent for him to come here to join us—for it is well to decide on some things before we show ourselves in Attegat."

And then Louis Blais sat down with them, and talked much while he ate of the food Felix Cyr sent by the hands of one of the maids.

While they ate, a fiddle was tuned under the window, and soon jolly strains began. By the sound they knew that all the travelers who were housed at Cyr's that night had joined the group about the musician. The twilight was down, and the men in the room upstairs did not try to see who this fiddler was. They were talking of grave matters.

"It is Fiddler Billedeau," explained the maid who came to carry away the dishes. "It is very jolly when he happens here."

Vetal's face showed prompt and black anger. He rushed to the window.

"Go—pass on, you thief of young girls! Leave here, you vagabond scoundrel, who go about defying fathers!" he

blustered in the French tongue. In his rage he took no account of what the listeners might think. "I have put my mark on your face once. I will come down there and do it again."

The fiddle ceased. After a moment of silence Billedeau replied:

"Is it you, M'ser Vetal Beaulieu?"

"You know very well who it is—your guilty conscience tells you, loafing pig of a fiddler. Go on your way, and don't disturb gentlemen who have business."

"Here are gentlemen down here who have no business, but who are ready for a little fun," interposed a voice—the voice of one of the guests. "Yes, go on, Billedeau. Go on with your fiddle! As for you above—keep still!"

"I obey my good friends," said the old fiddler mildly. "When they ask me to play for them it is my duty to play, because my good friends smooth my path through life for me. *Bo' soir,* M'ser Beaulieu. I shall play."

The fiddle went gayly on.

"Let the fiddler play. Don't make more enemies only for the sake of hearing yourself talk, Vetal," counseled Roi impatiently. "You have enemies enough. Some one will take a pop at you one of these days!"

Beaulieu came growling back to the table. He drove his fist upon it. He was too angry to think clearly or reason justly.

"They all sneer behind my back, those who do not borrow, and those who borrow talk hard to my face when I ask for what belongs to me! And my girl, after I have worked all the years for her, does both—she talks hard to my face, and sneers behind my back about the money I have earned. So she is the worst of all." He pointed quivering finger at the floor. "And down there is a man who says that Vetal Beaulieu will soon get something else than hard words! They would like to see me die, eh? Then they all would come and laugh hard over my grave, and my girl would give my money to the priests and the sneaking Yankees! You are a notary, eh? If you have some paper you write, M'ser Blais. Write now."

The lawyer stared, but obeyed Vetal's insistence. He found a blank sheet in his pocket, and uncorked his fountain pen.

"I do not give you the words—I give you the sense. You know the law words. Write it on the paper in the law words that if I die all my money goes to David Roi, and then my girl will not have any money unless she marries him. Write it that he must marry her within the year after I die. Ah, that will make you hurry some, eh, Dave Roi? It will make you hurry twice as fast as love will make you hurry, eh?" he shouted, turning convulsed face to the astonished smuggler.

"Seeing that both parties will have such strong inducements to marry," remarked the lawyer, urbanely professional, "the will ought to start the wedding bells to ringing. But in case of—of an accident—any unforeseen contingency, where will you have the money go then, Beaulieu?"

"To hell!" raved the frantic publican. "If my girl is a fool, and Dave Roi is so much of a coward that he will not get her, I want that money to go where it is the worst place to have money go!"

He stamped around the table, as he stamped about his loaded truck in his moments of passion. He jingled the coins in his pockets.

The fiddle outside was singing plaintively. The tune was one of the *chansons* of the old country.

"I appreciate your feelings, but I'm afraid the bequest must be made a bit more definite," suggested Blais, breaking the silence of the room.

Vetal paused in his march, and drove furious gesture at the open window. The fiddle sang on.

"If a fool and a coward lose my money, it shall go to some place that is hateful—it shall be wasted—it shall be thrown about the world by a loafer, a vagabond—it shall go to that old idiot who fiddles his way through life—it shall go to Anaxagoras Billedeau. Put his name into the will," he cried wildly. "If it can't go to the devil, himself, let it go to Anaxagoras Billedeau—and I spit on every dollar of it."

He resumed his march, unconsciously keeping time to the fiddle's strains.

The attorney shot a look at the smuggler in which doubt, inquiry, and hesitation were mingled.

"Write it as he wants it," directed Roi, "and make it as strong as you can. It suits me—for I'm going to have the girl. I have stopped fooling where she's concerned."

So the lawyer wrote while the fiddle played outside. In the room the only sounds were the scratching of the hurrying pen and the stertorous breathings of Vetal Beaulieu—his anger boiling within him, and seeming to steam through his nostrils.

When the document was finished, Roi went out of the room, and called to the waiting men below stairs.

"This is the last will and testament of Vetal Beaulieu," explained the lawyer, when Condon, Whynot, and the others had filed in. "Not that M'ser Beaulieu has any intentions of dying right away, but he feels that he ought to prepare his affairs as a business man." He thus answered the astonished queries in their eyes. "You are called up here to sign as witnesses. We may as well have all of you on the paper."

One by one they came to the table and signed, each writing slowly, and peering at the document, to get a hint as to its provisions. They obeyed Roi's nod toward the door, and went out.

"Now to go back to what we were talking about, Vetal," said the smuggler. "We've agreed, eh, that it's no use to argue with Evangeline? She isn't a girl who can be argued with."

The memory of that night in Monarda Clearing came back to Beaulieu. He could see her as she stood before him—her soul dominating him through the windows of those flashing eyes—abasing him—frightening him.

"She is not like the Acadian girls who obey—she talked to me——" he began to wail, but Roi checked him brusquely.

"I say she is not to be argued with. She wants to have every one else do exactly as she says. She has foolish notions. She lived all her life in a convent, and needs a little practical experience. She will settle down after she gets married. So her father and I have decided that she had better get married, Louis."

Roi understood the mercurial temperament of Vetal. The man needed the constant impetus of a stronger will—the support of plausible excuse for action in this difficult matter which had faced him in his family. It was plain that Roi was now talking more for the strengthening of Vetal's resolve than for the enlightenment of the lawyer. A sympathetic droop of the attorney's eyelid testified his understanding.

"I was perfectly willing to go about this marriage in the usual way—banns, a parade up the center aisle, and all the rest! But no, she stood out against her father and myself, and ran away to be foolish along with the Yankees. So her father and I have decided that if it isn't to be a church wedding it shall be a civil affair—and that you shall marry us, Louis. She has been promised to me—her father has come along to see her married, all due and proper, and under those circumstances we'd like to know whose business it will be if we do get married?"

"It is not a good place for any girl where she is now," Blais informed the father. "It is especially bad for an Acadian girl. After she is married and settled nicely with her husband she will be glad that you came to assert your authority. In the end it will come out all right."

"Those who have witnessed the will shall witness the wedding," stated Roi grimly. "And the wedding is set for to-morrow night. I hope there are no fools in Attegat who will forget themselves, and fall under the feet of the wedding party."

"They will not laugh at me behind my back after to-morrow night," declaimed Vetal. "I shall show this border that I can run my own family."

From a distance came the lugubrious wailing of hounds. It was a low, mournful ululation. To a superstitious mind it carried sinister portent; even the wise have found ominous meaning in that mysterious note in a dog's howl.

Blais folded the will, placed it in an envelope, and sealed it. Vetal's hand trembled when he took the document.

"That is not a good sound for a Beaulieu to hear," he muttered. "It means bad things."

"Folks will laugh at you behind your back and to your face, too, if they ever find out that a plain hound dog backed you down," sneered Roi. "What are you going to do with that paper?"

Vetal wrinkled his brow, and pondered.

"I think," he said at last, "I'll give it to Felix Cyr. He has a safe. He shall put it there. I do not like that sound. It is not good to hear. My grandfather told me it is not a good sound for the Beaulieus."

He trudged out of the room with his head down.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE TRIALS OF A KNIGHT-ERRANT.

On the slope of the long hill, above the Temiscouata portage, Norman Aldrich, walking his horse under the fluttering beech trees—for the afternoon was hot—met a curious procession. A tall, gaunt man stalked along, his head bent gloomily. At his heels in single file trailed seven hounds, who were as gaunt as he, and, with their sagging jowls and their pendulous ears, presented an aspect twice as melancholy. Their tails hung listlessly, and their tongues sweated hot drops upon the dusty highway.

"Dave Roi killed one—there were eight yesterday," stated the gloomy man. He halted when he came up to the officer, and he had begun without preface. "There were eight of the best hounds that ever snuffed a trail. Four of them yappers—four of them howlers. He killed the best howler because he howled under the window—and he had reason to howl, for Bullhead Cyr wouldn't open his tavern to us. I told them to howl—and Dave Roi killed one. And that will make it bad for Dave Roi some day."

He pulled a man's glove from his coat pocket, and shook it above his head.

"That is Dave Roi's glove. They can take a scent from that glove, and follow it through Gomorrah, across the brimstone fires. Some day he will be sorry that he killed that hound."

He plodded on, and the dogs plodded as dolefully as he. He had begun without preface—he ended without further explanation.

Aldrich stared after the procession with some interest. The name of Roi had added to his interest. But he did not speak to the man. There seemed to be nothing he could say.

He walked his horse on down the slope.

Far ahead of him, where the highway turned abruptly over the opposite hill, he could see the iron post which marked the boundary between the countries.

Another man was marching along the road toward him, leading a saddled horse. This person was alone. When he came opposite, Aldrich whirled his horse sharply into the highway, and, leaning down, rapped the man's breast with the butt of his riding whip.

The man yelped angrily.

"Ah, you are not wearing your tin waistcoat to-day, Mr. Whynot," said the officer. "I scarcely expected you would be wearing it across the line in broad daytime, but I thought I'd make sure."

"I do not do all the things the liars and the sneaks along this border say I do," retorted Whynot insolently. "You have no right to meddle with a man who is traveling along this road, minding his own business."

"I have a right to examine any man—especially a man who makes a business of smuggling."

"Why don't you go where they are really smuggling? Why aren't you up where the Red Lane is open for to-night? Afraid to be there, I suppose. Rather stay down here where it is all safe—holding up innocent men who are going about their own affairs, eh?"

"You are giving me a tip, are you, Mr. Whynot?" inquired Aldrich sarcastically. "I'm much obliged."

"No, it isn't a tip. I'm not telling you where the Red Lane is. But I know it isn't here. Be a coward and stay here,

if you want to. It's a perfectly safe place."

"Don't try that talk on me," cried the officer angrily. "I'm no child. Your boss Roi's wild-goose chases haven't fooled me yet."

"You play the lone-hand game, tumble in by accident, and then tumble out again," sneered Whynot. "Let's see! I believe you were the chap who reviewed a procession of three thousand sheep down Monarda way a few weeks ago! Seeing that you were there on the job, you might be able to tell me how much duty you collected on those sheep."

Aldrich had got his temper under control. He did not show that the taunt stung him.

"That's an unsettled account, Mr. Whynot. Even the best concern lets some of its bills run a while. The collection will be attended to in good time. The United States government has a way of getting what belongs to it—including men."

He started his horse along. His cheeks were flushed a bit under the tan. He felt a touch of shame when he realized that he was bandying retorts with this rogue of the border.

"You'd better go north, where the real business is on to-night," the man called after him. "This time you are getting it straight. I'm giving you the right tip because I want to see you get into some real trouble. See?"

"Don't be silly, Whynot," replied Aldrich, not turning his head.

"Well, I can tell Roi that I've got that particular polecat located," muttered Whynot, trudging on through the dust.

He turned after a time, and stood watching the officer's leisurely progress down the hill.

"After what I've said he'll stay out and watch this road, here, if he watches anywhere," the spy decided. "Roi has him sized, all right. The minute he saw me he knew I was doing skirmish duty. Oh, yes, he'll stay out."

After arriving at that satisfying conclusion, Mr. Whynot hurried on, and at the top of the slope he mounted and cantered away.

Anaxagoras Billedeau, fiddling softly as his old horse plodded, smiled up into the officer's face when Aldrich met him at the foot of the slope.

"I think I'd rather have *my* fiddle than *yours,* monsieur of the customs," said Billedeau, by the way of jest. He pointed to the rifle which Aldrich carried across his shoulder. "It's not a merry tune one plays on your kind of a fiddle."

"It's a tune only the wicked will dance to," returned the young man, with a smile. "But let us hope I'll not be called on to play the tune."

The old fiddler regarded the customs officer shrewdly.

"It is not to my taste to be an informer, M'sser Aldrich," he said at last. "I have tried to keep out of the sad wickedness of the border. But I feel to tell you that Dave Roi stopped last night at Felix Cyr's tavern, and there were bad men of his gang with him. I do not know what Dave Roi plans to do. But I never knew him to do any good. So I warn you, m'ser of the customs. The hawks flocked last night for some purpose. I warn you because I know of some one whose heart would be broken if any harm comes to you."

"I thank you," said the officer.

"Perhaps I take the liberty."

"You do not, Monsieur Billedeau. You are a good friend. You have done much to show that friendship. Evangeline loves you. I respect you. Both of us are grateful to you."

"With Dave Roi last night was Vetal Beaulieu—Vetal Beaulieu, full of anger and violent words. With the two of them was young Attorney Blais, of Attegat—and they all talked long in a room by themselves. I do not know of what they talked. I did not spy. It may have been of smuggling."

"Yes, it may have been of smuggling," admitted Aldrich, sudden apprehensiveness wrinkling his forehead.

"It may have been of something worse, monsieur officer. Perhaps Vetal Beaulieu would not come into the north to smuggle. I have been thinking so as I have ridden along to-day." He put up his hand, and ticked off the three stubbed fingers which he extended.

"Dave Roi, Vetal Beaulieu, Attorney Blais! I have been thinking much. This morning Roi sent his men away. The men have come across the line by different roads. Ahead of me by this road came Zealor Whynot. It does not look like smuggling. I have not a wise head for plots. I do nothing except fiddle for the poor folks. I am glad I have seen you to tell you of these things. You may understand."

While Billedeau had been talking the young man had been staring at him, perplexity in his face. This news sounded ominous. This conjunction of individuals at Cyr's place, within reaching distance of Attegat, had a sinister significance, which oppressed him more and more as he pondered.

"Where are Beaulieu and Roi?" he asked.

"They were still at Cyr's when I came away. They have horses and a buckboard. Roi's men went one by one, along the different roads."

The fiddler had delivered the little stock of his information. He picked up the reins. He eyed Aldrich wistfully, as though he hoped the officer's superior knowledge of the ways of guile could translate what had been told him.

"I shall set my mind upon what you have said, M'ser Billedeau. It means something—this meeting at Cyr's. We shall find out what it means."

Billedeau hesitated, displaying the reluctance of one who fears that his interest may become presumption. He had heard Evangeline Beaulieu's story of the persecution of her by David Roi; he had heard the passionate declaration of Norman Aldrich's love in the clearing of Bois-De-Rancourt. His understanding of the situation spurred him to speak.

"There is some business Dave Roi and Vetal Beaulieu have together in these days. It is not smuggling. I think you know what that business is, m'ser."

"I understand," acknowledged the young man bitterly.

"I know the sad things along the border as well as the jolly things. I live among the people in their homes—and I know! I do not tell the stories of the sad things as I ride along, monsieur of the customs, for that would be to spread the scandals. This thing, though, I do tell you. Love for a girl can make a young man strong. Hatred of a rival can double his strength. But when he loves the girl, and hates the rival, and then knows that the rival is a renegade who is bringing to her shame and misery—ah, then that young man may fight for her like ten men. So I must tell you what I tell you."

The eyes of the old fiddler blazed under the knotted gray brows.

"Away over in the Codiac Settlement there is a girl of the Macpherson family, and Dave Roi took her for his wife by word of mouth before her people. They tell me such marriages have been made in Scotland where the Macphersons lived long ago. I do not know. Dave Roi sneers, and says outside that it is no marriage. But poor Bessie Macpherson holds a baby on her knees, and thinks she is Dave Roi's wife. I have been in the Macpherson house. I know."

"The dirty dog!" Aldrich gasped. Till now he had not thought of Evangeline as in real danger of contamination at the hands of Roi. He had not believed that the man would dare, or the father would go to positive extremes in the matter of the marriage that had been contemplated. Evangeline had seemed safe there in the north. But these times were not the old times of law-abiding placidity. Even peaceful Attegat—parish of the good Père Leclair—was in tumult. Yet an attempt to coerce a girl into marriage, even though the father favored the union, would be such a rash undertaking that Aldrich had never considered this contingency as possible.

Now his suspicions and his angry fears flamed suddenly. He wondered why he had not realized that Dave Roi had never been accustomed to allow any considerations to stand in the way of the gratification of his passions. In this instance, having the backing of the father, would he show man's honor in regard to the wishes of the girl? Aldrich knew he would not. He cursed his own stupidity in leaving Evangeline unpro-

tected. He was like a man who was suddenly awake.

"I say again, I think it is for no good that Vetal Beaulieu and the man he has picked out for his girl are up here," stated the old fiddler. "What to do I know not. But I have told you the truth, m'ser. I think the strength is in your two arms, after what I have told you."

Yes, and the hot flame of love was in his heart, Aldrich told himself. He had understood her so well from the first—had so clearly seen her repugnance for the swaggering Roi—that the thought of a rival had never disturbed the sweetness of his affection for her. In spite of the distressing contretemps at Bois-De-Rancourt, their love had been an idyl. He was sure of her loyalty, even though their circumstances imposed long waiting upon them. The pure and placid romance of the attachment had overshadowed the recalcitrance of Vetal Beaulieu and the sensual wooing by Roi. He had been sure of her heart. Other considerations had not weighed.

Now all was changed. He was convinced that lustful passion threatened her. A satyr's love, sanctioned by her father, pursued her.

The spur of primal instinct roweled Aldrich's soul. The female he had chosen for his mate was in danger of violation. His fears argued with him now: There could be only one errand which would bring Beaulieu and Roi north, dispatching their emissaries ahead of them across the border. Beaulieu had determined to take his daughter!

Without stopping to debate the question of paternal rights versus the claims of love, Norman Aldrich promptly determined that Beaulieu should not carry her away where she would be exposed to persecutions by the libertine who coveted her.

Back to Attegat—back to Evangeline, if danger threatened—there seemed to lie his duty.

"Thank you—and adieu, M'ser Billedeau," he said, haste in his tones. "I shall act on what you have said!"

He whirled his horse and clattered away up the slope. His plan was not clear in his mind. He really had no definite knowledge that danger threatened the girl. Therefore, circumstances must govern.

Billedeau had warned him that spies had been sent along the highways. Whynot was ahead of him. He decided to be cautious. He turned off the road into the forest, making his way by mossy footpaths and by bush-bordered lanes which lumbermen had used. The afternoon sun was low, and the shadows were deep under the trees, but he knew the hidden ways through the forest, for he had traveled them at times when caution had counted for more than haste.

Even the precipitancy of a lover must defer to prudence. At sunset he dismounted at a brook, and ate his bread and meat while his horse cropped the grass of a little clearing. The ride to Attegat, by the winding paths and devious lanes he had chosen, was no task for a weary and hungry horse.

It was dark in the forest when he swung himself into the saddle. Progress was slow after he started. There were rotting logs across the way, and the woodland vistas were puzzling in the gloom. In the silence of the night the fires of his imagination were alight. All at once the panic of haste took possession of him. He blamed the caution that had inspired him to avoid the spies. To be sure, knowledge of the whereabouts of a man who would seriously threaten their designs would be valuable to Vetal and his companions, and such reflection had caused Aldrich to leave the highway.

While his horse floundered along he tried to console himself by the thought that, lacking information as to their plans, he needed to employ stealth. The spectacle of him pounding along the highway in broad day on the road to Attegat would have put his foes on their guard. But after a time he was not consoled by that thought. He cursed his folly aloud. Why, he had gone upon this business of the heart, this knight-errantry for the sake of the girl he loved, just as he would have started on a quest for smugglers! The obsession

of his occupation had been too strong. He had employed the methods of a sleuthing customs deputy in an affair where he had the right to stand forth and demand and enforce protection of the girl he loved even from her own father; in his new exaltation he decided that he had this right. For Vetal Beaulieu had promised her to a licentious scoundrel. Without question—and now this conviction came to him with full force—the two were in the North country for the one purpose of carrying her away to settle her future—as Roi's wife. And he was wasting his time dodging trees and wallowing through tote-road sloughs, playing the game of trying to outwit an adversary when the occasion needed action!

It is said that the night brings counsel. In the gloom, as his horse made the best of its way through the woods, thoughts had been racing through the mind of Aldrich. The affair of Evangeline Beaulieu took new form. With force that was telepathic the consciousness came to him that he was wanted in Attegat.

By following the sinuous course of the lanes he knew that he could arrive there unobserved. But—to repeat—the panic of haste took possession of him all at once.

The highways from across the border came into Attegat like fingers converging to the palm.

Aldrich was between two of those fingers.

He leaped off his horse and took the bridle rein. The work he had ahead of him just then was not a horseback job. He would be obliged to desert lanes and paths, and plunge straight through the woods to the nearest highway. When he left the route he had chosen, he had nothing except sense of direction to guide him. Had it been day he could have found a tote road or lumber lane leading out to the highway. In the night, among the trees, the vistas deceive.

He thrashed his way through bushes, waded across brooks, and the horse followed at the end of the rein. Now and then, when the treetops thinned, he took a fresh look at the North Star, and rushed on. It was slow work, the best he could make of it. There were battlements of ledges where he was obliged to make detours on account of the horse. Every now and then ravines forced him to retrace his steps. He was headed straight across broken country—and the lanes had followed the lines of least resistance. But he did not dare to turn too far from the direct course, and over and over he risked his neck and the limbs of his horse in making a climb or a descent. In places the crowns of the black growth were so thick that he could not see the sky, or find his guide, the North Star. Therefore, he lost his way on such occasions.

While he struggled on he cursed himself for folly, inefficiency, and lack of all qualities a man ought to have. His hands were bleeding from contact with the sharp rocks, his face was gashed and smarting from thrusts of twigs; an occasional and piteous whinny from the horse informed the officer that the animal was having its own troubles.

The panic which assails one who feels that he is late for the duty which calls him does not aid in accomplishment. Aldrich fell here and there—he rolled, tugging along his much-enduring horse, and when at last he burst from the forest into the starlit highway, staggering through the wayside alders, bleeding, tattered, panting, he was far from feeling like a hero of any occasion.

He was a disgusted, overwrought young man, blazing with the fury of impatience, hot with the fires of apprehension on behalf of one whom he loved with all his soul, and for whom he desperately feared. He did not dare to look at his watch to discover how many valuable hours he had wasted in what he had determined would be a cautious sortie in the woods. He did not take the time to wipe the sweat and blood from his face. He leaped into the saddle, and sent his horse away on the jump before he found his stirrups.

"By the gods, after this when I know I'm right I'll go the straight way to a thing and go on the gallop," he shouted to the sky above him.

Therefore, out of that travail in the night-shrouded forest came a resolution which was worth the toil—and which served him well in certain other adventures of that stirring evening.

He rode toward Attegat, his face close to the flying mane of his horse, encouraging the animal with pat of the hand and crooning word. He did not look to right or left in search of the spies of Dave Roi. His eyes were ahead—his heart was leaping toward Madame Ouillette's cottage in Attegat. That he was too late—that the spies were no longer required—was a thought which seared his soul!

CHAPTER XV.

THE SEVEN DOGS OF WAR.

The village of Attegat lay hushed under the stars. The impetuous rush of Aldrich's horse along the street to the square awakened the echoes—nothing else. The folks went to bed early and slept soundly in Attegat.

In the square the officer halted his sweating horse at the mossy trough, and the animal thirstily drove his nose into the water to his eyes. Then there were no other sounds than the eager suffling as the horse drank, the tinkle of the little stream from the wooden spout, the tired murmuring of nestling doves in the eaves here and there. The windows of the houses were blank and dark. In Père Leclair's church the altar light glimmered weakly—the only spark that illumined the darkness.

Aldrich allowed the dripping horse to drink but little—both prudence and impatience governing him.

He rode toward Madame Ouillette's house. Yes, there was one more light in the village. It was in Madame Ouillette's window. He saw it when he turned the corner and began the ascent of the hill. The gate was open. He dismounted, and led his horse to the door, and he heard steps hurrying within after he rapped.

It was Madame Ouillette who opened.

"Ah," she cried, blinking sleepily at the night outside, seeing but dimly, "you have come back, then, Mam'selle Evangeline! I have waited. I have worried."

"Is Mam'selle Evangeline not here?" he gasped. "I am Norman Aldrich. When did she go away? Where is she? Speak quickly, madame!"

Agonizing fear quivered in his tones. He set his hands on either side of the door and leaned to her, stammering more questions.

"Her father came. Ah, yes, he was her father. She called him that. She went out of doors to talk with him. She has not come back. He was her father," she repeated, quieting her own misgivings. "So I did not worry. But I have been wondering why she has not come back."

Aldrich groaned. "Why did you allow her to go? Why did you not give alarm? They have stolen her. It is a damnable plot."

"But it was her father," insisted Madame Ouillette. "Who has the right to step between a father and his girl?"

In that tumult of his emotions the woman's remark was like a blow in the face. Who had the right? Then he thought of Dave Roi, and that thought was like a blow of the whip across the flanks of a race horse. For him it was no longer a matter between Vetal Beaulieu and his daughter—it was a matter between Roi and a man for whom Evangeline had declared her love.

"Do you know nothing more?"

"No, m'ser. But tell me what——"

He did not wait. She screamed frantic queries after him as he galloped away.

In the middle of the village square a dim figure stood with arms upraised. The gesture was so compelling—so appealing—that he reined down his horse. The man was Notary Pierre Gendreau.

"I heard the horse's hoofs when you hurried past. 'Trouble—trouble' they seemed to say. I guessed it might be you, M'ser Aldrich. You have found it out for yourself, then?"

"I have found out that Vetal Beaulieu has been here to-night, and taken away his daughter," blurted the young man. "Is that what you mean, notary?"

"I do not mean that—I did not know of it. But this is what I know. I am a notary. I have business with the town clerk of Attegat at times. I am entitled to inspect his records. Intentions of marriage between David Roi and Evangeline Beaulieu have been entered on those books. Yes, and the license has been issued. I saw the names there today."

Aldrich reeled on his horse. The notary peered up at the face, that was ghastly white in the starlight—lined here and there by the blood from the wounds the lashing twigs had dealt.

"It seemed to me like mischief," faltered the old man. "I know Dave Roi. He is not a fit husband for a girl. But I did not think Vetal Beaulieu would do what you have said."

"All of us are fools!" declared Aldrich hotly. "We have let an innocent girl be dragged out of this village. She is in the clutches of the worst renegade on this border. Where have they taken her? What is happening to her?"

He spurred his horse in his frenzy, holding the reins tight, and the animal spun around in a circle on scuffling feet. To right and left and all about, Aldrich directed agonized glances, as though he were trying to decide which direction to take.

"They can't make her marry him. She hates the wretch. Such things cannot be done," he choked.

"When men are determined and desperate—and a father is present and consents, a great deal can be done," stated the notary sadly. "I see the hand of Louis Blais in this. He has the right to perform marriages. Yes, a great deal can be done when men are desperate and dishonest."

He was talking to a madman.

Aldrich leaped off his horse, and went down on his knees in the dust of the square. He put his face close to the ground. He stared with filming eyes at the crisscrossing of wagon tracks. He realized that such efforts to gain clews were worse than useless. But he was not in a state of mind to use reason. Oh, to find some sign which would show him which way they had taken her! To see one rut fresher than the rest, which would afford a hint!

"How did they come? How did they go?" he gasped. "Did you not hear them, notary? Was there not a cry for help? You heard *me!* Why didn't you hear *them?* You must have heard a horse—a wagon—something!"

"No, I heard nothing. Wagons come and go here in the night. I do not notice them. But your horse galloped—you hurried—and I knew the names had been entered on the clerk's books, and I had been worrying."

Aldrich struggled to his feet.

He brandished his arm above his head. His lips were rolled away from his teeth.

"Oh, if I were only a hound, instead of a man just now! I would follow on my hands and knees. I am good for nothing. I have let them steal her," he raved.

Notary Gendreau folded his arms in the cloak which he had thrown over his night gear, and wagged his head sympathetically. But, having no suggestions to offer, he kept silent. There were four roads out of Attegat, besides the main road to the south. Suggestions would be guesswork.

"No, they would not have gone toward Monarda," the officer burst out, answering certain mental calculations which the notary himself was revolving. "Roi is a coward. He would not take the road on this side of the river. He has gone back toward the border. Oh, God in the heavens, tell me which road he took!"

He lifted his face to the stars. In the stillness there was the sound of tinkling water from the trough near by; the doves still nestled and mourned.

Then came another sound—the sound of plodding feet. Out of the gloom a man emerged. At his heels followed dogs, dim shadows in the night. Aldrich recognized him. This was the terse individual of the seven hounds, and the memory of what he had said concerning Dave Roi flashed before Aldrich like a lightning thrust across black night.

The officer rushed to meet the man. He seized him by the coat lapels. He

shook him, and the man fairly barked his alarm as he tried to jerk himself away.

"But listen, man, listen!" pleaded Aldrich, babbling like a lunatic. "This is more than life or death. It is love—it is saving a pure girl from damnation. You have boasted of your dogs. Listen, man! You have said they hate Dave Roi. He has stolen a girl. He is going to—going to—but it isn't marriage! It is ruin for her. It is dirty outrage. This is Notary Pierre Gendreau. He will tell you. I am mad! I know it. But listen, man."

He went on incoherently, but the solemn individual began to listen with interest. Notary Gendreau added a word now and then. The hounds sat on their haunches, tongues lolling, their eyes shining with red-and-green fires.

"You said they would follow Dave Roi. Send them after him. Name your price."

"Hold on a minute, mister. If it's for the reason you say, and Dave Roi is the man, there ain't any price to this thing. Did I say they would follow him? Yes, they *will* follow him. Even if he has *flown* away from here, instead of walked or rode, those dogs will follow him. What are you going to do to him when you catch him?"

"Send your dogs ahead of me," Aldrich gasped. "What does a man do when he is saving the girl he loves?"

"I see you carry a rifle on your back. If I trust seven of the best dogs in the world to you, can you protect 'em? That's what I want to know. I realize pretty well what you will do for the girl. Will you do just as well for my dogs?"

"As long as I have a cartridge left!" declared Aldrich, with passion.

"Let me look at you!" The man took Aldrich by the shoulders, and studied his face by the light of the stars. He saw a countenance that was pale, rigid, bitterly determined, and the eyes blazed with fires that made the investigator blink.

"I reckon you mean business, mister," he admitted. "And now that I have met up with a man who really means business, and proposes to make Dave Roi 'the business,' I'm ready to do my part. I have been wondering why I kept on walking to-night. But something told me to walk—and I walked. I've found out why."

He released the officer, and drew an article from his pocket. It was the glove he had previously shown Aldrich. He held it above the heads of the attentive dogs, as high as he could stretch his arms, and uttered a peculiar and shrill cry. They replied hollowly, and came crowding around him.

"Get on your horse, mister," he advised, "for when they start, they start strong. And remember that yell! A last word!" He looked up at Aldrich, who had mounted with alacrity. "I'll be here waiting for you when you bring back my dogs—and remember that you're to bring seven. Remember the yell! They'll follow you back after you give it."

"You will be at my house yonder," stated Notary Gendreau. "I offer you bed and hospitality, m'ser."

The man drove the glove down upon the ground, under the noses of the hounds, with all the strength of his arms.

"That's the hellion, boys! Get him!"

The hounds bumped their heads together, snuffing eagerly. Then they separated, and ran to and fro, their ears lapping the dust of the highway.

"I thought dogs needed the scent where a foot has trodden," suggested Notary Gendreau. "Roi must have ridden away."

"Those dogs don't," returned the owner curtly. "Not in the case of a man who went into the pack and hammered one of 'em dead. You've got a lot to learn about dogs, sir, and you can learn more from my dogs than you can from any others in the world."

One of the hounds uttered a tremulous wail.

"They're off!" cried the owner. "It's up to you, officer. They're my boys; take care of 'em!"

Aldrich did not reply. His thoughts were too busy. Fortune had shuffled and dealt him a strange hand on a sud-

den. The flying hounds were streaming ahead of him down the village street. He set his teeth and followed at a gallop.

Once or twice, in the main street of the village, the dogs slowed and shuttled from side to side of the highway, as though in momentary doubt, or because they desired to reassure themselves. Then they sped on. Below Père Leclair's stone house a narrow road led off to the north. The hounds ran tumultuously past the end of this road, yelped a shrill chorus of disappointment, and turned in a pack with such haste that they sprawled and skated in the dust. They swept into the branch road.

After that there was no hesitation. They ran furiously, and at their heels came Aldrich at the full stride of his horse. Out of the welter of his emotions rose then the happy consciousness that he had a horse who would not fail him in this crisis. He had tested the animal on many occasions. Aldrich understood by the nervous spring of the shoulders between his knees that his horse had forgotten the trials of the early evening in this new lark behind the hounds. The dogs were serving as pacemakers. Even a weary horse is stimulated by the spirit of a race.

But it settled into a long race. The narrow road was winding, and led them by devious ways. They coursed hills where the warm breath of the summer night fanned Aldrich's burning cheeks; then they swept down and into hollows where the air was moist and damp with the eerie chills of marshes and watercourses, and where white veils of the mist drifted over the alders. The dogs ran in silence. Aldrich kept his eyes on the flapping ears and the waving tails, and in his breast there began to glow a strange sense of affection and gratitude toward these zealous and unflagging guides.

He was a man and they were dogs, but the same spirit of vengeance animated all of them!

He did not ponder coolly as he rode. His emotions were white hot, and through them played one red flame; the devilish thought that Roi, sanctioned and abetted by the father, would set no bounds to his lustful desperation in making this girl his own. The affair might be mockery of marriage, but, nevertheless, it would be effectual in enslaving Evangeline Beaulieu. He knew the border—its loose code of action, its callous indifference, its habit of accepting what had been accomplished as being right and proper. And in the matters of women—the independence of girls—the border sentiment harked back to the old days, the sentiment of which Vetal Beaulieu had expressed when he declared: "I say to my wife 'go,' and she go—that is the way of the women of Acadia!"

So he rode with fury of haste and despair. He took no thought of what he would do when he arrived. He pondered no longer upon the question of his rights in the matter of Vetal Beaulieu's daughter. He considered not the miles, or the direction. Whether he had crossed the border or not—whether he was in the States or in Canada—he did not care. He was no longer an officer of the customs—he was a man seeking the girl he loved. He flung away his cap with the badge which made him respect the covenants of nations as to metes and bounds. That badge had halted him once when all his heart reached out for her, when he had been obliged by his official duty to respect that painted line on the floor of Beaulieu's Place—to halt there as though it were a wall reaching to the heavens.

He felt savage satisfaction when he hurled the cap from him. The act seemed like symbolizing his bursting of all the trammels of those hampering considerations which bind men to this and to that. The red blood of achievement streamed in his veins. He was the male seeking the mate who had been ravished from him.

"Hold up!" It was a hoarse hail from the gloom ahead of him. But the next moment he was past the man, whoever he was. The hounds had not hesitated. A fusillade of revolver shots chattered behind. But Aldrich minded the popping of protest not at all, and the bullets yipped harmlessly past him.

It was evident that Roi had posted a picket. Aldrich swung his rifle from his shoulder into his hand. A picket hinted that the scene of action was near at last.

Suddenly the hounds gave tongue. At the foot of the hill down which they were rushing was a house which was signaled by a light in an uncurtained window. A pale glow from an open door illuminated the yard which sloped from the road. Aldrich had time to note a buckboard, with horses attached, and there were several horses picketed near the fence. He saw this in a flash, as the camera sees, for the reins were loose on his horse's neck, and he was riding at the heels of the hounds at top speed.

The hounds gave tongue more vociferously! They announced that the quarry had been run to earth!

The bedlam of their voices was terrifying—it had broken out so suddenly in the night's silences! It was unexpected, deafening, weird clamor. The howls and yelps made a din that would have struck dismay to the heart of a company of grenadiers.

The dogs headed straight for the open door, and leaped through it headlong, tumbling over each other. The horses of the buckboard sagged back on their halters, broke them, and ran. Aldrich escaped being carried down in that rush only by swerving his horse, and at the same time he leaped to the ground. He had seen a man on the door stoop as he came up. This man darted to one side when the dogs rushed past him. It was evident that this charge of hounds had been too terrifying for his nerves. But Aldrich, leaping at their heels, was a man, and the outpost took courage, and came at him with an oath. The light revealed his identity to the officer. It was Zealor Whynot. The officer was running. With the whole force of his body behind his fist he struck Whynot as he hurdled the stoop, and the man crumpled and rolled off the steps to the ground.

This engagement was so summary that Aldrich did not lose his stride. He was down the hall and into the rear room of the house just as the first of the pack of frantic hounds hurled themselves against Roi.

Again that camera flash of vision for Aldrich—the agony of his anxiety imprinting that scene on his soul forever.

His first wild stare was for Evangeline.

He and his dogs had burst in there so suddenly that he had given the actors in the drama no time to leave their poses.

Vetal Beaulieu was holding his daughter's wrists. Even the tempestuous arrival of the hounds—this irruption of strange disturbers—had not availed wholly to alter the expresion of her face—the expresion with which she had confronted her persecutors before he came.

This was no despairing, surrendering, fainting maid on whom he gazed.

One look at her, and he understood!

She had been battling. It had been a fight against odds. She was one against them all, and helpless. Of the end of the single combat there could have been no doubt. Louis Blais was standing there, the marriage license in his hand, the words ready upon his tongue. Vetal Beaulieu, glowering, determined—his pride, his money, his peace of mind at stake—clutched her wrists, and had sworn that she should marry the man to whom he had promised her. In the end she must have been overwhelmed, but when Norman Aldrich burst into that room she was battling with all the fierce resolution, the strength of soul, the stubborn ardor of her Acadian forbears. Upon her cheeks flamed the battle flag her undaunted soul had set there. Her eyes, when they met his, were filled with the fires of bitter resolve.

Into the word "Evangeline!" he put all the love, the joy, the encouragement, the hope that human voice can compass in thrilling tones. She heard and understood. Her look of faith in return rewarded him—gave him the fierce valor that makes no account of odds. All in that one instant he saw and comprehended.

The hounds were battering themselves against Roi. They did not rend and tear. That is not the nature of hounds

with men. They leaped singly, in twos, and in threes. In that small room the roar of their howls beat upon the ears with distracting violence. Sound alone would have been sufficiently terrifying. But it was plain that the smuggler expected that they were leaping at him to set their teeth in his flesh. He was screaming in mad fright.

He curved his arms before his face. He kicked wildly. But the dogs yelled and leaped and drove themselves against him, pounding him against the wall, spattering his convulsed face with froth and spume from their slavering jaws. Blais endured the astounding scene for a moment, and then sprang over the swirling mass of dogs, and dashed out a window with his foot.

There were several other men in the room, and they followed Blais when he threw himself out of the window. Some one had yelled the frantic warning that the dogs were mad. That fear routed Roi's supporters more effectually than clubs and rifles would have done.

"You are cowards—you are all cowards!" screamed Vetal, his own fears giving him the sudden, fictitious courage which weak men show when they are at bay. He released his daughter's wrists. Aldrich had leaped in their direction.

"You have no right," shrieked Vetal, but the furious young lover was in no mood to argue over again with Vetal Beaulieu that matter of rights.

"To my horse! Quick! To my horse!" Aldrich thrust the girl on her way even as he spoke. "I'll follow!"

The next moment, using his rifle as he would handle a bat stick, he struck the lamp, and sent it whirling through the open window. In the sudden, black darkness the howling of the dogs was more awful, more stupefying. The noise in those close quarters fairly made the brain reel.

The flabby publican clutched the officer in the darkness.

"Here he is, Dave! I have him! Kill him!"

Time was precious. Only seconds had elapsed. The surprise had been complete and effective. The conspirators were in confusion for the moment. Aldrich realized that he must not delay then, even for the sake of satisfying his very natural inclination to square his score with David Roi. But when Roi came dashing forward, fending off the dogs, striving to reach the door, Aldrich, though the gloom was like a pall, sensed the proximity of his hated foe. He threw Vetal off, and the next moment felt that sweet satisfaction which goes back to those primal days when the mind of man was not acute enough to win its comfort from mere moral victories; he felt his naked fist against the flesh of the scoundrel who had tried to steal a woman—and he heard the scoundrel's body go down in a corner of the room—and then he decided that his business in that locality did not require any more of his personal attention.

His arms ached to feel her—to lift her to his breast. He wanted to make sure of her. After the agony of his fears for her safety, only the assurance that she was held against his breast would satisfy him. Such was the impulse which sent him racing back into the night outside.

The man beside the stoop was rolling and moaning. He was surely out of the fight, but above the din of the dogs Aldrich could hear the voice of Blais in the rear of the house, rallying those who had escaped with him through the window.

The lover realized that a convent-bred girl, even though she were a girl of the border, must lack the experience as a horsewoman that would be needed in that crisis.

She was waiting for him beside his panting horse. The poor brute had performed his full task for that night. Among the three horses picketed in the yard, his quick eye singled the sturdy horse which Roi rode up and down the border. He ran and flung himself upon the animal, and leaned and loosed the others. They had been rearing and neighing in fright ever since the advent of the hounds. They did not need the kicks and yells he gave them. They bolted, and on their heels he swung his new mount, and caught up the girl. She clung to him, and, as he started away, he

imitated the shrill call with which the gaunt man had apostrophized the hounds. He had given their owner his man's pledge. His own horse was cantering beside him, whickering plaintive assurance of loyalty.

"My darling!" he gasped. "Hold tight! We're safe!"

But at that moment he felt the thud of a bullet against flesh and bone of the horse between his knees. The crack of a rifle came to his ears an instant later. Some one had fired from the house. In spite of his desperate effort to save the fall, he and his burden rolled upon the turf of the yard when the horse went down. But that whicker of loyal pledge had meant something. When Aldrich came to his feet his own horse had halted. The girl was on her knees now. His temples cracking with the effort, he tossed her into the saddle.

Once more he unslung his rifle. That bullet had declared their code of conflict.

"Go on! Hurry on!" he commanded the girl. "Cling to his mane. For God's sake hold tight. Go on!"

Then he began to fire.

He did not take aim. He clutched his rifle and pumped the lever, cursing them, threatening them. He did not know whether they fired again. He could not hear. The hounds went racing past, and he turned and ran after them. When he overtook the horse, he grasped the saddle, and forced the animal into a trot by slaps and adjurations. He did not dare to task the horse by mounting. The palpitating flanks under his palm showed that the brute was laboring. But no man on foot could overtake them, for Aldrich, clinging to the saddle, was dragged along at a nimble pace. When he could run no longer, when his heart seemed bursting and his eyes were dim, and his throat was constricted as though an iron hand were set about it, he drew the loose rein.

Then he realized that a sound he had been hearing was Evangeline's voice. She was imploring, protesting, beseeching.

"I will not ride longer, Norman. My lover, my sweetheart, I will not ride. You are suffering. I am strong. I will run beside you."

But when she struggled and desired to slide from the saddle, he prevented her. He had taken her hands in his own, and now he walked beside the horse, holding them, pressing them, trying to tell her his joy and his love in that fashion—for he had as yet no breath for words.

The tumult at the foot of the hill either had called in the picket, or had sent him scurrying away in flight. He did not molest the little party which was making its retreat from the battlefield.

At last Aldrich pulled his horse to a standstill. He listened. There was no sound behind them. The panting of the hounds at his feet, the rustling of the night breeze in the trees above their heads, faint shrilling of insects in the wayside grasses—there was no more ominous sounds than these.

He babbled to her incoherently as he marched on, and she answered through sobs of thankful happiness.

Now and then he hurried the horse, and ran until fatigue mastered him—for he feared mischief might come suddenly from that silence behind them.

So they went on through the night, back toward Attegat.

When the horse walked, Evangeline caressed her lover's face with trembling palm, and dared once to lean and kiss his forehead. And once he stopped the horse and pulled her down upon his breast, and put into an embrace all the passionate longing of his love, and all the delirious thanksgiving of his soul.

"Oh, my father! My father!" she mourned at last. "I went out to him with love in my heart, Norman, for he told me that he had come to be my good father; he asked me to go with him to Père Leclair's, where he could confess his sins and make his pledge. Oh, Holy Mother, have pity on a poor girl whose father has become her worst enemy!"

She told him the pitiful story of how she had been carried away, her father's hand smothering her cries as they rode out of Attegat.

Aldrich soothed her as best he could, although in that stress of grief he real-

ized that words availed little. But in telling her of his love he was more eloquent. He forgot his weariness as he plodded on. Her hands were in his, and, when he drew her down to him, her lips pressed his with the ardor of a love which had been hallowed by the gratitude of a woman saved from worse than death by him that night.

So, although the first faint streaks of the dawn were in the skies when they came to the village of Attegat, he trod on briskly, for love animated him, the warmth of it flooded his breast, and nerved his limbs.

He eased her from the tired horse, and rapped upon the door of Père Leclair's stone house.

"They will not find you here, dearest. They will not dare to disturb you here. To-morrow we shall take counsel and make you safe."

"Who is below?" asked the voice of the good priest, his face at the window of the tiny gable.

"A poor little girl who seeks sanctuary, father. It is Evangeline Beaulieu. She has been in sad trouble. It will all be told to you."

Until the priest came to open the door, Aldrich stood with the girl folded in his arms, looking into the eyes she raised to his, her face lighted by the first rays of the gray dawn. And when they heard shuffling slippers in the hall, and Father Leclair's anxious hail to his old housekeeper, she put her arms around her lover's neck, drew his face to hers, and kissed him with lingering tenderness.

"I have said no words of thanks to you, my precious knight, my lord," she said. "I'll not profane a great deed with words. I'll live a life of thanks to you, of devotion. For I love you!" Her tones thrilled.

"Darling, a pearl of great price does not need to thank the man who is happy enough to possess it, if that man follows a thief who has stolen his pearl," he answered.

Then the door was opened, and he gave her into the care of the good father, releasing her hands tenderly and regretfully.

"It shall be told to you to-morrow, Père Leclair. It is a bad story about wicked men."

He kissed the closed door after she had gone.

He paced to and fro before the stone house until the light in the chamber where the old housekeeper had led her had been snuffed out. The patient horse waited, his weary head hanging in slumber. The dogs sat in a circle, eying this new master wistfully.

They followed at his heels when he trudged away down the village street. All was still about Notary Gendreau's house. But the tavern keeper of Attegat was astir, for one must be early at work around a tavern.

"Take those dogs to the stable along with the horse," directed Aldrich, to whom the landlord had bowed respectfully and cordially, recognizing a regular guest. "And look, Lajeunesse! Give them right now the best meal a dog ever ate. Dig deep in your ice chest. When the market is open go across and buy seven of the best bones in the shop."

He went along the line of hounds, and patted each on the head.

"Good boys!" he declared, and his voice broke with weariness and thankfulness. He added wistfully, not minding the landlord's curious scrutiny: "If I wasn't so dead tired I'd stay up and make an after-dinner speech to you."

"There's blood on your face—and by the looks there might have been some in your eye a while back this night," observed Landlord Lajeunesse. "You have catch some pretty bad smugglers, hey? You take the dogs to 'em, eh?"

"Yes," smiled Aldrich, as he turned to enter the tavern. "They were trying to run something more precious than rubies across the border."

CHAPTER XVI.

THE TRAIL OF VETAL BEAULIEU.

Aldrich rode to the edge of Father Leclair's garden plot, and the priest left his beets and came tiptoeing across the crumbly earth.

"Is she still asleep, Father Leclair?"

"Yes, my son. Mother Bissette has

been crawling about the house all morning, as carefully as a caterpillar on a vine. You see, even I tiptoe across the ground outside as I tiptoed indoors. Sleep will do much for her. Ah, my son, she is a brave girl! She has a heroine's spirit."

"You should have seen her when I found her, good father! All the rest of the horrible business of last night is pretty much nightmare. I came out of it as one wakes up from a bad dream. It has steadied me—remembering how she behaved."

The priest glanced furtively at a curtained window in the stone house.

"It was all very brave. It was like a page from a romance. She told me—and there was a wonderful light in her eyes when she talked of what you did—but I think you saw it there yourself, my son, before you parted from her. Yes, it was all very brave—but it is very serious. There were shots. It was battle, eh?"

"I had no other way out of it. I fired to keep them back. I fired high—at random."

The priest was regarding the officer with earnestness and some curiosity. Aldrich wore a riding suit of gray tweed. A felt hat had replaced his badged cap.

"I have been into my trunk at the tavern, Father Leclair. I am riding on my own business for a time."

He glanced in his turn at the window where the curtain was drawn.

"I do not think they will disturb her again, but——"

"She shall stay with Mother Bissette until there is less riot—less recklessness on this border," declared the priest, with decision. "Daytimes she will be safe with her scholars up there under the trees. Nights she shall be under the roof of the stone house. They will not attempt—they will not dare!"

Aldrich threw up his arm, and clenched his fist slowly.

"I have grabbed upon a thistle—I am going to crush it, Father Leclair. That is why I am riding on my own business. I am going to clear this matter up, now that I have started in on it."

Père Leclair peered up at him uneasily from under the brim of his broad hat.

"Only good fortune—a lucky accident—the hounds of a half-witted vagrant—gave me my chance to save Evangeline last night. I don't propose to have her tortured every hour of the day by anxiety—her nights full of fear. For myself, I don't intend to skulk. So I'm going to hunt up Vetal Beaulieu and make him understand that I have an honest man's right to love his daughter. The thing must be settled, Father Leclair."

The priest shook his head. "You have a young man's impatience—as an old man I fear it will lead you into trouble, my son."

"And yet," insisted Aldrich, "to leave this thing hanging as it is is intolerable. There can be no comfort for poor Evangeline nor peace of mind for me until I have seen Vetal Beaulieu. No, Père Leclair, I do not know what I'm going to say to him," he cried, replying to a look in the priest's eyes. "But after what happened last night I'm certain that my love for Evangeline will give me a tongue, at least; it has already given me courage and strength, good father. I may be imprudent in what I am going to do. But yesterday I came near wrecking my life and hers, too, by being prudent. I swore that after this I would go straight to a thing, and gallop hard. So I'm going to Vetal Beaulieu. These are not the sort of days when a man can persecute his own daughter and hand her over to a renegade. Tell her, Father Leclair, that I have gone to her father for the sake of both of us. I'm going to make him understand."

As though he feared that the priest might try to dissuade him, he slapped his horse and rode away, his eyes caressing the curtained window until he had turned the corner of the house.

Aldrich displayed no hesitation when he came to the narrow road which led to the north. He sent his horse cantering along its shady stretches. The sun was overhead, and his rifle was at his back, and determination was in his

heart. His face was haggard, for he had slept but little. Impatience had driven him early from his bed at the tavern. He felt that it was his duty to roll the burden of fear from the girl's heart. He sought Vetal Beaulieu at the place where he had seen him last, resolved to follow along his trail until he could meet him face to face, under the frank sunshine, for a man's talk.

Suddenly he met Attorney Louis Blais on the narrow road. That participant in the affair of the evening before was riding a horse whose galled shoulders showed that it was more accustomed to the plow than the saddle. Blais was sullen and uneasy when Aldrich halted him. He had not recognized the officer until they were almost side by side.

"Which way did Vetal Beaulieu go this morning, Mr. Blais?" inquired Aldrich curtly, and with the authority of one who intends to be answered.

"I haven't any information for you about Mr. Beaulieu or any one else," returned the surly lawyer.

"You will remember that I found you playing a strong part in a vile plot last night, sir. You'd better be civil. There is a bar association in this county, and decent lawyers won't stand for abduction."

"Look here! I was invited to perform a civil marriage. The license had been procured. The only surviving parent of the young lady was there to give her away. The affair was interrupted by a person who had not the least right to interfere. If that person now proposes to make talk about the thing, he'll show almighty poor judgment. How will that talk sound? He ought to realize that he has just as much reason to keep still as the aggrieved and injured parties." Blais delivered this angrily.

"I have important business with Beaulieu. I say, you'd better tell me which way he went."

"Not desiring to be a party to the assassination of Mr. Beaulieu by a person who seems to have motive and the intention," stated the attorney, with stiff insolence, going as far as he dared with this young man of the haggard face and the burning eyes, "I shall keep my mouth closed." His lips worked, however, and it was plain that he wanted to curse this hateful adversary with all the venom that was in him; he refrained with the usual caution of Louis Blais when he found himself up against odds.

He curbed his anger, and confined himself to stilted retort, as though he were addressing a court.

Aldrich had placed his horse across the narrow road.

"Why are you holding me up here?" demanded Blais. "Have you added highway robbery to the rest of your desperate deeds?"

The officer snapped scornful rejoinder, and rode on, resisting an impulse to slap Attorney Blais' sour face.

After a time Aldrich came to the house where the dramatic scene of the night before had been enacted. There was no sign of life there. The doors were open, the windows were bare of curtains, and much of the glass was broken. The appearance of the place showed that the house had been deserted for years. In the daylight he saw that the clearing had grown up to bushes. This was the lonesome place which had been chosen for the wedding of Evangeline Beaulieu! He rode close to the door, and peered in. Only dust, and decay, and silence!

He went on, pondering.

Blais had given him a hint that they who had been witnesses and actors in the affair did not intend to talk. Aldrich had not expected that they would. He understood, however, that the "stand-off" had created a situation which, as he had told the priest, was intolerable. Also, as he informed the priest, he was not sure what he would say to Vetal Beaulieu. He understood the prejudices of the man to their depths. But there was the story of Bessie Macpherson! He should demand of Beaulieu that the story be investigated. And he had decided that if Vetal Beaulieu did not take a father's proper attitude, after that, in this matter of the protection of a good daughter, he would know what to say in behalf of the love of Nor-

man Aldrich for Evangeline Beaulieu. Thus he pondered as he rode on—determined to hunt up Vetal Beaulieu for a talk, man to man.

He drew one comforting inference from the return of Attorney Blais to Attegat, unaccompanied. The band of conspirators had broken up. It was plain that they had no heart for further violent measures at that time. That Blais would serve them as a spy and adviser—that Roi was still determined to prevail—of those facts Aldrich was assured by his apprehensions. This was not truce—it was sullen delay. He felt that he had all the more reason for insisting on an interview with Vetal Beaulieu. He must impress on that obstinate parent that this was not a case of compelling a girl to obey a father's promise and command—it was willful wrecking of innocence and happiness.

As he reflected on the matter—as he remembered what the fiddler had told him, he could not believe that Vetal Beaulieu would persist in his determination in regard to the unspeakable Roi. Vetal Beaulieu, in spite of his grudges, his temper, his jealous ignorance, was Evangeline's father. The thought that he was such, and must have real affection for her under all his turbulent emotions, encouraged Aldrich as he journeyed and pondered. The man must listen to him! Sense and reason and regard for decency must prevail when a man is a father!

At last he came out of the narrow lane, and was on the broad Canadian highway.

Here and there, now at a forge, now of some wayside toiler, he asked for news of Vetal Beaulieu. He got no information. If Vetal had gone toward the south by the broad highway he had passed in the night, or had passed unobserved. But the men whom he asked eyed him with curiosity, and gossiped after he had passed on. Was not this one of the customs men without his uniform? What was Vetal Beaulieu of Monarda doing in the North country, and why was an officer on his trail?

Aldrich explored side roads. He asked questions with assiduity; the apprehension that he was leaving Beaulieu behind—that the father was between him and the girl for whose sake he had taken the road—disquieted him. He searched with care. He wanted to feel sure that Beaulieu was ahead.

But he got no information until he arrived at Cyr's tavern.

Aldrich had ridden widely—had searched deviously. The twilight shrouded the big hill when he came at last to Cyr's. That had been the rendezvous! He looked eagerly at the wayfarers who were smoking in the big room. Beaulieu was not there. Roi was not in sight. To be sure, he had scarcely expected that Roi and Vetal would hurry back to this place—but they had met there to plot—they might be there to wait for further opportunity.

Feix Cyr—"Bullhead" Cyr—shaggy and lowering—sat behind the little counter under which he kept his stock of liquors.

Aldrich had given his weary horse into the hands of the stableboy.

Cyr scowled, recognizing a foe, when Aldrich crossed the room. "It is late, but may I have supper, sir?"

"Maybe you can go and hunt up a maid and coax her to unlock the cupboard if you have money and a glib tongue," stated the landlord brusquely.

The officer leaned over the counter, and put an inquiry in low tones.

Cyr bellowed a reply which took all in the room into his confidence.

"No; M'ser Vetal Beaulieu of Monarda is not at my house this night." It was insulting disregard of a guest's desire to keep his affairs from the ears of others.

"Do you know whether he has gone toward home?" asked Aldrich, keeping his temper down and his voice low. "I know he has been at your house within a day or so."

"You will tell me what business you have with my friend, Vetal Beaulieu, before I tell you where he has gone," declared Cyr. "You do not wear that cap with the old hen of the United States on it this time, but I know you. Why do you chase my good friend

down the border?" He shouted this retort, looking at the men in the room with an air which suggested that Felix Cyr desired to show that he would never demean himself by holding secret conference with a customs man.

Aldrich straightened.

"I do not go around exposing the private business of M'ser Beaulieu and myself to all listeners, sir. I asked you a square question as politely as I could. I'd like a straight answer."

"My friend, Vetal Beaulieu, has gone away from here, and is very busy minding his own business. It is a good plan. It pays me, maybe you can make it pay you."

Aldrich turned away from the counter. His nerves were not in the best condition. The preceding hours of the night and the day had been too full of tribulation. He was afraid that if he remained longer at the counter, looking at Cyr, he would hop across it and cuff the puffy, scowling face.

"I don't know as there's any great secret about Vetal Beaulieu," remarked one of the men in the room, a bearded giant, who sat on the end of the "deacon seat" near the grimy wall of the room. "I met him a dozen miles or so below here to-day when I was driving up."

"I thank you," said the officer. "Can you tell me whether he was on his way home to Monarda?"

"I reckon your friend Beaulieu was headed for the hive," returned the bearded man, with a sneer in his laugh. "He had collected his honey. He was leading three horses behind his buckboard, and a half dozen cows were ahead of him. On the buckboard he had hens and shoats in crates. I get it from the people along the way that Friend Beaulieu had been realizing on his bills of sale," he went on for the benefit of his listeners. "He came down on folks who owed him in a state of mind where there was no arguing with him. If a man couldn't pay he took what there was in sight—even down to the children's pet bantams. If a man who owed him didn't have collateral in sight, Vetal left word that he would send an officer with an execution running against the body. He certainly was in a fine condition to do collecting without fear or favor. I'm glad I wasn't owing him anything. I would have had to walk. He would have had my team away from me."

Aldrich believed he understood what had provoked Vetal Beaulieu's rage against humanity in general. Helpless victims had been atoning vicariously because Vetal Beaulieu could not expend the frenzy of his fury on the man who had stirred all the gall of his unstable temperament.

"I don't know what the nature of your business with him may be," continued the informant ironically. "I believe I just heard you drop a gentle hint that no one had better ask you. But if it is anything that can wait, you'd better wait. You tackle him now, and you'll have to talk business between punches."

Aldrich went away thoughtfully to hunt up a maid who could be bribed to furnish him with food. He was not encouraged by the report the bearded man had given him.

He mounted his horse in the early morning, conscious that Felix Cyr was surveying him with suspicion and curiosity from under his shaggy brows. The sturdy landlord stood straddled on his porch, jingling the coins which Aldrich had just tossed into his palm.

"So you go to chase Vetal Beaulieu, hey?"

"I'll return your courtesy of last evening, sir. I am busy minding my own business. It is a good plan. Perhaps it will pay you to do so."

He was fully aware that Cyr shouted strong language after him, but he was not tempted to make retort. He was saving his man's spirit for Beaulieu, for after what he had learned he understood that he needed it all. He rode on resolutely, nevertheless.

After a time he came upon the trail of the vengeful creditor. That trail was twenty-four hours old, but it was still hot; men whom he asked concerning Vetal Beaulieu cursed volubly and pointed to the south. Yes, he had gone

that way! He had taken away the only cow—and the children had cried themselves to sleep last night. He had led away the horse, and how could the grass be mowed or the fields of potatoes be cleared of weeds? Yes, and how could the family go to church on Sunday? That man who would not listen to excuses or promises or prayers, he had taken bread from their mouths, and the comforts of their religion from their souls.

Complaints and threats and dolorous despair dinned Aldrich's ears as often as he ventured to ask if Vetal Beaulieu had passed that way. And he was coming back for the bodies of those men who could not pay! Ah, surely the devil himself had suddenly taken the form of Beaulieu of Monarda, and had set out to persecute the poor people! Aldrich listened and rode south, his hopes waning, but his determination growing bitterly strong.

The repetition of this grief and rage proved unendurable at last. The young man was sure that Vetal was headed for Monarda with his spoil. He had had a day's start, and, even though he would journey slowly, leading his horses and driving his cows, he must be near home, so Aldrich decided. He gave his horse loose rein, and asked no more questions. He took the shortest route to Monarda Clearing.

But it was late in the day when he arrived there. He had been forced to linger here and there by the wayside gates to hear men curse and women lament.

The windows of Beaulieu's Place were shuttered and barred. The big door was padlocked.

A cripple—a misshapen man with crooked legs and shoulders hunched to his ears—hobbled from the barn, a pitchfork in his hands.

"No, he is not at home yet," said the man, in the peevish tones of the dwarf, when Aldrich asked a question. "I cannot sell you drink. I have no key to the house. I live in the barn."

He hopped in out of sight with the celerity of a trapdoor spider, and slammed the tie-up door behind him.

The young man allowed his horse to crop the short grass of the yard, and sat down to wait. There was a bench just outside the door.

Thrushes lilted their twilight songs in the trees near by, there were bird calls in the deep woods that sounded like the tinkle of silver bells. The horse reaped his mouthfuls of grass with mellow rendings of the tender stalks, and stamped away the flies. All these sounds only accentuated the peaceful hush.

But it seemed to Aldrich that there was something ominous in the silence of this place, which was usually so noisy. Waiting outside the door of a friend's house, when it is empty, gives one a wistful sense of gloom; the vacant shell of an enemy's castle is more portentous. And the young man was straining his ears to catch the sound of Vetal Beaulieu's buckboard wheels. He had hoped to meet up with Beaulieu in the open—out among men where the presence of others would impress constraint upon both, compelling them to speak quietly, so that others might not hear, to act with discretion so that onlookers might not quote. The thought occurred to Aldrich that this meeting on Beaulieu's own ground might be a collision rather than a conference. He questioned his prudence in forcing such a contretemps. Then he took fresh hold on his determination, thought upon the woeful plight of Evangeline, beset by her fears of further violence, and settled himself upon the bench to wait.

The padlock showed that Vetal was not within. A little spider furnished farther proof. He had spun in the corner of the door, and was crouched in the center of his web.

The night drew on. The stars winked above the spruces, and the chill from Hagas Swamp came creeping across the clearing.

Aldrich realized that he was hungry. He strode to the barn, and rapped upon the tie-up door.

"I do not sell drink," snarled the dwarf from within. "I have no key."

"All I want is milk," declared the young man. "I will give you a half

dollar for a tinful with a bit of your bread."

After a time the man shoved the bread and milk through the half-opened door, snatched his coin, and slammed the portal savagely.

When the officer had eaten the frugal meal he smoked his pipe, and trudged up and down in front of the door, his thoughts busy with the protests, the arguments and appeals he would employ with Evangeline's father. The reflection that Roi might accompany Vetal did not intimidate Aldrich in his new spirit. His rifle was on his back, his soul was in arms, and he had demonstrated that he proposed to fight them according to their own code.

Furthermore, that they would go as far as actual violence when he faced them in a situation where the presence of the girl did not complicate matters, he did not credit. That other attack on him at Beaulieu's Place had been fomented by desperation, and the agent was a drink-crazed man. It had been an attack from ambush, and such deeds were rare on the border. If Roi came, so much the better! He would charge the scoundrel with his betrayal of Bessie Macpherson, and would challenge him to a denial in the presence of Vetal Beaulieu. So he tramped to and fro, and pulled savagely at his pipe, and waited. Now and then there was the sound of wheels on the road. But they who appeared did not stop. Even the straggling customers of the place seemed to know that the doors were shut, and that Beaulieu was away.

At the corner of the house he studied his watch by the light of the stars. Nearly ten o'clock!

While he pondered with watch in his hand, he heard the husky lowing of cattle down the road to the east. His man must be approaching. He waited in the shadows of the low building.

Cows came first. They dragged themselves wearily, and complained with deep-throated mutterings. There was only one man on the loaded buckboard. Horses jostled behind it at the length of halter ropes. Aldrich mounted, and rode forth to meet the wagon.

It was not Vetal Beaulieu, this driver. He was a young fellow, and he stuttered and his tones quavered when he replied to the officer's sharp questioning.

He admitted that he was Beaulieu's man, after he had incoherently denied that he was. He owned up that he was bringing Beaulieu's buckboard home, and that the cows were Beaulieu's, and the horses were Beaulieu's—but this information was wrung from him piecemeal.

"Look here, my man," said Aldrich, suspecting that he understood what this reticence signified. "I am not trying to prove a smuggling case against you."

"But you are an officer. I know you. You do not wear your cap—but I know you."

"I am attending to my personal business now. I am not on duty. I want to find your master."

"I don't know where he is."

"But where did you leave him? Why did you come on alone?"

"He was tired. He stayed to rest. He will come to-morrow—yes, I think he will come to-morrow."

But where Vetal Beaulieu had stayed, what house harbored him that night, urgent questioning did not elicit. The man was dogged, confused, indefinite. In vain did the officer protest that his business with Beaulieu was honest, had nothing to do with the customs, concerned a matter in which Vetal was interested. The fellow stammered evasions, and became querulously angry when Aldrich tried to pin him down. To only one declaration did he stick stubbornly! Vetal Beaulieu would not come to Monarda Clearing that night.

So Aldrich, muttering some uncomplimentary remarks, touched his horse with the spurs, and gave vent to his impatience by galloping away. The ominous stillness of that deserted house had got onto his nerves.

He rode back toward the east, along the road by which the man had arrived. He rode aimlessly, hoping that he would fall upon some information which would lead him to the man he wanted. His desire to meet Beaulieu and settle

the matters between them had been whetted by delays; circumstances and difficulties had not moderated his determination.

At least, he pondered, he could seek shelter somewhere along the road, and he could return to Monarda in the morning.

For some miles the forest hemmed the highway. There were no clearings, and no houses. Farther on he passed through a little settlement, but the houses were small and mean, and promised only wretched lodgings. He had come to Monarda by one road from the north; he decided to try another thoroughfare, for it was plain that he had missed Beaulieu's trail when he had given over asking questions.

The forest skirted this road also, and he went on slowly, favoring his horse.

The moon, pared to gibbous three-fourths, rose at last. He put his horse to the trot. It seemed silly quest, this search for Vetal Beaulieu in the middle of the night, when undoubtedly Vetal was snoring in some farmhouse; he decided to hurry on and seek lodging at the first house that seemed respectable.

The moonlight makes odd shadows in a woodland road.

He stared ahead of him at one turn, and was not certain that he had seen living objects. He peered more closely, and was sure that the objects moved. They passed into the woods at one side of the highway, and the glimpse he secured convinced him that he had seen two men on horseback. If they were men they had retired from the road at sight of him.

The shifty young man at Monarda had not satisfied Aldrich in regard to Beaulieu's movements. Men had passed the place while he had waited for the return of the publican. Perhaps in some manner Beaulieu had learned that an unwelcome caller was waiting before the barred door. It would be like Beaulieu to shirk an interview, the nature of which he suspected. If those were horsemen yonder they had displayed stealth. They were not the usual belated wayfarers of the countryside, proceeding on legitimate business.

These reflections and others hurried through the mind of the anxious officer. Beaulieu at Monarda, with open doors, and surrounded by his friends, might not be an easy man to approach for such an interview as Aldrich required of him. If that were Beaulieu, coming on horseback, he had believed that the return of the buckboard would send away a disappointed suitor. Yes, that would be like Beaulieu, the officer decided. That mode of procedure suited the pattern of the man. Aldrich dauntlessly proposed to himself to proceed on the supposition that this midnight skulker was Beaulieu. That was a good place to meet a man on the matter for which he had come—out under the stars, face to face in the open—that was the place for man's talk! He would be Vetal Beaulieu, the father, there, instead of Vetal Beaulieu, the usurer, the smuggler, the landlord of Beaulieu's Place!

Aldrich halted his horse.

"Ho, M'ser Beaulieu!" he shouted. "If that is you, sir, I have business with you!"

He listened while his voice echoed among the trees. He got no answer.

"It is important, sir. I have things to tell you."

He waited a few moments, and then rode ahead. He had certainly seen men on horseback! He kept on until he came to the place where he had seen them turn from the road. The moonlight showed the fresh tracks of horses' hoofs. There was no lane by which they could have made a detour. They must be near at hand. In his eagerness to fulfill his mission, Aldrich did not pause to weigh consequences.

"M'ser Beaulieu! I have come in friendly spirit! I tell you freely who I am. I am Norman Aldrich."

The men were near at hand. While he waited for a reply he heard the whicker of a horse.

"If I have made a mistake—if this is not M'ser Beaulieu, please tell me so, gentlemen. I will go on about my business."

Staring into the gloom of the trees, he saw the quick spurting of sparks

before the sounds reached him; then a revolver cracked spitefully, emptying its six chambers. It was such unprovoked, cowardly reply to his courteous pleadings that he could not muster voice to cry protest. No bullets reached him. It was probable that they were wasted in the trunks of the trees between him and the man who had fired. But the brutal, wanton intent of the unknown behind that revolver was plain. Such despicable ambush stirs the meekest to fury. His horse began to leap in panic, and Aldrich swung his rifle from his back.

He fired once, twice, thrice, and when his horse whirled and galloped on toward the north he let him run.

The senselessness of this encounter made him all the more furious. It was of a piece with the affair of the night before—blind battle in the dark. At least, these unknown miscreants had known at whom they were firing; he did not have that advantage. He felt a sort of grim satisfaction when he reflected that he had retorted in the same language they had employed. Matters were arriving at a pretty pass on the border when bullets took the place of words! It was borne in on Aldrich that he had come upon times and men of a sort the old days in Acadia had not known. He had been trusting too much in tradition; he had not believed that assassins were abroad in the land which had been so placid. He decided that discretion must supplement valor after that, even when a man's heart is hot and his love is spurring him.

When he had ridden a few miles, a pale light in a farmhouse signaled to him. He found a mother keeping vigil beside a sick child, and she permitted him to stable his horse, and she opened the door of the fore room to him.

He went to sleep wondering whether Vetal Beaulieu had been there among those trees, and had attempted that summary way of eliminating a prospective son-in-law.

But how that chance encounter, that random interchange of shots, would color his troubled affairs some day he did not dream or apprehend.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE BITTER WORD FOR ATTEGAT.

Morning—fresh, sparkling, sunbright morning—brings new counsel, and burnishes courage if courage has been tarnished by the shadows of the night before.

After breakfast at the farmer's table, Aldrich rode once more to Beaulieu's Place. He was sure that he would find the publican behind his truck. There would be ways to make him listen. The morning instilled that confidence!

But when Aldrich came to the clearing in the late forenoon, the padlock still dangled outside the door, the little spider had increased the size of his web, and it was clear that Beaulieu had not come home.

The cripple snarled through a crack in the tie-up door, and corroborated what the padlock and the spider's web suggested. The sullen young man had gone away, so the cripple stated.

Aldrich sat down on the bench and waited. Men came past, and eyed him with curiosity. Of those who came from the east he inquired whether they had any news of Vetal Beaulieu. No, they had no news. They merely wished that Beaulieu would come back and open up his place so that a thirsty man would not find the Monarda Road so long and dusty.

There were few passers-by. In the summer days of growing things men were in the fields. Even the men who traveled the Red Lane for profit found better employment when the mowers were needed and the crops were ripening.

Duty called to Aldrich—he had spent much time on his own affairs. Disgust at this tedious waiting overmastered desire to have it out with Beaulieu.

In the early afternoon he growled, and shook his fist, in his indignation, at the barred door, and swung himself into the saddle. He rode first to the west, and then took the long highway north to the great river. He journeyed toward his post, and decided that he would soon seek another opportunity to impress upon Vetal Beaulieu the

necessity of revising certain plans regarding the wedding of Evangeline.

On the long road folks are not supercilious or reserved, or afraid to warm up to those whom they meet. Strangers doff hats and smile; men hold up and chat, and exchange confidences, and pass on and never see each other again.

Therefore, when Aldrich overtook a carriage that was slowly dragging up a hill, he spoke courteously to the passenger therein. The passenger was a priest. He answered rather gingerly, staring at the stranger. One could understand that he lacked experience in the free-and-easy ways of New Acadia. Aldrich returned his stare, and saw that the priest had a straight mouth, with narrow lips, narrow eyes, and above these a straight, unbroken line of eyebrows. His broad face was crossed by these three horizontal lines, and between the lines one could read stubborn will and autocratic obstinacy.

It was unmistakably the face of an Irishman—and Aldrich wondered what an Irish priest could have for business in that land of the habitants.

"You are not a Frenchman, then," declared the priest, showing fresh interest after Aldrich had greeted him.

"I am one of the customs deputies of this district; my name is Aldrich."

"I'm glad to know you, sir, seeing that I am carrying no contraband." The priest allowed the straight lines to curve for a moment. "I am Father Horrigan. I am on my way to the parish of Attegat. I have been transferred there."

He stated this with complacency, without visible indication that he supposed the news would cause any astonishment.

Aldrich gasped an ejaculation. He knew that Father Leclair had determined to brave the bishop in the matter of the school—but that this breach of discipline would entail anything except a rebuke the officer had not dreamed. Father Leclair was an institution in Attegat. He was attached to his people as an oak is attached to its soil, as a hill is attached to the granite which supports it. Who could conceive of the Parish of Attegat without Père Leclair?

"Do you know anything about the parish of Attegat?" asked the priest. He eyed Aldrich's manifest consternation with considerable curiosity.

"I do, father. But this is hardly credible—I mean, I am confounded! You are transferred to Attegat?"

The priest bowed his head stiffly. He did not relish this outburst.

"And the present incumbent is ordered to go to Moosehorn Plantation—to the mission," he said, the line of his lips straighter.

"But that is into the wilderness—in the backwoods—the lumber camps," faltered the officer.

"I believe so. The mission is very remote. But it is to be made a matter of discipline," stated the priest dryly. "I see that you stare at me, my son. Well, the offense which has been committed by the incumbent is very serious. He has defied diocesan commands. He has persisted in that defiance."

He had spoken harshly, but now he allowed the straight lines to curve once more.

"It is believed that the parish needs discipline, as well as the priest who has rebelled against authority. Therefore, I have been sent up here. I have enemies who declare that I am successful in matters of discipline—the unfounded charge of enemies, my son!"

After this flicker of irony the hard lines came back into his face, though he smiled grimly.

"So that is why a man by the name of Horrigan has been sent north to Attegat," he said.

This man among the children of the parish of Attegat! They were all children—even those whose hair was white and whose limbs were feeble. This man replacing Père Leclair, who had petted their foibles, indulged their whims, helped them nurse their griefs, and had made himself a child along with them! Aldrich was aware that the expression of his face must be informing Father Horrigan that this news was the news of disaster.

"It may not be as bad as all that," re-

marked the priest, his keen perception translating the officer's thoughts. "I see that you are a friend of the incumbent," he added.

"Does Father Leclair know that he is to be taken away from his parish?" Aldrich asked.

"A letter from the vicar general has gone ahead of me," stated Father Horrigan.

"Then it is settled—it is over? He has no chance for appeal—to explain?" stammered the young man, his emotion visible.

"*Res judicata*, my son! Meaning that the case of one who has defied his superiors has been acted on. It is settled."

He resumed the study of his little book of offices.

They were at the top of the hill, and Aldrich urged his horse on at a canter. This news had shocked him. His grief was deepened by his sense of utter helplessness. He understood through what difficult avenues must appeal proceed. And yet, more than all, he realized what a calamity to Attegat would the loss of Father Leclair prove in this crisis of affairs, when the overwrought people needed to be coaxed back to order and peace and loyalty—when the wise prudence of the good priest would prevail in the end; of that outcome of Père Leclair's intercession Aldrich was sure in his own mind. What might happen when the militant Father Horrigan arrived on the scene, and began his program of autocratic discipline Aldrich did not dare to guess. But he foresaw tumult—worse, rebellion.

He determined to reach Attegat ahead of the new priest.

When night came on he found lodging at one of the little taverns on the river road, and was on his way north again at dawn.

In the afternoon he galloped into the yard of the stone house, knotted the reins about the tethering rail, and walked to the door with the aspect and the woe of a mourner who walks to the portal of a tomb.

Evangeline opened the door, and came out and waited for him under the vines of the little porch.

"You have heard! Your face tells me you have heard," she told him, sorrow in her upraised eyes.

"The new priest is on the way. I overtook him yesterday on the long road. If his heart is as hard as his face—and he seemed proud to boast that he understood matters of discipline—then Attegat is going to have a master who will lay on the lash. Where is the good man?" he asked solicitously.

She nodded toward the door of the little study across the narrow hall. They had entered the house. She could not control her voice to reply. Tears were on her cheeks.

He drew her to him, and stroked her hair.

"One moment, sweetheart, for a word about our own troubles. You know the errand I went on! But I could not find your father. I hunted for him diligently. I went as far as Monarda. I shall go again. Keep up good courage. You will be watched over at Madame Ouillette's after this, and I shall find your father and make him understand."

There was time for no more then, for Père Leclair opened the door of his study.

"What shall I say to you? What can I say to you, good Father Leclair?" asked Aldrich sorrowfully.

He had expected to find the little father of Attegat broken in spirit, sunk in woe, overwhelmed by this disaster.

Père Leclair smiled!

His face was as pale as his hair was white, and weary lines were under his eyes, but he smiled, and his voice was firm when he greeted the young man.

He supported a row of books upon one of his arms.

"Come in, my son," he invited. "I am packing my box. I have plenty of time to talk with you. There is one comfort in being a poor priest; one little box holds all, and the work is soon finished."

"But you must not leave us—something must be done—they do not understand!" blazed Aldrich passionately.

"I wrote to the good bishop—a long

letter, as I told you I should write. But it seems he did not understand."

Aldrich found Representative Clifford striding to and fro in the study.

"This is damnable outrage, Aldrich," he stormed. "I have seen trouble coming, but I didn't dream it would go as far as this. Understand? Of course, they don't understand. They are taking the heart out of a body—the brain away from a soul—and expect the body to live! That's what it means when they take Father Leclair out of this parish! The people here haven't really known what he has meant to them. They have been growling and muttering, but they haven't realized that Father Leclair is a part of them, part of their souls and bodies! They'll wake up. But they'll wake up too late."

Père Leclair tucked the books into the box.

"Perhaps my way with them has not been the good way, after all," he said mildly. "I thought it was the right way—and we have been happy here. But now at the end too much trouble comes to my people. I am not wise, as the great men in my church are wise. I will not presume to advise them. I have done something which is not right—so my people have turned against me."

"It's no such thing," declaimed the patriarch. "Other men have made the trouble. The people are not awake. They have been fooled. They don't know what's good for 'em. They have bitten the hand of their best friend."

"But Father Leclair, tell me! Have you given up hope? Are you going to let them put you away in this fashion? Aren't you going to protest?" demanded Aldrich.

"Here's your home! Here's everything you have worked for," added Clifford. His wrath made him careless of his words. "You have given everything to these people. You haven't got even a decent suit of clothes to wear away. That's all right so long as you stay here, where your home is, but it's all wrong to throw you out. You aren't going, Father Leclair! You can't go!"

The priest smiled again—wistfully but bravely.

"It is not for me to say, my good friend. I am an old man, and going away from here is hard. But I must go. I could disobey my superiors when it was a matter between the good God, my conscience, and myself. That matter could be appealed from human judgment in prayer to God Himself. I did that, Friend Clifford. I knelt the long night through before I preached my sermon. I was called upon for sacrifice! Perhaps my life has been laid in too easy places. Perhaps I owe penance. It is better to sacrifice ease and position than to sacrifice a sacred conviction of the right when the future of my own people was concerned. I stood for the school."

His face grew radiant.

"I honestly believe that the humble immolation of myself upon this altar will work in the hearts of my people—will bring good to them in the end, out of all this evil which is upon us now. The school will do its work all in good time. I will go away, as I am commanded, and I will go without hatred in my heart, and without gloom on my face."

He stretched his palms to them, appeal in his gesture and his eyes.

"I ask you to help me in these dark days! Do not try to arouse hate and obstinacy in me. Say to me: 'It must be all for the best, Père Leclair. Good will come out of the sacrifice. Though you are old, and are taken away from those whom you love, yet it must be that God has something else for a grand task, and intends to prolong your life and make you useful.' Say such things to me, messieurs. Give me heart and courage—for I need such words."

He gave to each a hand, and they clasped the thin fingers.

"Aldrich, I want to see you a minute or so," blurted the patriarch, after a moment of troubled silence. "We'll get out from under the feet of Father Leclair."

He took the officer by the arm, and dragged him out of the house so hurriedly that Aldrich had time only for a mournful nod when he passed Evangeline on the porch.

They walked along the edge of Father Leclair's little garden toward the orchard. The old hound sat in the shade thrown by the great barn, looking wistfully at the house, as though he had been told by his canine instinct that something was wrong. The trim luxuriance of the neatly tended garden conveyed unutterable pathos to Aldrich; he knew that every seed there had been sown by the hand of the good priest, that every plant had been the object of his solicitous toil.

"Look-a-here, Aldrich, it mustn't happen—it can't happen! I'm the last man to meddle in church matters—but this isn't a church matter when you get down to bottom facts. It's a damnable dirty plot, and the church is being used in the thing as a weapon, and doesn't realize it. By the gods, they have got to reckon with me in this thing—I'm in it!"

"I repeat," agreed the officer sadly, "that the bishop doesn't understand the situation up here in this parish. You and I do understand how unjust it all is. It isn't religion—it's politics! You know more about politics than I do, Representative Clifford. What can be done?"

"Fight!" declared the doughty old man. His politician's soul now described a tangible object of attack—a definite course to pursue. "You are right, my boy. This is not religion. A saint has been martyred because his superiors have been lied to. The bishop has never understood these people up here—he doesn't know what kind of a school ours proposed to be. All there is to it, he must be made to understand. He must be shown what kind of folks these are up here. They need a father instead of a master! They're all children! Père Leclair is as much of a child as the rest of 'em. It's no use to ask him to help us in this matter. He wouldn't let us help him if he knew we were trying to do so. He's a lion when it's a matter of conscience, and a lamb all the rest of the time. Aldrich, listen! It's up to us two. Are you with me?"

"With all the will and strength there is in me," declared the young man fervently. "But you will have to tell me what to do in this matter, Representative Clifford. I am all at sea."

"Didn't I tell you this is politics? I know what to do in a matter of politics. What do you suppose is going to happen in this parish when the word goes out that Father Leclair has been sent away? Not a whisper of it has got out as yet. He wouldn't even tell me until I happened in, and found him packing that little box, and made him explain. I say, what do you suppose will happen in this parish when the folks know?"

The patriarch did not require reply to that question.

"Why, there'll be a howl that will shake windows from here to the St. Croix, Aldrich. They have accepted Père Leclair as an institution. They have never thought far enough ahead to figure that he will have to die some time. As for his being removed from this parish—they would as soon have expected to see some one come along here and rip up one of those hills yonder! They will forget their grouch against the Yankees, they will despise Louis Blais, they will hate the men who have been stirring up trouble along this border, they will bellow like young ones who have been whipped."

"And Father Leclair will go away with glory in his soul—feeling that they have been saved by his sacrifice," suggested Aldrich thoughtfully.

"It may be all right to consider it that way from a spiritual standpoint," growled the veteran of the legislature. "But from a political standpoint, not on your life, young man! When you go to turning your other cheek in politics you want to be sure to have spikes on that other cheek! I say 'Fight!' I say that Father Leclair is coming back to this parish, after a lesson has been taught to these critters here who have heard the cheap yap of a demagogue, and have forgotten the lifetime devotion of a saint. You and I will here and now shake hands on the pledge that we will bring this good priest back to this parish. Put your grit into this shake, my boy. Remember that we mean business."

The courage of the old man was reflected in the eyes of the younger; Aldrich understood that the politician had a plan.

"I'm going to give out the word of what has happened to this Parish of Attegat! I'm going to make the parish ring with the news. I'm going to start out petitions to be signed on every road, along every lane, in every clearing. It must be done in a hurry, and here is where you fit, young man. Get busy! Arrange for the couriers. Be captain of the riders. Start 'em in all directions. Keep 'em going all night long. We can't afford to waste even minutes, for this thing must be put up to the bishop while it's fresh. And I tell you, Aldrich, that when I have those names in hand, and work the scheme I have in my mind, it will mean that Father Leclair will come back to the home where he belongs—or else there's no science in politics! No, nor mercy in heaven, nor justice in the works of God!"

TO BE CONTINUED IN NEXT ISSUE, ON SALE JULY 7TH.

THE COMMERCIALISM OF THE SOUTH

STUART C. LEAKE, the railroad man, had to wait for a train in Columbus, Georgia, one day and he put in the time by hiring a carriage for a drive through the town and its neighborhood. Naturally, he was anxious to learn all he could about the place, and, to do this, he addressed many questions to the old colored man who was driving him.

"Uncle," he said finally, "what are the principal lines of business here, the chief products of the town?"

"I cal'lates, boss," said the old man, "dat de principul producks in dese parts is pedigree an' de perliminary spring practizing ob de big-league ball teams."

THE SIMPLEST OF REMEDIES

JOHN DREW was interviewed by a newspaper man in a hotel in Chicago one night, and at last realized that he would have a hard time getting rid of the visitor. The writer seemed determined to sit forever, in spite of the signs of sleepiness exhibited by the actor.

"I suppose I seem like a night owl," said the visitor when the clock pointed to nearly three o'clock in the morning. "As a matter of fact, I'm just that. I suffer intolerably with insomnia. I wonder what's the best thing to do for it."

"Go to sleep," suggested Drew smoothly. "If you'll step into the next room while I undress, I'll show you how to do it."

THE SOLUTION OF A MYSTERY

JOB HEDGES, the New York lawyer, wit, and after-dinner speaker, was called upon on one occasion to give advice to a young man who was thinking of taking up the study of law.

"My young friend," said Hedges, "I was once standing outside of a big music store in the city of New York, and was lost in admiration of the muscles and sinews of the men who lifted the pianos on and off the drays. I was joined by a middle-aged man who looked like an Irishman.

"'I love to watch those fellows,' I remarked casually. 'Their strength is fascinating.'

"'Yes,' agreed the Irishman, 'and they are interesting for another reason. Whenever I see a lot of piano movers and hack drivers, I am reminded that every year the colleges turn out a lot of graduate lawyers who never practice their professions.'"

A Gentleman at Random

By Theodore Goodrich Roberts

Author of "The Crooked Skipper of the 'Amaryllis'" "Old Twisty," Etc.

Folly was the gentleman's name, and when he came aboard Captain Watkin's ship you may be sure that his name was not exactly overlooked by the master mariner's brisk, deep-sea wit. There was a little surprise coming to the captain, however, at the end of the cruise, which somewhat altered his opinion of the young "gentleman at random."

"HE has gone ashore, sir," said the mate.

"Who has gone ashore?" asked Captain Watkin. "Remember, Mr. Hall, we have nine 'he's' aboard this vessel, not countin' the passenger nor the cook's dog."

"It's him I refer to, sir."

"What—the dog?"

"No, sir; the passenger."

"Let him go!" exclaimed the captain. "And he can stay there, for all I care. But how did he manage it? I hope you did not take it upon yourself to allow him to pull ashore in my gig, Mr. Hall?"

"No, sir," replied the mate, with unction. "He dropped himself into a bumboat layin' alongside, an' give old Mab two shillin's an' a cigar to pull him to the landin' stairs."

"Did he take his bag along with him?"

"No, sir."

"Very good! Very good, indeed! If he thinks I care then he's greatly mistaken. Let him come, an' let him go—I wash my hands of him. Fact is, Mr. Hall, I've had about as much of his everlastin' cheeky arguments as I can stand aboard my own ship. He'd argue with the devil, he would—about the correct temperature at which to keep the hinges of hell, as like as not. Let him attend to his own business—an' leave me to attend to mine."

"That's said in the proper spirit, sir. Most captains worry their silly heads off, an' make danged fools of themselves, when they have friends of the owners a-sailin 'a voyage with them," returned Mr. Hall.

A shadow of uncertainty, of uneasiness, darkened the captain's eyes for an instant. He grunted and returned to his cabin.

The barkentine lay in the roadstead, her decks under awnings fore and aft, waiting for a chance to get inside the reef and against the wharf. She had just dropped anchor after a thirty-six days' voyage. The captain had already been ashore with his papers, and upon returning aboard had taken a nap in his cabin. And now the passenger, Mr. W. V. K. Folly, a young gentleman who had been recommended to the captain's best attentions by the owners of the barkentine, was ashore. You may be sure that the passenger's surname had not entirely escaped the master mariner's brisk, deep-sea wit during the long days of the southward trip from Newfoundland.

Mr. Folly came aboard shortly after midnight. He was in splendid spirits, brought both watches on deck with his rendering of

"Then up spake the little midshipmite:
Cheerily, my lads, yeo-ho,
Cheerily, my lads, ye-o-o-ho-o,
Cheerily, my lads——"

and so on, without much variety, stepped on the tail of the dog, told the cook to call him early, when the Russian guns were in sight, and not a moment before, that he might be crowned Queen of the May, and then marched aft and knocked on the captain's door. He knocked once, twice, and thrice; he knocked with his knuckles, and subsequently with his feet; and he was seriously contemplating the advisability of knocking with a capstan bar when the captain opened the door.

"What the devil is the meaning of this, Mr. Folly?" demanded Watkin, with the air of an outraged monarch in shrunken pajamas.

"There!" exclaimed the passenger. "Mad again! This is too bad—altogether too dashed bad of you, Watkin. What have I done now? I have aroused you from your slumbers, 'tis true; but where lurks the sin in that? Life is brief, and art is long, success is in the silences, and fame is in the song. I once almost met the man who wrote that."

"What are you blithering about?" asked the captain violently. "Confound it, man, you have the whole ship's company on deck."

"I sang them out of their bunks," returned the passenger. "Fame is in the song; but success, on the other hand, is in the silences, as it has been written by a friend of mine. I can sing; I can be silent. I kept silent to-night when silence was called for."

"I didn't notice it," said the captain.

"I want to tell you about it," said the passenger. "Open wide the door, Watkin, and let me in."

"Go to bed," retorted the mariner. "If you want to talk in the morning I'll listen to you."

"Listen to me now, comrade and messmate, or I'll sit here and finish my little song about the midshipmite," returned Mr. Folly. "Yes, with pleasure. That song has a peculiar, bittersweet fascination for me, owing to the fact that, but for the examiners, I would have been a midshipman myself."

"Come in and sit down, for Heaven's sake," said the captain.

"It was this way," began Mr. Folly, comfortably seated on the locker. "The moment the gentleman in the alpaca coat and torpedo beard doffed his hat to me, I knew it for a case of mistaken identity. But I kept my shirt on—took off nothing but my hat, in fact, in acknowledgment of his polite salutation. By the way, where is my hat? Oh, well, no matter. I can buy another."

"Your hat is on your head, you idiot," said Watkin, in disgust.

"Just so," returned the passenger. "You need not tell me that it reminds you of a story about your grandmother and her spectacles. Let us stick to the subject in hand. 'You are the English gentleman?' said the stranger knowingly. 'That's me, to the dot,' I replied, 'and my name is Folly.' He seemed pleased with that, and we linked arms. I smelled a rat, of course—not to mention the garbage in the narrow streets through which he led me. 'The money is still in England, I suppose?' he said. I admitted it. 'In unlimited quantities?' he asked. 'Unlimited,' I replied. He was hugely delighted to hear me say so. We reached a rather rotten hotel, and my friend called for the horses."

"What are you giving me?" exclaimed Watkin. "I never heard such tommyrot in all my life."

"There were two horses," continued Mr. Folly quietly. "I am fond of horses. I got aboard the one that looked to me like the better of the two, without question; but mind you, Watkin, I did not lose sight of the fact that it was a case of mistaken identity. The chap with the torpedo beard began to get up, but paused for a second to ask if I had any papers in my pocket. I had nothing but my brother's cable, which reads: 'Draw on Hitchcock & Hamm.' That is a cable no man should be ashamed of. I produced it without a moment's hesitation. My friend cast his eye over it, returned it to me, and climbed to his saddle. He said that he was perfectly satisfied. He informed me that we would find the colonel at the house of the Señor Da Silva. I didn't know what he was driving at, of course—but success is in the silences, as I've told

you. The colonel was there, sure enough—a Scotchman, as I live, with mustaches on him as red and thick as carrots, a face as brown as a saddle, and eyes as gray as slate. He looked at me very hard, and then said: 'So you are the young man we are expecting?' I replied that such was the impression I had gathered. Da Silva was there, too—an oldish chap with a bald head. The man with the alpaca coat told them my name. The colonel did not seem to like it much. 'This is no matter for silly jokes,' he said, turning to me. 'I'll call you Brown.'"

Mr. Folly paused here, and laughed. Captain Watkin cut him short with the request that he get his blithering story finished, and go to bed.

"I can't finish the story to-night," returned Mr. Folly, "for the simple reason that it has not ended yet. I only got as far as the girl to-day—this evening."

"Go to bed," said the captain wearily, "and you'll have forgotten all about it by mornin'."

"The colonel wanted to see my papers," said Folly calmly, "so I showed him the cablegram. That seemed to give him a better opinion of me, and he was good enough to say that he was pleased to find so much discretion in so young and simple-looking a person. Then the four of us got together around a little table. We had something to drink. The colonel said that twenty thousand pounds were required immediately. I didn't know what he was driving at, but I had an idea that he was overstating the case. 'We'll say half that sum in ten days,' I replied.

"Ten days, you understand, gives a chap time enough to have a good deal of sport, if any is going, and get out. I wondered what their game was; but you may be sure that I wasn't fool enough to ask. They spent the next hour in trying to prove to me that ten days would be too late. Too late for just what, I couldn't catch; but I sat tight and smiled. I gathered a vague idea, from some remarks they made about stars, that they were promoting a company for manufacturing matches or explosives. Suddenly the door opened, and in came a girl, Da Silva's granddaughter.

"Well, she broke up the meeting, you can take my word for it. The colonel twisted up the ends of his red mustaches, and we all pushed back our chairs. Old Da Silva presented me to the girl. Her name is Olivia. We went into the dining room, the girl on McFaggen's arm. We had a ripping supper—just the five of us—and then we played cards. Old Da Silva didn't play. After a while I felt a touch on my knee. The girl's right hand was under the table. I put my hand under quick, but all I managed to get hold of was a little bit of paper. I was wise in a minute, and juggled the paper into my pocket. I soon made my excuses, and Da Silva and the colonel left the room to order the horses. Olivia entertained the man in the alpaca coat, and I examined the paper furtively. This is what I read.

Mr. Folly handed a scrap of paper to Captain Watkin. The captain eyed it suspiciously, then unfolded it, and held it up into the light of the lamp against the bulkhead. In pencil on the crumpled paper were scrawled the following words:

Please do not let them have any money. The country is prosperous under present government. I do not want the colonel in power. He wants to marry me. Please!

"Well, blast my eyes!" exclaimed Watkin. "So you have been telling me a true story."

"Of course I have, you silly ass," returned Mr. Folly.

"And what's it all about?" asked the captain.

"It looks to me as if some people in England are thinking of financing a turnover in this country, as if Hitchcock & Hamm are their London bankers, and as if the bold revolutionists have been expecting the advent of an agent from England," replied Folly.

"And they mistook you for the agent?"

"That's the idea."

"Then you're well out of it, Mr. Folly. You were lucky to get away from them to-night. After this lesson you'll maybe

condescend to stick close to me an' the ship."

"By no means. It is now two o'clock, and as I have an appointment ashore at ten I'll go to bed."

"What?" exclaimed the captain. "Why, you idiot, your life won't be worth a torn milreis note if they find out they've been blabbing to the wrong man. And they'll find it out next time they clap eyes onto you, sure as Christmas. You don't know these fellows. They'd stick a knife into you as quick as they'd stick one into a mango."

"Pleasant dreams to you!" returned Mr. Folly.

II.

Captain Watkin awoke early, only to learn that the rash young passenger had gone ashore before daylight.

"I wash my hands of him!" cried the mariner, shaken with anger and apprehension. "I tell you now, Mr. Hall, that if he gets his throat slit it is his own funeral."

"Yes, sir; it would be," admitted the mate.

In the meantime Mr. Folly had breakfasted in the town, and ridden off, on a hired horse, to the home of the Señor Da Silva. There he ate another breakfast, in company with his companions of the supper of the night before. After breakfast Olivia left the room.

"You have reconsidered your position," said Colonel McFaggen. "You have seen the truth of our arguments. The money will be as useless to us in ten days as in ten months. The iron is hot now. We must strike within the week."

"I don't agree with you," returned Mr. Folly quietly. "Ten days will give you none too much time to perfect your arrangements."

Blood rushed to the colonel's head so violently that his face seemed to swell. For half a minute he sat silent, glaring, mastering himself with an effort that shook his hands on the table.

"They promised to send a man," he said at last, pointing a derisive finger at W. V. K. Folly. "See what they have sent us, in the hour of our need."

Da Silva and the gentleman in the alpaca coat gazed at the object of his derision with veiled, black, inscrutable eyes.

"I don't follow you," said Mr. Folly coldly. "Be a little more explicit, please."

The colonel groaned. "And this is what I have come to!" he cried. "To be told my business by a junior clerk! This is my reward for services at——"

"Allow me to remind you that I have not asked for the story of your past," interrupted Mr. Folly.

A flicker of suspicion crossed the colonel's slate-gray eyes, followed by a furtive light of anxiety. For a second it seemed that he was about to make a retort or ask a question; but instead he raised his glass of diluted claret, and drained it thirstily. During the remainder of the discussion he spoke only once or twice, and then without his usual spirit.

The breakfast room was deserted for a shady gallery. Olivia did not appear. The colonel wandered down into the gardens, evidently in search of her. Ten minutes later Mr. Folly ordered his horse. He was accompanied to the gate by Da Silva and the gentleman in the alpaca coat. He turned in the saddle.

"Perhaps I can see my way to making it five days instead of ten," he said. "I'll let you know to-morrow."

He rode away before the gratified and astonished revolutionists could express their delight at his sudden relenting. As soon as he was out of sight of the house he rode slowly. Presently he dismounted, and led his horse into a thicket. He himself remained in the ditch. He had not waited long before Olivia appeared, on foot. He advanced to meet her, hat in hand. Her beautiful young face was flushed.

"Not here!" she exclaimed breathlessly. "They will follow you."

Though Mr. Folly raised his eyebrows at this, he stepped into the cover of the thicket without a word.

"I would not have made this appointment if I had known," she said. "Bad as the colonel is, I prefer him to—a spy."

Her eyes flashed scorn.

"I can accept no assistance in my private troubles from a spy," she added.

"You must forgive me, Miss Da Silva, but I don't catch your meaning," returned Mr. Folly quietly.

"It is terrible enough to lie—to dissemble—as my grandfather and his friends dissemble and lie," she said, in a choking voice; "but to lie with the face and the manner, and the clear eyes as well as the tongue, as you do, is dishonorable beyond belief."

Mr. Folly's smooth cheeks flushed scarlet.

"Why do you think me a spy and a liar?" he asked quietly.

"You were scarcely clear of the house when the real agent from England arrived," she said, her voice shaking. She shrank away from Mr. Folly, as if in disgust. "He has letters—proof. The colonel swears he will kill you."

"Oh, he has letters, has he?" said the young man. "So he is the real thing, and I am a spy? And your intended husband, the colonel, is going to kill me? In that case, I am afraid I cannot be of much service to you."

"Do not wait here another moment," whispered Olivia anxiously. "Ride—ride into the town—and go aboard some ship. They will kill you if they catch you anywhere in this country. Even the government—your masters—cannot save you. They may hang the revolutionists whom you have spied upon; but they cannot hang them all. Some one will remain alive to kill you sooner or later."

"If you think me a spy, then why do you warn me?" asked Mr. Folly. "If I am what you think, and escape these men even for an hour, the fate of your friends is sealed. And yet—knowing this—you warn me?"

Olivia's face went white as the linen of her gown.

"I did not think," she said. "I did not think! You cannot go! You must not escape!"

She drew a small revolver from the bosom of her dress. She shook from head to foot. Mr. Folly's face was as colorless as the girl's.

"One moment," he said. "I have promised to see your grandfather to-morrow, and I swear to you that I will keep that promise."

"To-morrow," said the girl. "If you go from here my grandfather will be shot at daylight. You will see him—dead; dead at your hand!"

"It is not so. I am not a spy," he said.

She raised her eyes to his. They were bright with unbelief, yet shadowed with horror. She raised her arm, and pointed the revolver at his breast. He struck swiftly with the flat of his hand, knocking the weapon from her fingers. Then he turned, sprang upon his horse, and drove home the spurs. He rode furiously to the hotel from which he had hired the horse, then hurried to the water front on foot. He was pulled out to the barkentine in a shore boat.

"You don't look any too well pleased with yourself," said Captain Watkin tartly. "How's your case of mistaken identity getting along?"

"With astonishing developments," replied Mr. Folly.

"I tell you frankly that if you get your throat slit it's your own funeral," said the captain.

"You'll find money for the undertaker in my box," returned Folly.

"You don't look so cocky about it as you did yesterday," said the captain, with something like anxiety in voice and eyes. "I have no authority to keep you aboard the ship; but if any harm comes to you the owners will make me sweat for it. A bit of fun is a bit of fun, Mr. Folly, and a pretty girl is a pretty girl—but revolutionists and cases of mistaken identity are birds of another feather."

"Don't worry," said the passenger, laughing. "Don't worry about me or about yourself. My good friends the owners know that I am a bit of an ass—and also that I am quite able to take care of myself."

"Look here," said Watkin, "what in thunder are you, anyway?"

"I am just what you see—a gentleman at random," replied the other, smiling.

"You're well named for the part.

Keep on randoming; but don't forget that I have warned you of the danger," retorted Watkin.

Mr. Folly remained aboard all day and all night, and his air was that of a man who "lies low."

But what of Olivia and the revolutionists, and the genuine agent from England? Olivia wept in the thicket beside the road for ten minutes. Then, forgetting to pick up her revolver, she returned to her grandfather's house by secret ways. She found the three leaders of the revolution and the agent still in the dining room. The Englishman was having all he could do to convince the others that the best thing to do was not to follow the spy and dispatch him offhand.

"He does not know that you see him as he really is," argued the agent. "He thinks that you still mistake him for a friend, and he will be back to-morrow to hoodwink you some more, and try to obtain some papers with which to seal your fate. We'll just wait for him and deal with him to-morrow. You have not shown him any papers, I hope?"

No, they had not shown him any papers. The fact is, they had each distrusted him deep down in their hearts. Here were the papers. The genuine agent took the papers, glanced them over, and would have pocketed them had not the colonel objected. Olivia begged her grandfather to mount and ride for the back country; but the agent overruled her. They would wait for the return of the spy. The girl went to her room. The back of her right hand was still red from the blow which Mr. Folly had dealt it. She lay upon her bed, cast down by a sense of misery and loss which she could neither explain nor understand. It was something more than anxiety for her grandfather, something more than dislike and horror of the Scotch colonel.

III.

Captain Watkin awoke at his usual hour when in port, and found a folded sheet of paper pinned to his pillow within an inch of his nose:

MY DEAR WATKIN: Perhaps you are right, after all. I fear that this case of mistaken identity may prove a trifle too much for me to-day. Will you come to the house of the Señor Juan Da Silva this morning, accompanied by a few friends—Captain White, of the *Argus*, Ling, of the *Walrus*, and Dever, of the *Silas P. Roote*—and demand your reckless passenger? You can obtain horses and information concerning the way to Da Silva's house from the American Hotel.

The captain swore, dressed, and made all speed to the ships of his friends. He told them what a young fool he had for a passenger, and said a great deal to the point about cases of mistaken identity and the lure of a pretty face. It looked like a picnic to the bold mariners, and they donned their best clothes, and all rowed merrily ashore in the one boat.

"I've bin in messes of this kind myself, though I was never mistook for a secret agent," said Captain Dever, of the *Silas P. Roote*.

"Boys will be boys, blast their eyes!" said Captain Ling.

"I don't hold with carryin' passengers," said Captain White.

But they were all glad of the prospect of a little excitement.

Mr. Folly approached the great house of the Señor Da Silva by obscure and devious ways. The place wore an air of unusual tension and excitement, though this would not have been noticeable to any one less keen and observant than Mr. Folly. It was the hour at which coffee is served in the bedrooms; but the whole household was astir, and Olivia, her grandfather, the gentleman of the alpaca coat and torpedo beard, the colonel, and the genuine agent from London sat in the cool breakfast room. The tall, French windows were open. Mr. Folly crossed the floor of the gallery noiselessly, and stepped into the room.

"Run! They will kill you!" cried Olivia, springing from her chair.

Mr. Folly looked astonished. "Why, what's the row?" he asked.

"Spy! Viper! Liar!" cried the colonel.

He and the gentleman of the alpaca coat sprang forward, and gripped the young man by wrists and shoulders.

The face of the agent wore an expression of amused satisfaction. He turned sidewise in his chair, his left hand in his coat pocket, and his right on the handle of his coffee cup.

"So you are the man?" he queried pleasantly.

"My name is Folly," said the passenger, with composure.

"Very suitable," returned the other, chuckling. He looked at the colonel. "You have the papers safe in your pocket, I suppose, Colonel McFaggen?" he said.

"I have," replied the colonel, crushing his long fingers into Mr. Folly's shoulder.

"In that case my work is almost completed," said the agent coolly. "With the papers, and Mr. Folly, the measure is full."

All save Folly turned to him with eyes in which inquiry, suspicion, and a horrid understanding seemed to dawn and freeze to stone. The two who held the spy shivered and lost color. Old Da Silva's lower jaw went slack. The girl gazed from the agent to the prisoner—and suddenly light came back to her eyes and pink to her cheeks.

"He is not a spy!" she cried.

"What the devil do you mean?" asked the colonel, staring at the smiling agent as one might at a terrific bomb unexpectedly discovered in the midst of one's family circle, and due to explode in a moment.

"The young lady is right," said the agent. "Mr. Folly is not what you are pleased to call a spy. I don't know who he is; but circumstances point to something that will lead him before the firing squad this evening, I fear."

He moved his chair back from the table, hitched it around a little, and so brought every person in the room under his eye. He produced two automatic pistols from his pockets.

"I can use these to a nicety," he said. "Colonel, as you were! Mr. Foolish, where are your papers—the papers that you were cautious enough not to show to these gentlemen?"

"Papers?" said Mr. Folly. "I have nothing in the way of credentials except this cablegram from my brother, telling me to draw on his bankers. These gentlemen seemed satisfied with it—though what they think I am or what they want me to invest my money in, beats me."

"You needn't put your hand in your pocket," said the other. "I'll take your word for it. Keep still, gentlemen, or I'll lose my nerve and signal for reenforcements."

"You are very amusing—all of you," said Mr. Folly; "but I fear that I have become involved in a purely private matter, through a case of mistaken identity, and am anxious to return to my ship."

"My clever young friend," returned the man with the automatics, "Messrs. Hitchcock & Hamm will never again see your smiling face."

"I can stand that if they can," replied Mr. Folly, "for my own account there is overdrawn. This cable refers to my brother's account—which is healthy—though scarcely healthy enough to stand the strain which these gentlemen seemed determined to put it to. What's it all about, anyway?"

The genuine spy—who, so short a time before had looked exactly like a genuine agent from London—laughed politely, and with something of admiration in the sound. Old Da Silva turned weary eyes upon Mr. Folly. He had aged ten years in the last ten minutes.

"If you are not the man we expected, and if you are not a spy, then what brought you into this death trap?" he asked bitterly.

Mr. Folly pointed at the man in the alpaca coat, who continued to hold him by the arm for lack of anything better to do.

"Our friend here, and the spirit of adventure," he said.

"But why did you return to it? Are you such a fool as not to have detected any hint of danger?" asked the old man.

"Yes, I began to suspect complications," returned the passenger; "but even if I had known that I was to meet this person with the automatic pistols I should have returned."

He looked at Olivia, and bowed. Their eyes met for a second.

"Yes, señor, I would have returned," said Mr. Folly.

"Very pretty," said the spy. "I can almost find it in my heart to wish you a better fate and a better name."

"The name is good enough," returned the passenger. "Nodford is the titular name. My brother is the present earl."

"Come now," said the other. "That's a bit too thick. The brother of an earl doesn't take on jobs of this nature. But I've wasted too much time already. You will pardon me, Miss Da Silva, if I discharge a couple of shots into the ceiling as a signal to my men."

But at that moment brisk voices were heard outside, heavy feet smote the gallery, the name of Folly was shouted, and then Captains Watkin, White, Ling, and Dever looked into the breakfast room. Their eyes centered immediately upon the gentleman with the automatics.

"What? Pistols!" exclaimed Captain Watkin; and on the instant four braces of huge revolvers were leveled at the spy. The spy's agreeable smile was frozen on his face.

"Mr. Folly, I'm ashamed of you," said Watkin. "Get out."

Mr. Folly did not move; but the colonel and the gentleman in the alpaca coat faded away like smoke, ignorant of the meaning of the interruption, content to leave the mystery of Mr. Folly's identity unsolved, and the fate of the Da Silvas uncertain—pleased to death, in fact, to accept this unexpected chance of escape without question. The spy cleared his throat.

"Who are you?" he asked.

The four captains told him who they were.

"I don't know what kind of joint you're runnin' here," said the master of the Newfoundland barkentine, "but I don't like the looks of you or your pistols. It's no place for my passenger, anyhow. H'ist your hands a bit higher above your head, will you?"

Old Da Silva moved from his seat at the table like a man in a dream. He held his napkin in his hands. His eyes met Mr. Folly's, and the passenger nodded. Quick as a flash the old man took a turn around the spy's wrists with the napkin.

"Now gag him and bind him to the chair," said Mr. Folly.

The señor did as he was told.

"Now we had better be going," said Mr. Folly, "for the police are hiding in the garden, I think. Watkin, you are a true friend, and some day I may be able to repay you for this—and for your unfailing good nature in the past. Captain Dever, your ship is due to sail to-day, I think. You will have to find room aboard her for three passengers. Señor Da Silva, you must consider yourself as my most honored guest until you disembark at some point of safety. Olivia, allow me to offer you my arm."

"What are you givin' us?" asked Captain Watkin.

"Jack," said Mr. Folly, laying a hand on the captain's shoulder, "I mean what I say. There sits a spy of this government. Señor Da Silva and this young lady are in grave danger of being stood against a wall and shot. I am in the same plight—for I am what these revolutionists first thought me, the English agent of the promoters of this turnover that will never turn. So we must all three take passage on the *Silas P. Rootc.*"

He led the way out of the house, with Olivia on his arm, leaving the spy gagged, bound, and helpless in his chair. They passed down the lawn and front garden to their horses, leaving the policemen crouched among the roses awaiting the signal that never came. Mr. Folly lifted Olivia to his own saddle.

"You did not want to shoot me, even when you thought me a spy," he whispered, looking up into her flushed face.

"No," she breathed.

"And I decided that the game was off the moment I saw that bounder McFaggen roll his eye at you," he said. "Even if the government hadn't chipped in there would have been no revolution this year."

"Thank you. I knew it," replied Olivia quietly.

The Lady from Missouri

By Robert V Carr

Author of "Things that Count," "In the Sawdust," Etc.

"What does a woman know about business, anyway? Ab-so-lute-ly nothing." Johnny Reeves tried that kind of talk with his wife, but she had to be "shown." The folks that are married, and the folks who hope to be, will appreciate this yarn. It's very real, and very alluring

I'M not strong for that sort of life where you know what you're goin' to do every minute in the day, as soon as you wake up in the mornin'. Some gobbler who thought he was the original wisey has said: "A rollin' stone gathers no moss." But he never cheeped about tombstones. A tombstone sure gathers moss; but, as the feller said about the camel: "Who wants to be a tombstone?" Believe me, some of them old copybook gags give me a pain. The only reason I stand for them a-tall is because they're so old, and you're supposed to respect old age—which I don't, unless it can do something. I don't respect nothin' that don't deliver the goods. But, for the sake of peace, I keep still.

But of the cut-and-dried existence. I know fellers that get up in the mornin', make just so many moves, go to their work, make just so many more moves, come home, grunt just so many times, eat dinner, read just such a certain paper, then hit the hay and snore in just such a key. And they do that over and over again. That's all right and proper, but not for Johnny Reeves. I'd go crazy as a loon if I had to lead that kind of a life. It's too much like herdin' sheep.

What I want is change and surprise parties. I get tired of the same old thing every day in the same old way. I want a new deal every minute, and I'm strong for action. That's why I took to road life like a duck to water. When I was hustlin' shipments for the Dayton Live-stock Commission Company, I never knew two minutes ahead what was goin' to happen.

Of course, I had a good home, and the finest little wife in the world, but I never could stick around the house over a week at a time without gettin' the fidgets.

Often Leona would say to me: "Johnny, when are you ever goin' to settle down? Here you've only been home three days, and you're already lookin' at your grip and studyin' the time-tables. I don't believe you love me like you used to."

About that time I'd have to get busy and square myself.

"Now, look-a-here," I'd tell her, with all the married folks' trimmin's, "you're the only girl in the world for me. You know there hain't nothin' I love better than you and my home. You're an angel, the swellest little housekeeper in seven States, the finest, sweetest, dearest——"

By that time she's cryin' and laughin', too; and when Leona does that combination tear-smile stunt, she's as sweet as roses in the rain.

"But, Johnny, dear, why do you get so restless?" she insists, refusin', womanlike, to change the subject until she'd had her little say. "Don't you like to be with me? I remember when you'd hardly leave me long enough to get a wink of sleep. Now you go away and stay for weeks."

That's just the way with the best of women. You try to reason with them,

and *bingo!* they drag you right back to the personal proposition, and there you be, as helpless as a toad in a hailstorm. All you can do is flop and flounder.

Generally I'd try to wiggle out by sayin: "You wouldn't have me a-layin' around the house all the time, would you? I don't believe you'd have any respect for a man who wasn't a hustler and a go-getter. If I was one of them house dogs, you'd put rat poison in my coffee to get shut of me—you'd be so tired of seein' me stick around."

"But, Johnny-boy, I get so lonesome." When she sprung that in a little, mournful voice, I was done. Nothin' left to do but get down on my bended knees and beg her pardon for livin'. Then we'd have a small honeymoon, and she'd go to sorrowfully packin' my grips. But if there was anything in the world that would get me, and get me right, it was Leona doin' the sweet-sad-resignation act. I simply could not stand it.

So one day, when we'd had the usual before-takin'-a-trip performance, I got sentimental, and said: "Dry your eyes, Lady-bird. I see a trail out. What's the matter of you goin' with me? You can take in the stock meetin's with me, and then whirl over and visit your folks. That's the idea. Throw some stuff in a trunk, and come along."

I was goin' West to the spring stock meetin's, and, as you've probably figgered out, Leona had made me feel I was a cold-hearted brute for leavin' her to fret her heart out with lonesomeness.

"Pack up your duds!" I repeats. "Hit the trail with your lovin' hub. We'll make it a bridal tour."

Say, you ought to see that girl's face light up. She just took time enough to grab me and do a two-step around the dinin' room, and then she flew at the packin'. Ordinarily I'd have to wait two or three hours for her to doll up to go to a show. But not that trip. She fairly throwed things into that trunk, and was ready in no time—dancin', laughin', and singin' as she worked. She's a sweet girl, anyway, with just enough of the kid about her to win your heart and hold it forever.

We goes down to the station in an auto, and I buys her a bunch of American Beauty roses on the way, also I takes a drawin'-room out of Chicago, and reserves one by wire out of Omaha.

"Johnny, Johnny," objects the little miser I'm wedded to, "don't be so extravagant!"

"Missis Reeves," I tells her flat, and without battin' an eye, "when my wife travels with me, there's nothin' too good for her; and that goes."

She laughs in spite of herself, buries her pretty face in the roses, and then gives me one of them looks—well, you know the kind a woman flashes at a man she loves. Of course the roses got jammed up some just about then.

We have a heap of fun on that trip. We'd been married several years, but the porter thought we were newly-weds. Leona was so happy, she giggled like a schoolgirl makin' fudge. Everything goes as fine as weddin' bells, and when we gets to the stoppin'-off place, we rides up to the hotel, sniffin' the smell of the sagebrush, which both of us loved, and feelin' glad because we're glad. Married folks can have a bunch of happiness if they know how; and Leona and me knew how.

I'd reserved two of the best rooms in the hotel—one for our own use, and one as headquarters for the Dayton Live-stock Commission Company. Leona gives a little sigh of content as she looks around. It's a new hotel, and everything is clean and fresh.

"Now, girlie," I says, "just make up your mind to have a good time. I'll be with you every minute that I can. But you know business is business, and I've got a lot to do. Just you sail in, float around, and enjoy yourself. I've got to get busy."

"But can't I help you, dear?" she asks, kind of disappointed.

I has to laugh. It just tickled me to think that she thought she could help me in my business otherwise than by bein' what she was—the finest wife on earth.

"The only way you can help me, honey," I babies her, "is by condescendin' to remain just what you are—your own little self, Missis Johnny Reeves."

She's fussin' with her hair before the glass, but she gives it a farewell pat, and comes over and puts her arms around my neck. "You're a dear." That's all she said for a spell, and I winked at myself in the glass over her shoulder. Then she goes on: "Johnny-boy, a wife should help her husband. She should interest herself in his business——"

"Never mind that," I jollies her. "Life's too short for you to worry your pretty head about my work. I just want you to have a good time. Besides, there's nothin' you can do."

"But, Johnny," she declares, "I know all about cattle, the market, freight rates, and shrinkage."

"Cut it, cut it!" I laughs. "There's nothin' doin'. You're a sweet girl, and the best wife a man ever had, but business is out of your line. You might have heard me talk about them things, but it takes a man to handle them. You're just kiddin' me a little, hain't you?"

I was just a little sober with her, and she pulled away from me, and looked at me kind of startled. Then I notices her mouth closes firm, and I knew she'd made up her mind to do something.

She points a finger at me.

"Johnny Reeves," she says, impressive like, "look me in the eye."

I did the best I could, sayin': "I always liked your eyes." I said that more just to be talkin', although it was the sweet truth.

But Leona was not to be led off the main trail. "Do you know where I was raised?" she asked, calm and cool.

"From what information I've been able to gather," I replies, "you honored Dakota territory by bein' born in it."

"Go to the head of the class, my dear, although there is one point you overlooked." She speaks sweet and innocent.

"What's that?" I asks her, lookin' about as intelligent as a pet coon.

"Though born in Dakota, I am also from Missouri."

I began to get ready to dodge. "And if you will jog your memory," she goes on, very pleasant, but meanin' business, "you will recall the fact that it is the 'show-me' State."

I fell back on the bed like I'd been shot, kicked and fluttered, and then played dead, but for the wigglin' of one foot. But that stunt gets no encore from Leona. She just goes to primpin' her hair again.

Finally I thinks of what-all I got to do, and gets up and looks at my watch.

"Gee whiz, girl! Let's be gettin' down to dinner."

"All right, old Hurry-up," she says, in her sweet way. "But I hope you won't forget what I told you about Missouri."

I don't pay no attention to her prattle. I just grab her and run down the hall with her. I'd rather play with Leona than hear her say one word about business. I always looked on her like a child that was only to be taken care of and loved. Thinks I: "What does a woman know about business, anyway? Ab-so-lute-ly nothin'. Business is for men. They got the bulk of the gray matter and the strength. A woman's work is in her home, lookin' nice, and bein' loved."

So you can see I wasn't strong for this equality bunk. I'd hate to think Leona was my equal—hate to think she was no better than me. I wanted her to be just what she was—my superior in the finer, sweeter things. And it went without sayin' that she didn't, and I didn't want her to, know anything about business. That's part of my thoughts, in a kind of a jumbled way, as we go rompin' down the hall.

Pretty soon we're in the dinin' room, and, after I gives our orders, I looks around to see who's there. I'm a liar if old Jerry MacCloud and his wife hain't at the next table.

Thinks I: "Here's where I take another crack at Jerry. I know I won't get his cattle, but I'll try him, anyhow."

I'll tell you a little something about MacCloud. He's a big lump of a man, with a square beard, like a Mormon elder; and, so far as I knew then, he'd never spoke civil in his life to any one —always a growl. He had ears that

stuck straight out from his head; and when he walked, he drove his heels down hard.

The last time I'd tackled him he'd said: "No Chicago for me." And that's exactly what he'd said some six previous times.

Old Mac's business was a mighty good thing to have; for, in spite of his grumpy ways, he'd a lot of influence. One of the reasons for his drag was that he never broke his word; and another, he never told a lie.

I makes up my mind to toss my rope at MacCloud again. A man hustlin' shipments—if he's got class—never gives up. Turn him down cold, and, if he's the right sort, he'll come up smilin' and tackle you again.

After dinner I breezes around with Leona a while, and then she concludes to go up to her room and take a nap. She did.

I drifts through the hotel lobby, with an idea of tacklin' Jerry MacCloud again. It's the day before stock meetin' opens, and there hain't much doin'. Lots of people are comin' in, but things are fairly quiet. I thinks to do a little business before the rush is on.

MacCloud isn't hard to locate, and I finds him in a grump, lookin' out the window. He has his hands in his pockets, and don't offer to shake.

"Looks like we're goin' to have good weather for the doin's," I opens up. Weather talk is always safe.

"Yep!" agrees he.

"How's your cattle wintered?"

"Fair," he grunts.

"Comin' to Chicago this fall?"

"Nope!" he throws at me.

I lingers around a spell, and then says: "See you later."

"Umph!" he rumbles in his neck.

I walks away.

Now, speakin' as man to man, what would you do with a proposition like that? Would you take a club and beat it to death, burn it at the stake, or what? But on second thought, none of them moves would do any good with Jerry. No matter what you done, he'd just grunt, and you couldn't dent him with a diamond drill. Jerry MacCloud was not to be waltzed up to and picked like a bouquet. Believe me, *no!*

I floats around some more, and 'long about five-thirty I drifts upstairs to find if Leona had done finished her beauty sleep. I'm feelin' hungry, and want to hit my stomach in the face with a T-bone. But Leona hain't in the room. Naturally, then, I heads into the parlor, and there she is. I'm glad to see her, as I always am, and comes siftin' up to her so quick I don't notice she's with any one.

The next second Leona is sayin': "Missis MacCloud, meet my husband."

By Jimminee! she was Jerry MacCloud's wife, and a right sweet old lady at that. Thinks I: "How'd such a fine woman come to marry that old sorehead? I'd think she'd rather take in washin' than live with that everlastin' grouch."

Missis MacCloud shakes hands with me, and we sets down and visits a while. I could see the old lady was strong for Missis Johnny Reeves. Finally Leona speaks up: "I've asked Missis MacCloud to find her husband, so they can take supper with us."

"Certainly," I O. K.'s the proposition strong. "I was just goin' to suggest that very thing."

After talkin' a little more, we heads downstairs, Missis MacCloud figgerin' on findin' her husband in the lobby. She does, and the old hunk of gloom comes along, willin' enough after meetin' Leona.

Then I gets a pleasant surprise. Jerry MacCloud was an old grouch to the world, but all to the good so far as his wife was concerned. With her he was a changed man—gentle and lovin' was no name for it; and he called her "Sweetheart." That made an awful hit with me. I like to see old people lovin' with each other that way.

And Leona? Say, I was proud of that girl. She simply wound old Jerry MacCloud right around her finger. Blamed if he didn't laugh and joke with her, and tell her funny stories. I was so surprised I sugared my coffee twice. Leona was more than charmin'. She was really lovin' to them old folks.

They acted like they'd always known her. It was a happy meal, only I didn't get much attention. Of course, they talked to me some, but it was Leona who got the spotlight.

When we leaves the dinin' room, old Mac takes the arms of the ladies, and escorts them out. As we stop for a minute in the lobby, MacCloud says to his wife, in a soft voice: "Mamma, our Rose would 'a' been just her age—if she'd 'a' lived." The tears come into the old lady's eyes, and she said after him, soft, and with a tremble in her voice: "If she'd 'a' lived."

Gee! They'd lost a girl, and Leona reminded them of her. It gave me a quick, sharp pain to think how I'd feel if I'd lose Leona. Believe me, the world's light would go out for me. And by that time I was afraid something would happen to the girl. So I gets a-holt of her arm quick. She looks up at me sudden, and I turns my face away. Leona understands.

Right there several little ideas about winnin' the MacCloud cattle faded from my mind. We were on a sentimental basis now; and, accordin' to my way of figgerin', business was out of it. The lonely old couple loved Leona, and so did I. That made business entirely out of the game. Never again would I ask MacCloud for his cattle. Love is too fine a thing to let dollars and cents get in sight of.

Well, we sets down in the lobby—Mac with a cigar and me with a cigarette. Leona is bright, lovely, and entertainin', and them old people fairly hang on every word she says. Missis MacCloud is a-holdin' her hand like it's a comfort to her soul. I don't say anything, for the simple reason that I can't.

"I knew," says Missis Mac, in her gentle way, to her husband, "that just as soon as she spoke to me in the parlor I'd love her. Remember, daddy, how Rose used to hold her chin up, so proud like, so much like this dear child?"

The old man made a queer, helpless swipe at nothin' with his hand, and cleared his throat. I began makin' arrangements to duck. I'm not what you'd call sentimental; but when a sweet old lady begins mournin' her girl, on whose grave the crocuses have done bloomed for ten springs, Johnny Reeves has business elsewhere. If I stay, I weep; and when I weep, it hurts.

So I says: "If you folks will excuse me, I'll drift away for a spell. I've some business to look after."

The old man turns around and speaks up: "Go ahead, Johnny"—notice the "Johnny," will you?—"I'll look after the ladies." He actually parted his whiskers with a friendly smile. "Maybe we'll go to a show or something."

"That's the idea exactly," I replied. "I'll go get the tickets now. You take the women to the show, Mister Mac, and I'll attend to my business. Would go with you, but have a lot to do."

"Never mind the tickets," growls Mac, in his old way. "They're on me." Then, more pleasant: "Sorry you can't come along."

"Yes," chimes in Missis Mac, who's been listenin', "we want you to come, too."

Leona, the dandy little wise-girl, don't say a word.

"Would like to," I comes back, edgin' away. "But if I don't get busy to-night I'll be swamped to-morrow."

Some more regrets were cut loose; but just the samee, I ducked. MacCloud took the women to a show, and I breezed around among the shippers.

About midnight, I drifts into the room, and finds Leona settin' up waitin' for me.

"Johnny," she says, as she started unbraidin' her hair, "how glad we should be that we have some one to love us!"

"You little soft-hearted bunch, you," I says, gatherin' her up, "I am glad! Glad is no name for it."

Well——

Stock meetin' opened with a hurrah the first day. Things began to hum, and I got busier than a bird dog on a flea farm.

Leona drifts in and out of headquarters with this woman and the other, robbin' me of my buttons, badges, and souvenirs without mercy.

Funny how women get acquainted!

They just go to speakin' to each other right off the handle; and before you know it they're plannin' to come and stay a month.

I don't pay much attention to what Leona was doin', just humored her and kidded her along. She seemed to be havin' one good time, and that was all I wanted to know. But she kind of neglected me them three days. She is invited to a lot of hen parties, and sometimes wouldn't get up to the room until nearly midnight, or maybe later. Two or three women would always come with her, and several times the MacClouds brought her home.

Now and then I sights her on the street, and she'd smile at me from among a bunch of women. And you can bet, I was proud of her looks and ways. There's none can hold a candle to Leona for looks; and as for pretty ways, believe me, she leaves 'em all miles back on the trail.

I could see that Leona was popular, but I didn't think much of it, as that was nothin' new. I knew everybody liked her—but why shouldn't they? I liked her some myself.

As for business, it was good—exceptionally good. Shippers I never expected to land fell for my Chicago market talk like it was gravy and sweet potatoes. Some of them even come up to me, and voluntarily said they were a-goin' to ship to Billy Dayton.

Says I to myself: "You will sure bring home the bacon this trip. There certainly is class to your work. You're the go-get-'em kid, and no mistake. The results of this trip will make Billy Dayton set up and bark like a fox. There's no use a-talkin'—when you get after them, they might just as well rack into the corral, for they stand no chance to get away. Swell up and bust—you got the right to."

Then I goes to runnin' over the names of the hard ones I'd landed. There was Richmond, Atwell, Channing, Seymore, Jamison, and Wardell—all heavy Omaha shippers, but now headed for the pens of the Dayton Live-stock Commission Company at Chicago. It was good business, and I had a right to pass myself a bouquet on a little pink pillow on a silver platter.

The evenin' of the third day of the stock meetin' I'm in the room with Leona. The trunk and grips are packed, and we're ready to hit the trail in the mornin' for Paw-in-law Summers' place over in the next State. Leona plans to visit her folks until I finish my spring work.

"Johnny," she says, tired like, "I'm simply all fagged out. The MacClouds want to take me to the dance to-night, but I was so tired I told them I couldn't go. My, but I've worked hard!"

"Worked hard?" I asked, kind of puzzled. "At what, my dear?"

"Why, you silly goose, don't you know?"

"Search me. I don't."

She sets up on the edge of the bed, and giggles. Then she begins tickin' names off her fingers:

"There's the Richmonds, the Channings, the Wardells, the Atwells, the Seymores, the Jamisons, and—of course—the MacClouds——"

"What about 'em?" I slams out sudden, feelin' a kind of weakness stealin' over me.

She giggles again. "All of their cattle go to Billy Dayton, at Chicago." Then, sweet and modest: "I guess their wives rather like your wife, Johnny-boy. Then Mister MacCloud helped me so much. He's a dear, kind man."

I held onto the chair to keep from slippin' down to the floor. I could hear my conceit go *phfung!* like a punctured toy balloon. A great light breaks in on me, and I bats my eyes and wags my ears. I'd thought I was IT, in large letters, when it was Leona's ways and cleverness that was swingin' the business.

I was done. I just raised my hands, and said: "Shoot me in the heart, so I won't suffer!"

Leona smiles a little smile—not a mean one, mind you, but just the same it made me duck. I knew what was comin'.

"Of course, I know that you've said that a woman knows nothing about business——"

"Go on, go on," I urges her, "rub it in! I just love to have you."

"Then you'll remember," she slides along, sweet and ladylike, "that I said I was from Missouri, though born in Dakota——"

"Is there nothin' I can do to get you to stop?" I pleads, though in my heart I'm proud of her beatin' me.

"Nothin' except——" I tumbles. So I goes over and gets Missis Johnny Reeves, and for a spell she can't talk.

After a while I says to her: "You're a great little helpmate, but I'm afraid business can't be done on sentiment. It will go for a spell, but——"

She interrupts me: "Johnny, let me ask you one question: If you were a cowman, would you ship your cattle to people you hated?"

"Well——"

"Answer me."

"No—I can't say I would."

"Then you'd let the sentiment of hate interfere with business?"

She had me. "You're right. You're always right," I tells her, with my heart in the words. "I can see now where there wouldn't be any business if it weren't for sentiment."

"There wouldn't," agrees the wisest, cleverest, sweetest woman in the world.

There is another good story about the live-stock commission man in the next POPULAR. It is called "Bread Upon the Waters." On the stands two weeks hence, July 7th.

ROCKEFELLER AND HIS ROCKS

JUST because John D. Rockefeller has made more money than he can count without the aid of nineteen clerks and forty adding machines, not to mention a well-trained corps of coupon clippers, there are many people who come forward these days with stories to show that John, now famous for his wealth, wigs, and wit, was once about the cutest person that ever happened when it came to financial strategy.

According to this latest narrative, Rockefeller told a close friend—and that "close" goes both ways—one morning that he wanted to borrow five thousand dollars and that he must have it in order to save his business. The friend went downtown in the course of his work, and pretty soon met a big banker.

"I wish," said the banker, "if you see Mr. Rockefeller this afternoon, you would tell him that I have found a place to put that ten thousand dollars which he asked me to loan out for him."

The friend gasped like a goldfish, and proceeded on his way, encountering another of the town's leading bankers.

"By the way," said the banker, "when you see Rockefeller this afternoon, please tell him that I have found a man who wants to borrow that ten thousand dollars."

The friend staggered on, and met a third banker, who repeated what the other two captains of finance had said. Then he went back and found Rockefeller.

"John," he said, in astonishment, "when I left you this morning, you told me you had to borrow five thousand dollars, and all day bankers have been telling me that you asked them to lend out ten thousand for you."

"Well, well," smiled Rockefeller, "that's fine! I suppose I may safely assume now that my credit is established in this town. I'll just step out and borrow that five thousand I need."

The Blue Wall

By Richard Washburn Child
Author of "Jim Hands," Etc.

PART VI.

The Story of Mortimer Cranch.

THE SHEIK OF BAALBEC SPEAKS.

THERE is only one person now in this world who could have told you my name. I have been sure that she has long believed me to be dead. That person is Margaret Murchie, and it is only too plain that she has told you all that she knows of me. Parts of my life she does not know. My testimony as to these is now given against my prayers, for I have prayed that I never would have to uncover my heart to any living man.

My first two recollections are of my birthplace and of my mother. A lifetime has passed, yet I remember both as plainly as if they were before me now.

I was heir to a fine old colonial estate which, because of diminishing fortunes and increasing troubles extending over two generations, had been allowed to run down. My great-great-grandfather, whose portrait hung in the old parlor between two mirrors that extended solemnly from floor to ceiling, had been a sea captain and shipowner, and, it is said, a privateer as well. Whatever strange doings he had seen, one thing is certain: he returned after one mysterious voyage with great wealth, a sword wound through his middle, ruined health, and a desire for respectability, social position, and a reputation for piety. It had been he who had built the immense house which, in my childhood, was shaded by huge, gnarled trees, under which crops of beautiful but poisonous toadstools were almost eternally sprouting.

If the great house was like a tomb, my mother was like a flower in it. I recall the sweetness of her timid personality, the half-frightened eyes which looked at me sometimes from the peculiar solitude of her mind and the faint perfume of her dress, when, as a child, I would rest my head in her lap, and beg her to tell me of my father's brave and good life.

If I grew up somewhat headstrong and self-confident, it was in part due to a faith in my inheritance. The delicate and refined lips of my mother, upon which prayers were followed by lies, and lies by prayers, taught me an almost indescribable belief in my own strength. The fruit forbidden by moral law to the ordinary man seemed to belong of right to me.

I knew my mother's philosophy of pleasure was different from mine, and reaching an early maturity, I concealed from her the experiments I made in tasting daintily and rather proudly of life's pleasures. Before my boyhood had gone, my natural cleverness and my selection of friends had introduced me to many follies, each of which I regarded as a taste of life which in no way meant a weakness. Weakness I was sure was not the legacy of character which I possessed, and I failed to notice that I no longer sipped of the various poisons which the world may offer, but feverishly drank long drafts.

This story began in the May Month-end POPULAR. Back numbers can be obtained from any news dealer.

The awakening came in extraordinary form. I had not had my eighteenth birthday, when upon a beautiful moonlit night in spring, a man and a woman more sober and much older than I, drove me out to my gate, begged me to say less of the nobility of the horse which they had whipped into a froth of perspiration, and left me to make my way alone along the path of flagstones to the house.

A light burned in the hall. I stood there, looking for a long time in the mirror of the old mahogany hatrack, with a growing conviction that my reflected image looked extraordinarily like some one I had seen before. I finally recognized myself as being an exact counterpart of my great-grandfather's portrait. This did not shock me, though the idea was a new one. I remember I laughed, and brushed some white powder from my sleeve.

The powder did not come off readily; it was with some thought of finding a brush that I gave my serious attention to the handles of one of the little drawers. My awkward movement resulted in pulling it completely out. Chance brought to light at that moment an object long hidden behind the drawer itself. The thing fell to the floor; I stooped dizzily to pick it up. It was an old glove!

It was an old glove, musty with age, and yet still filled with the individuality of the man who had worn it, and still creased in the distinctive lines of his hand. As I held it, I imagined that it was still warm from the contact of living flesh, that it still carried faint whiffs of its owner's personality as if he had a moment before drawn it from his fingers.

What maudlin folly seized me I cannot say. I remember that I exclaimed to myself affectionately as one might who, like Narcissus, worshiped his own image in a pool. I pressed the glove to my face, delighting in its imagined likeness to myself. I gave it in my intoxicated fancy the attributes of a living being. To me it seemed alive with vital warmth. It had long lain a corpse. My touch had thrilled it as its contact now thrilled me.

With it, pressing it against my cheek, I turned toward the portières of the library, and, as chance would have it, making a misstep when my head was swimming, I went plunging forward into the folds of this curtain. Because of this I found myself sitting flat upon the hard-wood floor, gibbering like an idiot at the dim light which showed the bookcases, which extended around the room, from floor to ceiling.

At last, out of the haze of my befuddled mind, I saw my mother.

She did not speak; she did not cry. She had come down the stairs, and now her face shone out of the clouds of other objects, quiet, set, as immovable and as white as a death mask. She came near me, and, taking the glove from my hand, examined it in the manner of a prospective purchaser.

The next morning, in the midst of a horror of brilliant sunlight, she told me the truth about my father. He had not been brave. He had not been good.

"The glove was his," she said, in her dead, cold voice. "Are you not afraid?"

"Of what?" I asked.

"Of yourself," she whispered.

"Yes," said I. "Mortally!"

I had believed in my strength. Now a few hours had taught me the terrors of self-fear. The ghastly story of inheritance of wild passions from grandfather to grandfather, from father to son, pressed on my brain like a leaden disk thrust into my skull. I had first learned the joy of experiment with my strength; I was now to learn the pains of the ghosts which always seemed to be mocking the assertions of my will. A line of them, fathers and sons, pointed fingers at me, and laughed. "You are doomed!" said they, in matter-of-fact voices. I spent my days between determination to indulge myself for the very purpose of testing my power in self-control, and the sickening relaxation of moral force that occurs from the mere deprivation of all hope of victory in the battle. The excuses of intemperance were never so clever as those I devised for my own satisfaction; the bald truth that I had taught my body enjoyments which would never be shaken off before

old age or infirmity had placed them out of my reach, was never better known than to me.

Fortunately my mother died before the outbreak of my barbarous nature had broken down the pride which caused me to conceal my true self from the day-lit world. I sold the home, and cursed its dank old trees and toadstools, and silent, gloomy chambers the day I signed the deed. I went to city after city, leaving each as it threatened me with ennui or with retribution. Money went scattering hither and thither, spent madly, given, stolen, borrowed, with no regret but that the piper might some day, when the pay was no longer forthcoming, refuse to play.

Perhaps all would have been different had I not been pursued by a fiendish fortune at games of chance. As if Fate meant that my ruin should be complete, she saw to it that I was provided with funds for the journey. I have seen my last penny hang on the turn of a card, and come screaming back to me with a small fortune in its wake. Everywhere, misconstruing the results, men whispered of my luck. It was only once that the truth was told; at Monte Carlo, a pair of red-painted, consumptive lips pouted at me with terrible coquetry over the table. "Pah!" said they. "The devil takes us all on application. It is only very few he *chooses!* Monsieur has won again!"

She was right, but there is an end to all things, and the end of all my ruinous luck came at Venice. It came with Margaret Murchie; it came, I believe, at the very instant that I saw her sitting in a café there—saw her sitting alone, golden from head to foot, golden of hair, golden of skin, golden rays shining from her eyes, showers of gold in the motions of her body—a living creature of gold, shining as a great mass of it, warm and bright and untarnished as a coin fresh from the pressure of the dies.

I took her with me to Tuscany—stole her from an old vixen of a fortune teller.

Ah, I see she did not tell you all! Never mind. There was no disgrace for her—she might well have told everything! She needed no blush for the story. It was the only pretty thing in my life.

The trees of that country grow at the edges of green meadows, tall and stately as the trees of Lorraine's brush. Sheep, with soft-sounding bells, feed along the rich rolls of the land. Birds sing in the thicket at daybreak. The hills are alive with springs of matchless clearness. Butterflies hover over hedges, and dart into half-concealed gardens.

For a month we played there like children. Her ignorance was charming. Her mind was like a fresh canvas; I could paint whatever I chose upon it, and, loving her, I painted none but beautiful pictures, pictures of the divine things that were still left in the violated mortal sanctuary of the soul of Mortimer Cranch.

What did I accomplish by spreading all the fruits of my education and my familiarity with refinement before her? What did I accomplish by my mastery of mind? I accomplished my undoing! I made this healthy, glowing Irish lass believe in the beauty of character which I insisted she possessed. I made her believe that she was a noble creature, and that she was capable of fine womanly unselfishness. It was like the influence of the hypnotist. My own fanciful conception of her, at first described merely to awake in her the pleasures of admiration, became, when repeated, convincing to myself. I began to feel sure that she had the rare qualities which I had ascribed to her. I found myself desperately in love with her—not only intoxicated by the beauty of her body and the sound of her laugh, but by real or imagined beauty of character as well. This acted upon her powerfully. She, too, began to believe. Her capacity for goodness expanded. A sadness came over her.

"Why are you so thoughtful?" I said to her, one midday, as we sat together on a ledge overlooking the peaceful valley.

"Don't ask," she said bitterly, looking at the ground.

Curiosity then drove me mad. For two days I persecuted her with cruel questions. I believed that some regret for a secret in her past was troubling her.

At last she told me. I believe she told me truly. She said that she knew that a girl without education and refinement could have no hope of being taken through life by me. She spoke simply of the unhappiness it would bring me if I were tied to her.

"Tell me that you love me!" I cried.

She shook her head.

"I am not your equal," she said. "You have been the one who has made me good, if I am good at all. Didn't you say that I would be capable of any sacrifice for love?"

"Why, yes," I said.

"Hush!" she whispered, and laid her hand on mine.

The next day she had disappeared.

No one knew when or how or where she had gone. She had vanished. She left no word. Her room was empty. And there on the tiled floor, in the sunlight, was the rosette from a woman's slipper. It spoke of haste, of farewell; it was enough to convince me that Margaret was not a creature of my imagination. But the little tawdry decoration and the faint aroma of her individual fragrance which still clung to it, was all that was left of her and my selfish dreams.

I traveled all the capitals in search of her or of Mrs. Welstoke, to no purpose. My resources dwindled. The wheel and the cards mocked my attempts to repair my state. Fortune had dangled salvation in front of me, had snatched it away, and now laughed at my attempts to put myself in funds. I was shut off from a search for my happiness. When I had played to gain money for my damnation, as if with the assistance of the evil one, I had won; now that I sought regeneration, a malicious fiend conducted the game, and ruined me.

I remember of thinking how I had begun life with full assurance of my power over all the world and, above all, over myself. I was sitting on a chair on the pavement in front of a miserable little café at Brest, looking down at my worn-out shoes.

"Well," said I aloud. "Some absinth —a day of forgetfulness—and then—I will begin life anew."

It was the same old tricky promise—the present lying to the future and making everything seem right.

I clapped my hands. A slovenly girl served me, standing with her fat red hands pressed on her hips as I gazed down into the glass.

"Drink," said she. She was a cockney, after all.

"Must I?" I asked.

She nodded solemnly. And so I drank.

Eight days later I was taken on board a sailing vessel, and when we were out at sea, and my nerves had steadied, I was forced by a villainous captain to the work of a common sailor.

From that experience as a laborer I never recovered. My mind learned the comfort of association with other minds which conceived only the most elementary thoughts. The savage vulgarity of stevedores, strike-breakers, ships' waiters, circus crews, and soldiers, had a charm for me of which I had never before dreamed. I entered the brotherhood of those at life's bottom, and found that again I was looked upon as a man superior to my associates, and perhaps more fortunate. Even though I exhibited a brutality equal to any, I was regarded as a person of undoubted cleverness. If the great or showy classes of mankind would no longer flatter my vanity, the vicious and uncivilized classes would still perform that office. Fate threw me among them, so that nothing should be left undone to cajole me toward the last point of degradation.

I kept no track of those years, nor understood why Mary Vance ever married me, nor why she was willing to be so patient, so loyal, so tender, and so kind. I had come from above, and was going down. She had come from the dregs; she was going up. We met on the way. I married her, not because I loved her, but because she loved me, and I could not understand it. She was a lonely, tired little guttersnipe, who had

gone on the stage, had had no success whatever, and whose pale-red hair was always stringing down around her neck and eyes; but even then I could not see why she picked me out for her devotion.

She was like a dog in her faithfulness. I can see her now as she was one night, snarling and showing her teeth, keeping the police from taking me to a patrol box. I can see her cooking steak over a gas jet. She thought my name was John Chalmers. I learned to love her at last.

I learned to love her, and because of it I learned to hate myself. She deserved so much and had so little from me beside my temper, my wildness, and abuse.

When we were at our wits' end for pennies to buy food, the little girl came. The only thing we had not pawned was a gold locket that had never been off her neck because it was wished on by her mother, and had always kept her from harm, as she said. She took it off and put it on the baby's neck, and tears came to my eyes—the first in thirty-five years.

"We will call her Mary," I said, choking with happiness.

Four hours later I was on a wharf, crawling around on my hands and knees in the madness of alcohol, with a New York policeman and a gang of longshoremen roaring with laughter at my predicament.

It was on that occasion that, as my brain cleared, I saw what I had done. I had sworn a thousand times never to do it. And now it had come about. I had become responsible for another living human thing, with the blood of my veins coursing in its own! I had committed the crime of all crimes!

To describe the horror of this thought is impossible. It never left me. I began to devise a means to undo this dreadful work of mine. I prayed for days—savagely, and breaking out into curses—that the little laughing, mocking thing should die.

"She has your eyes," said Mary, looking up at me with a smile on her gaunt, starved face.

I rushed from the dirty lodgings like a man with a fiend in pursuit; the words followed me. I roared out in my pain.

"I will do it!" I said, over and over again. "I will kill the child. I will kill it!"

I believed I was right. I believed the best of me and not the worst of me had spoken. I believed I must atone for my crime by another. I believed I should begin to prepare the way.

"Suppose she should die?" I said to my wife.

"Then grief would kill me, too," she said.

I could not stand the look on her face.

"This is the only happiness I ever had," she said, pressing the little body close to her.

I believed then that I could never do what I had planned. I knew I could never take Mary's happiness away. I felt myself caught like a rat in a trap. The blood of my fathers was going on in a new house of flesh and bone! I had done the great crime! And there was no help for it!

We move, however, like puppets of the show. Just see!

Within a month the doctor at the clinic had said that my wife was incurable with consumption.

"The worst trouble with it all," said he, "is that she will suffer without hope and for no purpose."

"Death would be good luck?" said I.

"The kindest thing of all," he answered, killing a fly on the window ledge, as if to demonstrate it.

I was trembling all over with wild nerves, a wild brain madness. I shut my eyes craftily as I went down the steps.

"She may go first," I whispered to myself. "I will kill her in the name of God. And then the other, and the devil is cheated!"

Was I a madman?

I cannot say! I had sense enough to prepare myself by days of drinking, during which I deliberately and cruelly beat whatever tenderness remained in me into insensibility. I suffered no doubts, however, for I was sure that I had planned a crime which, unlike all

my others, was founded on unselfishness. I believed I had dedicated myself at last to a supreme test of goodness and love.

The question of what became of me after I had done this terrible thing never entered my mind. My desire was to place Mary where she need suffer no more, where she would be free from hardships and labors, from lingering disease and slow death, and from my ungoverned brutalities. Above all, however, I wanted to accomplish the second murder—made possible to me by the first. A monomania possessed me. I wanted to put an end forever to my strain of blood before it was too late—before it had escaped me through the body of my little daughter.

My zeal, I suppose, was like that of a religious fanatic; but it did not blind me to the horror of my undertaking. I cried out aloud at the picture of the sad, reproachful eyes of my poor wife, fixed upon me as they might be when the film of death passed over them. I knew that I must do the thing in a way which would prevent her sensing my purpose, even in the last flicker of time in which her understanding remained.

I can't go on! Wait!

Well, it was over. I fled. Dripping, I rushed from the river bank. I had planned to go back after the baby. I forgot it entirely. The meadows became alive with shapes and faces. I swear to you that I believed a terrible green glow hung over the hole in the black water behind me. I thought this water had opened to receive her. I had not seen it close again. There was a hole there! She lay in the bottom of it, screaming terrible screams.

The grass of the slope was filled with creatures who had seen all. The moon rose up the sky with astounding rapidity. Its rays dropped like showers of arrows. Every sparkling drop of dew became an eye that watched me as I fled. I sought dark shadows; the moon snatched them away from me. I ran over the soft carpet of new vegetation; it seemed to echo with the sounds of a man in wooden shoes, fleeing over a tiled floor. I fell over in a faint. I regained consciousness with indescribable agonies.

Then, and only then, did I remember the flask in my pocket. I drank. The stimulant, contrary to my expectation, flew into my brain like fire. I was crazy for more of this relief. I had believed it would sharpen my wits for further action; I found it made me disregard the existence of a world. And instead of suffering fear or regret, I was mad with joy. I drained the flask, hummed a tune, grew foolish in my mutterings to my own ears, and at last, glad of the warmth of the spring night, welcomed sleep as a luxury never before enjoyed by mortal man in all of history.

It is unnecessary to tell you of my awakening. Though no one was about, the air seemed to ring with the news of a floating body. I had slept, but that wonderful sleep had robbed me of all possibility of defending myself. Believing this, I tried to escape the town. The sun was worse than the moon. It poked fun at me. From the moment I awoke to look into the face of this mocking sun, I knew that my capture could not be prevented. The very fact that I myself believed so thoroughly that I could not escape, determined the outcome. To feel the hand of the law on my shoulder was a blessed relief. It seemed to save me so much useless thought and unavailing effort. It was as welcome as death must be to a pain-racked incurable.

This touch of the hand of the law is a blessed thing; it is as comforting as the touch of a mother's hand. So lovely did it seem that it put me into a mind when, for a little kindly encouragement, I would have said: "You have opened your doors to welcome me in. God bless you for your insight. I am the man!"

I do not know why I shook my head at my accusers with stupid complacency. My denial of guilt seemed to me a trivial lie. I had become a man of wood. I went through my trial like a carven image. I seemed to myself to be a puppet, a jointed figure, a manikin.

In a dull, insensate way I had learned to hate the judge as a superior being

who showed loathing for me on his face. The jury foreman and all the rest there in the courtroom day after day were as little to me as a lot of mountebanks on a stage. Yet is was the foreman, with his red, bursting face, and thin, yellow hair, and fat hand stuck in his trousers pocket, who awakened me from this strange and comfortable coma of the trial. "Because of reasonable doubt," he said, with his unconscious humor, "we find the prisoner"—here he paused and shifted his feet like a schoolboy who has forgotten his piece—"we find him not guilty."

Not guilty! I was free! It crashed in upon my senses. Suddenly there came back to me the existence of my little daughter—the existence of my blood—the fact that I had pledged myself to another crime in the name of humanity—that its execution awaited me. They had gone wrong! They had thrown me back on the world! They had denied me the comfort of the law—that thing which had touched me on the throat with its firm hands, and had promised me oblivion! They had left me staring at the terrible mind-picture of a little child asleep in its crib with the thing that was me lurking in its heart, in its lungs, in the cells of the brain.

"I did it," I whispered to my lawyer.

"You spoke too late," he said, gathering up his papers. "You have been tried. And for that crime you can never be tried again! Come with me. I have a carriage outside. Where are you going?"

"For alcohol!" I said, gritting my teeth.

"That is a matter of indifference to me," he replied, sniffing with a miserable form of contempt. "Our relationship is over, anyhow!"

His eyes were upon me with the same expression as the others. They looked at me everywhere. Youthful eyes ran along beside the carriage; a hundred pairs watched me after I had alighted and the vehicle had gone. The darkness came on as a kind thing which threw a merciful blanket over me. I thanked the night. I was grateful for the world's vicious classes, so used to violence that they did not stare at me. I thanked the good old rough crowd, the fist-pounding, the hard-talking, hoarse-voiced loafers whose leers showed envy of my notoriety. And all the time I thought of my child, of the blood of my fathers which, against all my vows, had escaped again, and with the stimulant whirling in my head, I determined to go back to the other end of town, to the house where I knew this menace to the world lay smiling in its crib.

Yet when I had carried out all but the last chapter of my plans, when I, like a thief, had slipped off into the night, with my little daughter in my arms, I found that I held her tight against my aching heart. At last I knew fear—no longer the fear that I would not carry out my aim, but fear that I would.

Again, out of the grass, and down from the apple trees, drops of dew glinted through the darkness like a thousand human eyes. Then suddenly they all vanished, and as I walked along in the shadows I believed that some one trod behind. I heard soft footsteps in the grass. I thought I felt human breath upon my neck. Some one came behind me, and yet I did not dare to look, for I knew if I turned I would see the pale, thin face of Mary, with her wistful eyes.

She was there——

I say, visible or not, she was there. I knew then, as if I had heard her command, that I must go up the slope to the judge's house and knock upon the door. As I walked, she walked with me, watching me as I held the sleeping baby in my arms, fearing perhaps that in my drunken course I would fall.

And then—after I had been knocked senseless by the reporter's fist, and at last regained consciousness—then, after all the years, at that terrible moment, a self-confessed murderer, a half-witted, half-sodden, disheveled, driven, half-wild creature, what prank did fate play? Who stood there, gazing at me with full recognition in her eyes, and begging for my life? You know the story already.

It was Margaret, the woman of a thousand dreams, the woman I had lost.

You know, too, of that night. But this you do not know—that a mile out of the village I sat on a bowlder in a hillside pasture, and watched the flames of a terrible fire, without any knowledge of what house was burning, and that it was not until a man came along the road long after daybreak, with a shovel over his shoulder, that I had the energy to stir.

He saw me as I got up; he waved his hand. "Bad fire!" he shouted, not recognizing me.

"Whose house?" I asked.

"Judge Colfax."

My heart came gurgling up into my throat.

"Anybody lost in it?" I asked, trembling.

"No," said he. "Everybody got out. The servant got out, and the judge saved his baby, and there wasn't anybody else in it. Those three. That was all."

His words stunned me at first. I said them over and over after he had gone, because I could not seem to believe their meaning. Those three! That was all! What I could not do by my will, another Will had done. The Great Hand had swept away my fears!

Above my grief I felt the presence of one marvelous fact. The inheritance I had allowed to escape me had been ended again! Once more my body was the only body in the world containing the terrible ingredients of my strain of blood. I raised my face toward the blue of heaven, and gave vent to a long cry of triumphant, hysterical, passionate exultation.

I became possessed of the desire to make sure, to ask again, to hear once more the phrase, "Those three; that was all," and then turn my back on the town forever.

With this idea I walked swiftly into the village, choosing a back street until I had reached a point opposite the smoking ruins of the judge's house. The crowd was still buzzing back and forth along the fence, and gathered about the old-fashioned fire engine that was still spitting sparks and pumping water. I slipped into the back yard of the house just across the street, half afraid to show myself, half mad to ask some one the question I had asked the man with the shovel.

Then suddenly, as I stood hesitating, I heard Margaret Murchie's voice in the window above me—I recognized it instantly.

"There is some one at the door, judge. The secret is safe with me," she whispered.

At the same moment something fell at my feet. It was the tiny locket my child had worn on its little neck from the day the mother had fastened it there. What secret had Margaret meant? The locket was the answer! I had been a plaything of some unknown, malicious fiend again. The rescued baby was not the judge's baby. That was the secret! The child I heard crying there was mine!

I felt like a creature in a haunted place, pursued by devils, mocked by strange voices in the air, deceived by the senses, tricked by unrealities, persecuted by memories, the victim of fear, falsities, and impotent rage. I rushed away from the spot, walked many miles, and at last, coming to the railroad again, I took a train, and for weeks, without money, rode westward on freight trains. I dropped out of sight. I lost my name. I even lost much of my flesh. I was as thoroughly dead as a living man could be. The world had buried me.

Almost immediately the body and its organs, which had borne up with such infernal endurance for the express purpose of making the ruin of my soul complete, gave way. Suddenly my stomach, as if possessing a malicious intelligence of its own, refused the stimulant with which I had helped to accomplish my slide to the bottom of life, and with which I had expected to be able to dull the mental and physical pains of my final accounting. My mind now found itself picturing with feverish desire all the old pleasures. At the same moment my flesh and bones forbade me to enjoy them. My body had caught my mind like a rat in a trap!

Day followed day, week, week, and year, year. It was a weary monotony of manual labor, poverty, restless travel on foot, and hopeless attempts to recover my birthright—the privileges of excess—which had gone from me forever. Cities and their bright lights laughed at me.

I suffered the tortures of insomnia, the pains of violent rheumatism, the dreadful imprisonment of a partial paralysis. I was in and out of hospitals. I spent months on my back, entertained only by my lurid memories. My mind became starved for new material on which to work. It was at that period that I first learned to obscure the awful presence of my own personality by flinging my thoughts into the problems of chess.

I recalled often enough the fact that somewhere I had a daughter. No night passed that I did not go to sleep wondering where she might be. I realized that she was growing up somewhere. I realized, too, that a child of fancy was growing up in my mind. I could see her in her crib, a laughing baby uttering meaningless sounds, clasping a flower in her fat little fist. I could see her in short skirts, trying to walk upstairs, clinging to the banister. I could hear her first words. I saw her learning to read. Little by little her hair grew. It reached a length which made a braid necessary. At times I saw her laugh—this child of the imagination, and, once left alone at dusk, she had wept over some cross word that had been spoken to her. I could see her tears glisten on her cheeks in the fading light.

"Little girl!" I cried aloud. "Come to me! It's I! Little girl!"

The sound of my own voice startled me. I found myself sitting in the Denver railroad station with my hands clasped around my thin knees.

No man's own blood ever haunted him more than mine. I had not seen the child, yet I loved her. She had no knowledge of my existence, yet she seemed to call to me. I suffered a dreadful thought—the fear that I should die before I saw her and feasted my eyes upon my own. I struggled to keep myself from going to seek her. I felt as one who, being dead, impotently desires to return to the world and touch the hands of the living. Year after year the desire grew strong to rise from my grave and call out that she was mine.

At last I yielded to my temptation—fool that I was! I came eastward. I made cautious inquiry. I arrived in this city, where I had heard the judge had gone. The mere fact of proximity to her made me tremble as I alighted from the train. I had expected difficulties in finding her. But when I telephoned to the name I had found in the book, and heard a voice say that the judge had just gone out with his daughter, I felt that I was in a dream. A strange faintness came over me. The glass door of the booth reflected my image—the face of a frightened old man. It was remarkable that I did not fall forward sprawling, unconscious.

Before seeking a lodging I sat for hours in a park. Young girls passed, fresh, beautiful, laughing, going home from school.

"Can that be she?" I asked a dozen times, looking after one of those chosen from among the others. "What can she be like? What would she say to me?"

Suddenly I realized again that I did not exist, that she could not know that I had ever existed, that whatever pain it might cost me, she must never know. If I saw her, it must be as a ghost peeping through a crevice in the wall. These were my thoughts as I sat on the park bench hour after hour, until a little outcast pup—a thin, bony creature, kicked and beaten, came slinking out of the gathering dusk, and licked my hand. It was the first love I had felt in years. My whole being screamed for it. I caught up the pariah, and warmed its shivering body in my arms. This was the dog that, two years later, I lost along with the locket in the judge's old garden, where I had gone indiscreetly, praying that I might get a peep in the window, and see my own girl—so wonderful, so beautiful, so good—reading by the lamp.

You need not think I had not seen her before. If I spent my working hours manipulating the automaton at

the old museum, all my leisure I spent in seeking a glimpse of my own daughter. The very sight of her was nourishment to my starving heart. Many is the time I have hobbled along far behind her as she walked on the city pavements. Months on end I strolled by the house at night to throw an unseen caress up at a lighted window. I have seen a doctor's carriage at that door with my heart in my mouth. I have seen admiration given by a glance from a girl friend, with a father's pride so great and real, and it took strength of mind to restrain myself from stopping the nearest passer-by and saying: "Look! She is mine!"

Again the malicious fortune into which I was born was making game of me; it had made my daughter more than a mere girl, whom I was forbidden to claim. It had made her the loveliest creature in the world!

I cried out against it all. I knew that if I would, I could claim her. She was mine. I had the right of a father. She was still a child. I loved her. I wanted to have the world know that, whatever else I had done, and whatever doubts I had once felt about the blood that was in my veins and hers, now I was sure that I could claim a great achievement, and hold aloft the gift to mankind of this blooming flower.

I remembered then, however, what I had been. I saw in the bit of mirror in my squalid lodgings a countenance stained with the indelible ink of vice, and molded beyond repair by excesses and the sufferings of shame. Could I present this horror to my daughter? Could I destroy her by claiming her? Could I blight her life by thrusting my love for her beyond the secret recesses of my own heart?

"No!" I whispered. And I prayed for strength.

Above all, I knew that, except for regaining, by reading books, the refinement of my youth, I was not changed. I knew I had not and never would be free from the old, vicious fiends within myself. I could not, had I come to her with health, prosperity, and a good name, have offered her safety from my brutal nature. I had even abused the dog which had been my only companion and the one living thing that had love for me in its heart. I can see its eyes upon me now, with their reproach, and, I imagine, with their distrust. I had cowed its spirit with my passions of rage, my kicks, and my curses, for each of which I had felt a torment of regret, and with each of which came a hundred vain vows to myself never to let my nature get the best of me again.

I had grown old, but I could not trust myself more than before. I even feared that some day I might reveal voluntarily my existence to my daughter so that a final and terrible, unspeakable culminating evil deed should mark the end of my career. I feared this even more than another narrow escape from accidental disclosure such as I had had in my first attempt to enter the old garden on that winter night I remember so well.

At these times I have kept away for weeks and weeks, mad for the want of the sight of her. I had been forbidden liquor by wrecked organs, but now the sound of her voice at a distance, the sight of her perfect skin, was like a draft of wine to me. Crazed with the lack of it, I always at last gave up my struggle, and, with my heart filled with the tormented affections of a father, I went back to my watching and waiting, to my interest in her school, her clothes, her young friends, her health, her afternoon walks. I watched Margaret Murchie, too, with strange memories that caught me by the throat. And ever and ever I watched the judge. Unseen, unknown, careful never to show myself often in the neighborhood for fear of attracting attention, as sly as a fox, suffering like a thing in an inferno, and no more than a lonesome ghost, I tried to determine if the judge were acting my part as he should—he who had taken what was mine by the gift of God.

Chance, as you now know, threw him into a place where he was no longer a stranger to me. He became a visitor to the "Man with the Rolling Eye," though I believe he used to call my automaton "The Sheik of Baalbec." It was my delight to beat him in a battle of skill,

and at the same time, from my peephole, scan his face to read his character.

At last one day he brought this young man, Estabrook.

What awakened all my sense of danger then I cannot explain. I only know that as this young man walked toward the machine, I realized a truth that had never so presented itself before. My daughter was no longer a girl! She was now a woman! Some man would come for her. And I believe I would have been filled with hatred and fear, no matter what man he had been.

That night I tossed upon my bed, feverish with new thoughts. I realized that soon there would be a turn in the road of my own child's destiny. I realized with agony which I cannot describe that I could use no guiding hand. I hungered for the responsibility of a father. I cried out aloud that now, in this choosing of men, I should have a word. I writhed as I had often writhed, because, loving her too much, I was forbidden to perform the offices of my affection. The tears came, and I wept for hours, as I had wept on other occasions.

I began a new and indiscreet observation. I found that this young man was a real menace. I followed him as he walked with her, liking him no better when I saw a look in my daughter's eyes that never had been there before. I would have interfered with his love-making had I been able.

"God!" I whispered. "I am only a ghost!"

Then chance gave me, I thought, an opportunity to strike at his courage. He is here. He can tell you of the message the automaton scrawled for him on a bit of paper. But he cannot tell the anxious hours, the frantic hours—a tormented outcast spent before that message was written, lurking in front of the judge's house, watching with eyes red with sleeplessness for every little sign of what was going on. Nor can he tell you of the terror that came into a lonely creature's soul the night the judge came down his front steps and met a shadow of the past, face to face. It is only I who may describe the horror of that meeting. The recognition of my identity by a dog who whined and cowered, and then by a man, whose breath gurgled in his throat, and whose skin turned white, are things that no man knows but myself.

I can see the judge's face now. It looked upon me with the same accusing expression that I knew so well, and I slunk away, believing that the worst had at last come. He had seen behind the mask of my years, my physical decline, and my suffering. In one glance, before he turned dizzily back toward the house, he had taken my secret away from me. He knew me!

The madness of desperation came over me then. It was that which caused me to write the message through the hand of my automaton; it was that which led me to conceive the folly that, being known by the judge to be living, I might, in the name of my love for my daughter, tell him, out of my own mouth, that I would never molest them.

I had stood all that man could bear. For the second time in my desperation, I entered the garden. I climbed the balcony. The judge was there. Estabrook was there. They both saw me. I fled with their staring eyes pursuing me.

What more can I tell?

You have heard.

I am a miserable man.

PART VII.

The Paneled Door.

THE DOCTOR AGAIN BECOMES THE NARRATOR.

Estabrook listened to the story of Mortimer Cranch, sometimes staring into the wizened face of the speaker, sometimes gazing into the depths of the painted gardens of Versailles. When at last, in a hollow voice, which reverberated through the scene loft, Cranch had ended, the younger man jumped forward, with his eyes blazing, his hands clenched, his nostrils distended.

"What is wrong with my wife now?" he roared. "You know. Tell me, or I'll tear you to pieces!"

There was a moment in which the place was as still as a tomb. I myself drew no breath, but watched the half-bald head of the criminal shake sadly.

Then suddenly he looked up. With one clawlike finger he pointed at Estabrook. Hate and distrust were in his eyes.

"You know!" he piped, in a thin but terrible voice. There was no doubting the sincerity of his accusation.

"I know?" cried Estabrook, falling back. "I know?"

"It began when you left the house!" cried Cranch. "I've always watched on and off since you married her. I'm her father. I've loved her, no one knows how much! It was my right to watch. I've been nearly mad with worry. What have you done to her? You have dug me out of the grave, I tell you. Now we're face to face. What have you done with my girl?"

The lonely, ruined man had thrown his arms forward. He wore dignity. For a passing second he became a figure to inspire awe; for a moment he seemed the incarnation of a great self-sacrifice. And in that pause he saw that Estabrook's expression had suddenly filled with sympathy, as if in a flash a warmer circulation of blood stirred in his veins; as if suddenly his sight had been cleared, so that he could picture all the suffering which Cranch had been forced to keep locked up within himself, through dragging years. He reached for the extended, bare, and bony wrist of the older man, and grasped its cords in his strong fingers.

"Come," said he softly. "There is no time for us who have loved her so much, each in his own way, to misunderstand."

Cranch did not answer. He did not move a muscle. But his eyes filled with the thin tears of aged persons.

"And now, doctor," said Estabrook, wheeling toward me, "we must find out if Margaret has sent us word."

He plucked my sleeve; he started toward the stairs. He turned his back on the gardens of Versailles and the vagrant who kneeled beside the cot in the foreground, with his face buried in the red blankets.

It was the hoarse call of this ghost of a man that stopped us.

"Estabrook!" he said.

"Yes."

"We may never meet again." The younger man went back, and, without speaking, clasped the other's hand.

"You will tell one person—just one—about me?" asked Cranch.

"Julianna!" Estabrook exclaimed, with horror.

The other shook his head patiently from side to side.

"I meant Margaret Murchie," he whispered.

Then, feeling the wistful gaze of his worn and watery eyes upon our backs, we left the Mohave Scenic Studio forever.

A run across town in my car brought us again to my door. My scrawny busybody of a maid opened it before I had opportunity to even draw forth my key.

"Four or five telephone calls," she said, with her impudent importance; "but only one is pressing."

"One?" cried I. "Who from?"

"Somebody I don't know, doctor. Margaret Somebody. She left a message. She wouldn't say no more than just one word."

"What was that word?" cried Estabrook at my shoulder.

"Danger."

I suppose that both of us felt the shock and then the tingle of excitement in the meaning of that phrase interpreted in the light of our understanding.

"Doctor!" the young man shouted.

"Yes, Estabrook," said I. "Keep your nerve. I think I have the key to this problem in my possession. I have not yet explained. I did not want to do so unless it was necessary. But if I am right you must not weaken. You must be ready to throw your whole strength into loyalty and affection for your wife, and courage to protect her at any cost!"

"I'm ready!" he cried. "I feel that I must win her all over again. She is

as fresh and new and beautiful to me as the day I first saw her. And I love her now as never before!"

"Jump into the car, then!" I commanded, and, turning to my chauffeur, whispered: "To the Marburys'. Where we were this morning. And what—we—want—is—speed!"

He nodded but I have no doubt that Estabrook and I both cursed him for his caution as he slowed down at the crossings, and finally, when, to conform to the traffic regulation, he circled in front of the banker's house.

This time neither of us looked up at either residence but ran forward toward the Estabrook door. I pressed the bell centered in the Chinese bronze.

Suddenly, however, the unfortunate husband grasped the arm of my coat.

"My promise!" he exclaimed.

"You mean to keep it at any cost?"

"Yes," said he. "I trusted her judgment and her loyalty, and gave her my word."

"Pah!" I exploded angrily. His literal sense of honor, his narrow conscience, which led him into inexpediency, seemed to me a part of a feminine rather than of a masculine nature, and more ridiculous than high-minded.

"Well, wait here, then," I snapped back at him as Margaret Murchie opened the door. "If necessary I will call you."

The old servant said nothing until we were in the hall, but her face was white with fear. I read on it the word she had transmitted to us by telephone. And whether or not it was my imagination, I felt the presence of a crisis and a forewarning that the inexplicable events which I had observed were now to come to some explosive end.

Margaret's first words, said to me, with her two large hands raised as if to ward off a menace, were not reassuring.

"The scratching noise!" she cried. "The soft, scratching noise!"

I turned her toward me by grasping her shoulder.

"No hysteria," I said firmly. "Every second may count. Tell me quickly what has happened."

"Yes, sir," she said, bracing herself. "I've done as you told me—very faithful. I went this morning to get my orders from her. I don't say the voice that answered me weren't hers."

"Well, would you say it was?" I asked savagely.

"I think I would, sir," she replied. "It was strange, and changed and soft. I could hardly hear it. She said she didn't require anything. So I came away."

"And then I did as you told me. I went to her door often enough and listened. You told me not to call to her unless there wasn't any sound. But there was a sound—a dreadful sound after a body had listened to it a bit."

"A sound?"

"Yes, a scratching sound. Sometimes it would stop, and then it would go on again. And all the time it seemed to me more than ever that she wasn't alone in that room."

"Wasn't alone! What made you think so?" I exclaimed.

"I couldn't just say," answered Margaret. "I've never been able to say. It's just a feeling—a strange and terrible feeling, sir, that somebody else is there. But the scratching sound I heard with my two ears. And you never heard so worrying a sound before!"

"It has stopped?" I said.

"Yes, it has stopped. It stopped just before I telephoned. I thought I heard something touch the door, and I went up and listened. I couldn't hear anything. I knocked. I got no answer. I remembered your orders. I wasn't sure whether I could hear breathing or not inside, but I didn't dare to wait. I called your office, sir. And I thank God you're here!"

"And you didn't break open the door? You didn't even try the knob?"

She looked at me dumbly. Her mouth twitched with her terror.

"I didn't dare. I've had courage for everything in this world, sir," she said. "But I didn't dare to open that door! I'm glad somebody else has come into this dreadful house!"

"Which is the room?" I asked.

"Come with me," she replied, beginning her climb of the broad stairs.

Her feet made no noise on the soft carpeting, nor did mine. The whole house, indeed, seemed stuffy with motionless air as if not even sound vibrations had disturbed the deathlike fixity of that interior. As we turned at the top toward the paneled white door, which I knew as by instinct was the one we sought, for the first time I became conscious of the faint ticking of a clock somewhere on the floor above us.

"I've forgot to wind the rest," whispered the old servant, as if she had divined my thought. "They were driving me mad."

I nodded to show her that now I, too, was beginning to feel the effect of the strange state of affairs which I had first sensed from the other side of the blue wall.

"Leave me here," I said to her softly. "Go down to Mr. Estabrook. He is in the vestibule. He has a message for you from long ago."

I may have spoken significantly; she may have been at that moment peculiarly sharp to read the meanings behind plain sentences. Whatever the case, her face lit up with joy—the characteristic, joyful expression that never comes to the faces of men, and few times to the face of a woman. For a moment youth seemed to return to her. The last traces of the limber strength of body, gone with her girlhood, came back. She wore no longer, at that second, the mien of a nun of household service. She was transfigured.

"It's Monty Cranch!" she cried, under her breath. "He isn't dead! I knew he wasn't. I knew it always."

"Go now," I said. "Mr. Estabrook has something of a story to tell you."

She left me then, standing alone before that white expanse of door. I was literally and figuratively on the threshold of poor MacMechem's mystery, knowing well that the solution of it would explain the strange influence that had registered its effect upon my patient, little Virginia Marbury.

I listened with my ear pressed softly against the door. No other sign of life came to me than that of soft breathing. Indeed, even then I had to admit to myself that I might have imagined the sound. I stood back, as one does in such circumstances, half afraid to act—half afraid that to touch the knob or assault the closed and silent room would be to bring the sky crashing down to earth, turn loose a pestilence, set a demon free, or expose some sight grisly enough to turn the observer to stone. I found myself sensing the presence of a person or persons behind the opaque panels; my eyes were trying, as eyes will, to look through the painted wooden barrier.

My glance wandered to the top of the door, back again to the middle, downward toward the bottom. The house was so still, now that Margaret had stepped out of it into the vestibule, that the ears imagined that they heard the beating of great velvety black wings. The gloom of the drawn blinds produced strange shadows, in which the eyes endeavored to find lurking, unseen things that watched the conduct and the destinies of men. But my eyes and ears returned again each time to their vain attention to the entrance of that room, as if the stillness and the gloom bade me listen and look, while I stood there hesitant.

At last the reason for my hesitancy, the reason for my reluctance, the reason for my staring, suddenly appeared, as if some fate had directed my observation. A corner of an envelope was protruding from beneath the door!

I felt, as I pulled the envelope through, that the next moment might bring a piteous outcry from within, as if I had drawn upon the vital nerves of an organism. Yet none came; I found myself erect once more with the envelope in my hand, reading the writing on its face. It was scrawled in a trembling hand:

MARGARET: Send for my husband. Give him this envelope without opening it yourself. Give it to him before he comes to this door.

"Poor woman!" I said, with sudden sympathy. "Poor, poor woman!"

With my whispered words repeating themselves in my mind, I retraced my way along the hall, down the stairs.

I opened the front door quietly. My first glance showed me the countenance of the old servant; it was lighted by the words which the young man was saying to her.

"Estabrook," said I.

He jumped like a wounded man.

"She is not dead?" he groaned.

"No," said I. "Not dead. Come in. She has sent for you."

"Sent for me!" he cried, trying to dash by me.

"Wait!" I commanded. "Before you go, come into this reception room. This message is for you."

He took the envelope, almost crunching it in his nervous fingers.

"Remember what I told you," I cautioned him.

"Told me?"

"Yes—to be strong," said I. "To be loyal."

He nodded, then ran his finger under the flap. There were several sheets of thin paper folded within.

"Her writing!" he exclaimed. "But so strange—so steady—so much like her writing when I first knew her. Why, doctor, it is her old self—it's Julianna."

"Sit down," I suggested.

He spread the paper on his knee.

As he read on I saw the color leave his skin, I saw his hands draw the sheet so taut that there was danger of its parting under the strain. I heard the catch in each breath he took. As he read I looked away, observing the refined elegance of the room in which we were sitting, and even noting the bronze elephant on the mantel, which I remembered was the very one which Judge Colfax had thrown at the dog Laddie. It was not until he had reached forward and touched my sleeve that I knew he had finished.

I looked up then. He had buried his head in the curve of his arm. His body seemed to stiffen and relax alternately, as if unable to contain some great grief or some great joy which accumulated and burst forth, only to accumulate again.

I heard him whisper: "Julianna."

I saw his hand extending the paper toward me, with the evident meaning that I should read it.

I took it from him, and I have never allowed it to go out of my possession.

This is the letter.

PART VIII.

A Woman With Two Lives.

THE LETTER OF JULIANNA.

I am a miserable woman.

Before I ask you to return to me, I am determined that you shall know the truth. I beg you to read this, and consider well what I am and what I have done, before you undertake life with me or again bring your love into my keeping. This I ask for your sake and for my own; for yours, because I grant that you have been deceived and owe me nothing; for my own, because I believe that I have borne all that I can, and to have you come back to me without knowing all, and without still loving me as you used to love me, would break my heart.

I must not write you with emotion; I must stifle my desire to cry out for your sympathy. I shall write without even the tenderness of a woman.

I am the daughter of a murderer.

In my veins is an inheritance of unspeakable viciousness.

Before the death of him whom I had believed all my life to be my own father, I was wholly in ignorance of my own nature. I believed that I took from two noble parents the full assurance that I would be exempt from weakness, that I, with brain cells formed like theirs, would possess forever, their tenderness, their gentility, and their strength of will.

You know well how strong a faith I had in the power of inherited character.

To it I attributed all that was good in me. I realize now how cruel is this doctrine of heredity; I have spent my strength and given my soul in a battle to prove that I was wrong, that it is not a true doctrine, and that God and the human will can laugh in its face.

Without knowing my experience, however, you cannot know to what extent I have been successful. I must tell the story of the tempests which have swayed my mind, of the contests between good and evil, of the narrow gate where my will has made its last defense against the onslaught of terror and destruction.

To my task!

You remember the paper that I burned at dawn which my foster father had dropped from his fingers, stiffening in death. It was his last message to me, written in infinite pain, and in an agony of doubt, intended to warn me of the truth that I was not by inheritance strong, but weak; not good, but bad. It told me that I was not the daughter of my mother, whose gentle goodness seemed to fill the old home like a lingering aroma, nor of him who was so strong and so respected of all men, but the daughter of a pitiable woman of the tenements, who had passed her days in singing and dancing for pennies thrown at her, and of a man who, having descended from a long line of exquisite savagery, self-indulgence, and weakness, had been driven by his inheritance through all excesses, and finally to the murder of his wife and the wish to strangle me in my crib.

Can you conceive the effect of this truth upon my mind?

At first I was merely frozen with terror. I did not fully grasp the significance of these lines of writing in which he who loved me so well had endeavored to soften for me his warning against the latent horrors that had been locked up within me. At first I did not realize that the same night which marked his death had marked also the death of my old self.

Indeed, my first thought was of you. The message had said plainly that I might consider myself the sole possessor of my secret. I was certain that you did not know. I felt the desire to prevent you from ever knowing; I felt the wildness of a tigress at the thought that any one might take my secret from me. Between your hearing the truth about me and my giving you up forever, I had no hesitancy of choice. You must never know, I told myself. Though you were all that was left in my life, I might send you away, but to tell you the truth about myself would be, I believed, to end your love for me, which was all that was left to the comfort of my heart. And at that idea I screamed aloud in agony.

I still possessed my conscience; I promised myself over and over again in those hours that I would not deceive you. I did not think for a moment then of asking you to take me with the understanding that you knew there was some terrible thing about me which you were forbidden to know. If in those moments then, when you came to my room at dawn, I made that bargain with you, so that I might feel your arms about me, and know that I was not to lose you, it was the act of a woman who had just lost her girlhood, and whose life had been torn to shreds.

I made a terrible mistake. I know it now. The fact that you have refrained so honorably from asking me the forbidden question, and also the fact of your keeping your promise to stay away during these last days, though you were in ignorance of my motives in asking it, has shown me that I might well have disclosed all to you. Without meaning to do so, I have tested not only your honor, but something more. I have proved to myself that behind your undemonstrative exterior you have that love and tenderness of spirit which is capable of faith and loyalty, and the warmth of which endures the better because covered. I should have told you because the secret has mocked me, and because nothing can last between man and woman without truth.

I should have told you, moreover, because you might have prevented the terrible result of my knowledge of what I am in bone, blood, fiber, and brain.

That knowledge began its corrupting influence at once; it accumulated force as time went on. The irresistible pull of that knowledge has brought me to the point where I know not whether it is heredity or the knowledge of it, which presses upon me—which has driven me like a slave. At times I feel certain that the last message of Judge Colfax, rather than the danger of which it intended to warn me, has been my menace.

At first I recalled the fact of my birth and inheritance with resentment and courage.

"I am myself," I have exclaimed. "I alone am responsible for my life, my thoughts, my actions. They shall be according to my will to make them."

Then the haunting doubt would oppose itself to my claim. It spoke to me like a person.

"No," it said. "You are not yourself. You are the victim of fixed laws. The zebra is striped rather than spotted because its forebears wore stripes. So with you. You are half murderess and half guttersnipe. You are woven according to the pattern. You are molded according to the mold. You are a prisoner of heredity. Deceive yourself if you will for a time, but, soon or later, you, like those from whom you came and of whom you are a part, will be the plaything of self-indulgence and weakness and passion. Fate has made your image that you see in the mirror, refined and comely, so that you may see the better the work of heredity when it asserts itself."

This voice was ever at my ear. It became a personal voice. I thought at first that it was the voice of some other being. At last I came by slow changes to the belief that it was not a voice outside of me. It was my Self that spoke. It was the heritage of evil within me. The thing that whispered to me with its condemning voice, frightening away my courage, and sapping my strength of will, was my own blood!

I began to watch for the outcropping of evil in my conduct—for the moment when the force of heredity within me would make itself known to you and to the world. No morning dawned that I did not ask myself if night would fall without some opening of the gates of my character behind which so much that was evil, I believed, was clamoring to escape. I lived in two lives. In one I was your wife and the girl you had known, who now existed like an automaton, going senselessly through the acts of day-to-day existence. In the other I was a condemned victim, waiting in apprehension for the call of terrible and evil authority.

It was an accident which at last made real my fancies.

You remember that I was thrown from a horse. You remember that for days a torn nerve in my elbow gave me excruciating pain. You remember that, having regained my senses after the setting of the bone, I would not allow the doctor to give me any narcotic. You remember my protests against that form of relief.

I was afraid. I trembled not only with pain. I trembled with terror.

I believed I was on the threshold of danger. I felt the impending of ruin. Though I had never experienced the sensation of an opiate, I even found my body already crying for its comfort. I found myself struggling hour after hour with a desire to try myself. I alternated between a belief that I was strong enough for the test and the instinct that told me the blood in my veins was waiting like a wild animal to pounce upon a first form of self-indulgence.

At last I yielded.

"There is no harm in the proper use of this," said the doctor, seeing my expression, "by a woman of your type."

I laughed in his face.

I hardly recognized the sound of this laugh; it was not my own. It was the laugh of a new personality. It was carefree and desperate at one time.

"There is no need of your suffering so terribly after each adjustment I make of these cords," said the doctor, a few days later, sympathetically.

"But I suffer so at night," said I.

"I will leave you something," said

he. "Do not use it oftener than necessary."

Why should I tell you the imperceptible steps by which, partly because I believed myself destined to become a victim, I fell an abject slave to this drug. I need only say that, while my arm was still suffering from its injury, I gave myself false promises from time to time. "When the pain is gone," I said a thousand times, "there will be no need of this comforter."

When I was obliged to admit that I suffered no more, it was a shock to find myself secretly procuring the opiate in order to continue its use undiscovered.

"This will be the last time," I often said.

Then something laughed within me.

It was my blood laughing. It was my blood mocking me.

I began to experience a cycle of terrible emotions, which consumed my days. They began with shame, with injured pride, and terrible grief. They then passed first to vain resolves, then to fear of myself, followed by the feeling that what must be is inevitable, and that struggle to escape from the weakness given me by birth was hopeless. This belief led me over and over again to surrender, but with surrender came the fear of exposure of my new secret.

As long as I dared I used a prescription which the doctor had given me. I made guilty trips to the drug store where I had been from the first. I began to feel that strangers who had followed me into the store by chance were there by design to spy upon me. My own furtive glances were enough to excite suspicion. My more frequent purchases were enough to confirm them. At last one day I read in the eyes of the clerk who waited on me the question which must have been in his mind. I seized my package, and rushed out onto the street, knowing that I would never dare return.

I went then from one place to another in shrinking fear of detection. In each one my experience was repeated, until I believe I began to wear the air of a hunted creature.

So suspicious were my actions that at last a drug clerk shook my little worn-out slip of paper against the glass perfume case, and scowled at me.

"The last half of the doctor's name is torn off," he said insolently. "Where did you get this?"

I could not speak.

"I'm sorry," he snarled. "We don't sell that under these circumstances. Where do you live, madam?"

I hurried out into the street.

There I noticed that a tall young man, who had been staring at me, with a row of gold teeth accenting a diabolical smile, had followed me from the store. After I had walked half a block to find my carriage, he spoke to me.

"I can sell you somethting just as good," he whispered by my side. "I do a little quiet business in it. It's not for yourself, is it?"

"No," I said, trembling from head to foot. "It is for an unfortunate woman, whose name must not be disclosed."

"Call her She," he suggested, with a leer. "Here is an address. Send a messenger boy whenever you like. Every one thinks I am a perfume manufacturer."

This was the opening of greater comfort to me; my terror of detection was lessened. As time passed I found that my moral sense was being dulled, little by little. I was fulfilling my destiny. I was living according to my arrangement of brain cells. In spite of his warning —or, perhaps, solely because of it—the fears of my foster father were realized. I was I!

Four weeks ago came a new thing. It burst like dynamite. It gripped my heart. It felt along the cords of my womanhood. I could not escape its presence. It cried to me in the darkness. It walked beside me in the sunlight.

It has been hard for me to tell coldly of my first weakness; it will be harder still for me to write of what has followed, without letting escape on this page the emotions which are in my heart. This new thing awakened me with a start from my slumber of indifference and my philosophy of defeat.

With a sudden return of my old self, I began to have my first doubts about the powers of heredity. I began to wonder if fear of myself, inspired by knowledge of whence I came, rather than any true inherited traits, had not been my undoing. I found that I had not changed so much, after all. The goodness in me had not gone. I saw in my mirror the Julianna you had known and loved. I felt new faith.

I felt new faith in the goodness of the plan under which men and women live and strive. I had always believed in a Divine Spirit, if for no other reason than that I and all living things through all time had sensed somewhere beyond their full understanding the existence of a dynamic of creation and order. I believed, if you wish me to phrase it so, in God. It seemed to me in my new awakening that no human creature could be made by such a Spirit the plaything of so cruel a thing as all-powerful heredity.

"He must give us all a chance," I cried, with tears on my cheeks. "It must be true that I can save myself by fight. It cannot be that I will be deprived of the opportunity of putting an end to this evil descent. My father sought to strangle me because he believed he would appear in my blood. Now it is I, who, finding him there, must strangle him!" And, in my agony, I fell upon my knees and prayed.

You were asleep when, in my bare feet, forgetful of the cold, I stood hour after hour at the window of my room, listening to your breathing. In those hours, little by little I realized that it was not escape from a single weakness or indulgence which I must seek, but that I must reëstablish mastery over myself. I knew that no help from without would accomplish this mastery. I made up my mind to fight single-handed, and to stake myself, and, if necessary, my life, in a battle to place again my will upon its throne.

Accordingly I took, as I supposed, my last dose of opiate; and, under its influence, which gavé me strength, I pleaded with you to leave me alone in this house for three weeks. You yielded. I then ordered all furnishings out of my chamber, and all the servants except Margaret out of the house, to the end that no sight or sound should draw my attention or my thoughts from my purpose.

I had a plentiful supply of my drug. You will doubtless want to know what I did with it. I took it with me into my retreat.

My first day I suffered the deprivation but little; it was on the second that I moved my mattress where I could concentrate all my attention on a single wall of the four. On the third day I began to lose track of time. I had feared much, but not the degree of suffering which the pains of denial now piled upon me in an accumulating load.

Often I fell forward prostrate on the floor, squirming in my agony of body and mind, while within me a battle went raging on between the spirit and the flesh. My eyes would search for the packet of drugs lying on the floor within my reach, and rest upon the sight of it, staring as mad persons must stare. It was my will that held my hand.

Can you imagine the eternal vacillation of such a contest? Then you will know that desire fighting against reason now drove my will back step by step, until it was tottering on the brink of chaos, and again, in a triumph of resistance, my determination swept everything before it, until I longed to rise, to throw my arms upward, fingers extended, and cry aloud my victory.

On the other hand, a thousand moments came when, ready to yield to my temptation, I have dropped on my knees on the boards, and, with my eyes fixed upon that wall, have prayed like mad, hour after hour, my lips parched, and blood running from my bare knees.

Voices whispered to me that I was a fanatic, pinning my faith to superstition and the practices of savagery. I whispered back to them that they should see me victorious at last.

"How long will you fight?" said they mockingly.

"Till desire is gone, and the will has nothing to fight for," I answered them.

"You are insane," they said, speaking like so many devils.

"We shall know better at the end," I replied softly.

These dialogues, the torture of which no one can know, went on eternally. They were arguments, I knew, between my ingenious mind and the will which was trying to reclaim its mastery of my thought.

Night and day became all one to me. I lost count of the hours, then of the days. I became filled with the fear that three weeks would go by, that you would return too soon, that interruption would come before my fight had been determined one way or the other. This terror was enough to weaken me. I felt it many times, and on each occasion drew so near the bare wall that I could throw my weight against it, and lose all external thoughts by staring at the blank surface with all but my one purpose banished from my mind.

I have eaten merely to live, slept only to repair my strength. Each morsel of food has added to my bodily anguish, each falling asleep has meant a horrible awakening to new, exquisite torture of the body. My hands have become black by resting on the bare boards, my nails torn by scratching over the covering of my mattress. My hair is matted. My throat, dry with prayers, is almost voiceless, my lips are cracked like old leather.

I do not tell you these things to gain your sympathy, but so that if you should want to come back to me, you will not be shocked to find me horrible.

I must go on.

Five days ago my craving began to yield. The blessedness of the relief is beyond description. Little by little the resistance to my will weakened. Little by little my will gained mastery. It seemed a youthful giant, learning its power. It seemed to fill the room, to seek to reach beyond, and find new labors for its strength. I felt the moment approach when I, no longer a slave of myself, could indeed rise from thanks to God, and feel my triumph sure.

I dared three days ago to touch my drugs, to take them in my hand, to mock them!

Yesterday I got up. I began to write this message.

I could hear martial music as I wrote, and the tramp of a million feet. It was the army of men and women who have fought against evil and won—they who have been masters of themselves. As they passed, they cheered me, each one; they waved their hats and hands.

And afterward there came a little child, and smiled, and stretched his arms out to me. He was glad.

For he is to be my own.

PART IX.

Beyond the Wall.

THE DOCTOR FINISHES THE NARRATIVE.

Such was the message Julianna had sent her husband. I read it, and, without speaking, I arose and touched Estabrook on his shoulder.

"Doctor," said he pathetically.

"Come!" said I.

We went up to her door. It was not locked; it opened. She was there.

She was there with a smile of greeting—a beautiful woman, pale with her suffering, pale as the flower of a night-blooming cactus, but warm with the vitality given to women who love. The pink light of dusk was on her calm face.

She was leaning back against the wall. Her great eyes fixed themselves upon Estabrook without seeing me at all. She did not speak. She seemed in doubt.

Estabrook hesitated a moment, with his hand reaching behind him for my sleeve. He pulled at it twice, without turning.

"Is she safe?" he whispered hoarsely.

"Yes, in every way. The Lord wouldn't allow the contrary to happen,"

said I. "If she should need me later, call me. I shall be downstairs."

I stepped back then as softly as a cat. I shut the door after me with the greatest pains. In the reception room below I looked about for the letter I had laid on my chair. It was gone!

I called Margaret softly. I searched cautiously through the halls, whispering her name. She was nowhere. At last I brushed against a hanging which, being withdrawn, disclosed the message itself on the floor. Its sheets were crumpled together, so that it was evident that some one else had read it. I suppose that the old servant had done so. If her curiosity was pardonable, so was my theft. I folded the paper and thrust it in my pocket as I sat down to wait.

The minutes went by, and many of them had gone before I heard some one in the back part of the house, descending the stairs. The breath of this person was labored like the breath of one who carries a heavy hand bag. A little later I heard a door creak and a latch click below. Then all was still.

The house was terribly still. The stillness beat as before, like a thing with feathery wings. The distant clock tick came and went between these flurries of silence. I looked at my watch. An hour had gone. It was growing dark. My patient chauffeur had lit his lights. Passers-by came and went, in and out of their white glare. I had smoked two cigars.

Finally a pair of feet ran up the front steps. The bell rang. There was no movement in the house. It rang again. The feet on the steps stamped impatiently. Again the bell buzzed. The sound came from some unexplored region of the house, but the little thing made a shocking hubbub in that desert of silence.

After this last vehement assault by the newcomer I heard a door open above. A man, burning one match after another to light his way, came down the stairs. When he had reached the bottom, I saw that it was Estabrook. His face was illuminated by the little flame, but a hundredfold more by an expression of happiness, the equal of which I have never seen.

"Great Scott, doctor!" he cried, in sincere surprise. "I forgot you were here!"

"Come! Come!" said I. "Some one is wearing his thumb off on that bell."

As he swung the door back, obeying me like a man in a dream, a voice outside mumbled indistinctly.

"Yes," said Estabrook, "I am he."

Then, closing the door, he came into the room, fumbling along the wall for the electric switch. The flood of light disclosed him trying to tear open an envelope.

As he read the contents, his face grew black, as if with rage, then it brightened again. He uttered an exclamation of pleasure.

"Thank God!" he cried. "Here! Read this. It's from Margaret Murchie."

I took the paper. On it this was written in a rough scrawl:

You will never see me again. I have gone to Monty Cranch. You won't ever see either of us again. He is going with me. We plan to finish life, what is left of it, together. We will never turn up again. You better not worry.

I have caused enough trouble already. I have been wicked enough and had to pay dear for my lies. Julianna is not the daughter of Monty Cranch. That is the truth. She is the daughter of the judge, so help me. Mrs. Welstoke is to blame for that first lie. I stole the locket from the Cranch baby's neck, and after the fire I saw a chance to get the judge in my power. I snapped the locket on, and I fooled him otherwise. God knows I suffered enough for it afterward when I got to love him and Julianna. I never attempted any blackmail. But I did not dare to tell the truth. It was the only home I had and I was afraid. I have done the best I could. You will never see me again. Monty knows now she is not his. I have money saved. We won't come back.

"Well," said Estabrook, when I had tossed it on the table, "I am dumb. I am the happiest man alive. The Estabrooks, when you come right down to it quickly, would have been sorry if there had——"

"Pardon me, sir," I said. "I will call later. You do not need me now, and I will step into the Marburys'."

"But, doctor!" cried the young man.

I shook my head.

"My dear fellow," said I solemnly, "I cannot bear to hear you talk about the respectable Estabrooks!"

Our hands met, however, and, I believe, with a warmth that meant more than many words.

As I went up the Marburys' steps a minute later, I looked up. A light was burning in Mrs. Estabrook's room. I saw the shadows of a man and a woman pass the curtain together.

This pretty picture was in my mind as I entered little Virginia's room, where Miss Peters met me with a smile —the first human smile I had ever seen on her metallic face.

For many minutes I sat on the edge of the bed, looking down at the child that I had grown to love, as a foolish old doctor sometimes will. Then I bent and kissed her cool, white forehead.

"She is out of danger," said I softly.

"Oh, yes," said Miss Peters. "She will get well. You have saved her."

She moved her angular shoulders as she adjusted her belt, she strode noiselessly across the room, and moved the shade on the lamp. The light now shone so that the blue wall, with its ethereal depths, had turned rosy, as with the light of dawn.

"Suppose, Miss Peters," said I, after staring at it a moment, "suppose that you were called upon for one guess about this wall and its effect upon this child."

She wheeled about and stared at me.

"I've thought of that," she said.

And then she said the very words with which I started to write this narrative.

"What's behind that wall?" she mused, as if to herself. "As between something and somebody, it is not a thing, but a person. A person has been there—perhaps some one overcoming evil or winning some victory over disease."

"Well," said I, seeing that she was hesitating. "Go on."

"I can't exactly go on," she said. "I don't want you to take me for a fool. Only don't you suppose that you and I, ourselves, must throw out some influence that is not seen with the eyes or heard with the ears? Don't we affect every one near us with our good and evil? Don't we affect the people who live above and below us in apartments, or to the right and left in houses? Doesn't strength or weakness come through wood and iron and stone? Didn't it come through this wall, doctor?"

"My dear Miss Peters," said I, shrugging my shoulders, "how can I say? I can only tell you that you have just finished the longest, the most human, and, on the whole, in the best sense, the most scientific observation I have ever known you to make."

There is the story. I foresee that some, having read it, will write to ask concerning my theories. I have none. My narrative is like the data I keep in every case which comes before my notice—it is a somewhat incomplete and matter-of-fact section out of human life. Like poor MacMechem, I try to keep my mind open. I simply offer the sequence of events. Make of them what you choose.

One thing, however, interests me: Did Margaret Murchie lie when she said Mrs. Estabrook was the daughter of Cranch? Or when she said that she was the daughter of Judge Colfax? To me that has always been, in a mild way, an entertaining consideration.

THE END.

Looking On from the Bleachers

BEING THE LETTERS OF FELIX McGEE, FORMER PITCHER FOR THE INVINCIBLES, TO HIS OLD-TIME CAPTAIN IN THE IRRIGATED LAND OF PROMISE AND BIG RED APPLES

By Frank X. Finnegan

VI.—A VICTIM OF BENCH PARALYSIS

DEAR BILL: I hadn't heard from you in so long when your last letter arrived that I began to get a hunch that you had finally mixed it up with that lowbrow on the next apple ranch to you, who is always scrapping about the amount of water you pinch from his ditches, and that you had either plugged him and beat it for the Klondike, or were laid away under one of your own Brother Jonathan trees. Glad to know you are still in the game and able to work the full nine innings every day, and I hope to hear before long that you have bent a hoe handle over his bean so he won't have any further doubt as to who is field captain out there.

You have to put it up to some of those fellows the way Jimmie Haines used to handle the old Meteors when he was captain of that rough-necked bunch of burglars that used to steal a pennant every year or two under Marquis of Queensbury rules. That was in the good old days, Bill, you remember, before we had bench managers and inside play and hit-and-run signals and other trimmings that have made baseball nowadays a sort of an open-air game of chess. Every fellow that went up to bat had one idea in his nut—that was to whale the ball all the way to the carriage gate, no matter how many were on, or who was out, or what anybody on the bench suggested when he was picking out his wagon tongue.

But one day when the Meteors were playing the Hawkeyes, and they got along to the ninth stanza with the count two to one against the Haines outfit, Captain Jimmie had a happy thought all of a sudden about tieing it up. In the last half, with nobody out, the speediest boy of the Meteors got a walk. A big burly named Jed Merritt was next up, and while he was spitting on his hands in front of the bench, Haines pretty nearly pulled the sleeve out of his shirt trying to ease this big idea into his Parian-marble top.

"Go up and bunt, Jed," the cap says. "Just lay it down, understand? 'Slivers' can make second, and we'll have two good chances to bring him home if they get you. Easy, now. Just tap it."

Merritt nodded his dome just as if he understood English, and then he walked up to the plate and took a swing at the first ball that pretty near split him in two; but the Hawkeyes' heaver had something on it, and he missed it by two feet. He got his glim working by the time it came up to him again, and when he took another poke at the ball, just as husky as the first one, he cracked it down to short into a double play. The big fellow that batted behind Jed, and who, Haines was figuring, might bring 'em all home if he went up with two on bases, poled a high fly into center, and the game was all over.

When the Meteors were going to their clubhouse after the cruel war was over, you could see the heat shivering up out of Jimmie Haines' collar and singeing

This series began in the first May POPULAR.

his red hair, and as soon as they all got inside the door he backed Merritt up against the lockers.

"Why didn't you bunt, you big rummy?" he says. "Didn't I tell you to lay it down?"

Jed looked him right in the eye for a few seconds.

"Well, I tell you, cap," he says; "on the level, I was tryin' to bunt, but my hand slipped."

"Oh, is that so?" says Jimmie. "Well, I have that trouble, too, once in a while," he says, "and I feel it comin' on right now." And with that he comes across with a haymaker on Merritt's jaw that bumped him against the wall and jarred the clubhouse about three feet out of plumb. "And you're good and lucky," he says, on his way out, "that my hand doesn't slip twice, like yours did."

I wouldn't be surprised if something like that would have a very soothing effect on this crab that lives next to you, because I judge from the peevish breaks he has been cutting loose when the two of you meet in the same county that he is looking for trouble—and the gink that does *that* usually meets up with it, unless he goes out after the Olympian four-hundred-and-forty-yard record when he sees it coming. Speaking of that sort of thing, Bill, I had my foot on the third rail the other day with Sam Mickleberry, that long length of trouble that nearly covered third for us one or two seasons. Sam's been lawyering out in Colorado for a long time, and he came on back here for a week or so to unbelt a little and scatter seeds of kindness along the main saloon street of our promising metropolis.

In the midst of our prattle, Mickleberry told me about having to go down into one of the cow counties of Colorado to hunt up proofs of the death of a cattle rustler named "One-eye" Harris, who had faded away from his usual jails for a few years—it was something about settling up an estate, or pardoning a murderer, or something—anyhow, it would fix things if Sam could make sure this party with the single lamp was no longer in the batting order any place. He got to the town where Harris was last heard from, and, sure enough, the first fellow he asked—the proprietor of the Silver Dollar Bar—told him there was no question about it—that Harris was dead. Mickleberry began to feel good all over.

"And now," he says, "perhaps you could tell me—how did he meet his death?"

"*Meet* it?" says the saloon keeper. "Say, stranger, I guess you didn't know 'One-eye' very well. He didn't meet it—why, the boys had to chase him into the next county before they could catch him and get the rope around his neck."

Sam asked about you, of course, and when I told him you were on an irrigated apple ranch in the shadow of the majestic Rockies—you remember, that's what you pulled on me when you first wrote back from there, and thought I could get it across on Mickleberry as original—he said he wasn't surprised that you went back to the farm when the time came for you to earn your living, but he didn't think you'd wind up in the right field of agriculture.

I didn't quite get him when he slipped me that one, but after a little third degree work he explained that out in the bounding West that irrigated-farm gag is considered a right-fielder's job because all you have to do after you turn on the water is to stand around in the sun and wait for things to come your way.

I mention this here, cap, so you will know how well you stand with your old teammates—it may be a cheering thought to you in the silent watches of the sultry summer night, when you are sitting by your sluice gates with a rifle in your lap, waiting for some long-legged hound to come sneaking along from the next ranch and shut off your water.

And at that, Bill, sitting around in the sun isn't the softest job on earth for an old scout that's been as active as you, even if you were able to put it over and let the apple trees do the rest. It might bring on a mysterious complaint like the one Bill Conley got the

year the Giants got him from Des Moines.

Bill had been walloping those Western League pitchers out there at a three-eighty-five clip for a year or two, until one of McGraw's scouts got an eye on him and tipped him off to the little boss.

Mac thought he might need an extra slugger or two that year, and he got him without springing a leak in Brush's treasury; but the regular outfielders turned out so well that season there was nothing doing for Conley but to sit on the plank and get splinters in his uniform. He made three circuits of the National League, but the only thing he discovered about the ball parks in the different cities was which one had a bench that was softer or springier than the others. Every place they went, the Giants had planked Conley, à la McGraw, with them; but Bill never got into a game until one day along in August, when Seymour was put out of the lot for casting reflections on the umpire's ancestry, and they chased Conley to the garden.

Far be it from me, Bill, to knock any ball player who is trying to keep a death grip on a pay roll, but the game that Bill put up that day was not only a misdemeanor—it was a felony. When he went after a fly that somebody boosted to him, we could hear his joints creak away up in the stand, and when the fly fell four feet behind him, McGraw sat down on the grass, and leaned his head against the water barrel.

After that Conley tried to relay a long drive in from the fence, and he chucked the pill into the left-field bleachers, and got his hand tangled in the breast pocket of his shirt while he was doing that difficult stunt.

When they got to the clubhouse after the game, Conley tried to square himself by saying he was sick, and I wouldn't be surprised if he was by that time; and Mac ordered him to report to the club physician that evening for an examination. Later on, McGraw called up the doc.

"Hello, doc," he says. "Was Conley over to see you?"

"Yes; he just left here," says the physician.

"Well, how is he?" the little manager pipes. "Is anything the matter with him?"

"There sure is," the doc says, "and he's got it bad, Mac. I had my own suspicions when I saw him try to play to-day, but after looking him over I'm sure of it."

"Great Scott, doc," McGraw yells, "what has he got?"

"Bench paralysis," the doctor says, and hung up on him.

So you can console yourself, cap, with the thought that if your nervous neighbor keeps you awake nights, and has you winging daytimes trying to grab off an even break on the water supply, it's all for the best, and will stall off any stiffness of the back that might come creeping over you. If you keep your old whip in good shape, the way it was when you used to nip 'em ten feet from the bag, stealing second, you might be able to cop this geezer on the bean with an eight-ounce souvenir of the majestic Rockies we were talking about, and sort of wind up the argument without appealing to the National Commission.

It does seem kind of queer to me, Bill, to see you so fussy about water. I remember the time when you didn't care particularly whether you got it or not—if the bar boy forgot to set it out you never mussed up the mirror, or scrambled the free-lunch counter; but I suppose it's all in the point of view, after all. It reminds me of the way Fitzgerald put it one time when he was doing some ground-and-lofty tumbling in Boston while the rest of the team was up at Lawrence, trying to trim the Bluejays three straight.

You remember Fitz, of course—that big, husky twirler that came out of the coal bunkers of Pennsylvania and brought some of his coal-bunker habits along with him. One of them was to lay off about once in three months and start in trying to lick up everything that was wet enough to pour from a bottle, without any particular regard for what was happening to the ball club that was

keeping him out of the poorhouse. He walked into a saloon in Boston one night with his dashboard lamps and tail lights all going, and pounded on the bar to get a little attention.

"Lemme have a little drink here!" he says. "I'm Fitzgerald—I'm the Irish lion!"

The bartender was mixing up a cold glass of beer for somebody, and he let Fitz pound and yelp for a few minutes. This didn't suit our bold pitcher for a minute, and he let another yodel out of him.

"I'm the Irish lion!" he says again. "D'ye see that?"

The bartender took a slant at him, and he was holding up a fist that looked like the ham what am.

"That put seven men in the hospital since yesterday," he says, "and I can lick any seven more that don't believe it. I'm the Irish lion! Gimme a little drink here, or I'll clean out your old dump!"

Just then a little bit of a tad that had been picking out pieces of beets and bologna from the wreckage on the free-lunch counter stepped up to Fitzgerald, hit him a wallop in the stomach that doubled him up in a knot, and while Fitz was grabbing the place where the polthogue landed to see how badly it was caved in, took a quiet sneak out the side door. Fitzgerald held himself together for a minute or two, and then eased out into the street to ask somebody whether he was dead or not, and nobody in the place even took a look at him while he was on his way.

In about five minutes he came tiptoeing in again and took a flash around, to be sure the little fellow with the wallop wasn't hanging around with another loose jolt in his hand. Then he edged up to the bar, and whispered to the bartender.

"I'd like a little drink, if you're not busy," he says.

The bar boy took a mean lamp at him.

"Say, ain't you the noisy guy that was in here a few minutes ago," he says, "tellin' everybody you were the Irish lion?"

Fitz blinked a little, and nodded, still feeling of the spot where he had been assassinated.

"And didn't a little bit of a sawed-off shrimp hit you a crack in the stomach," the bartender says, "and knock the life out of you?"

"Yes, that was me," Fitz says; "but—but wasn't that a h——l of a place to hit a lion!"

I suppose that fellow next to you has his own point of view about this water proposition, at that, but making him see things from where you stand is nine points in a ten-point game, cap, and it's up to you to educate him a little. The fact that he was simp enough to buy a patch of sand sifted over with rocks on the far side of your irrigation ditches needn't cause you to break out in a rash from worrying over the situation, and if he tries any squeeze plays on your base paths, just put him out of the game and clear off the lot—you can do it under the rules without even being fined. Yours for health,

New York. FELIX MCGEE.

ANOTHER DANGER OF THE SUMMER SEASON

CHARLES D. HILLES, the President's secretary, always accompanies the chief executive on his trips to Beverly, Massachusetts, in the summer. Just outside of Beverly there are many fashionable homes, with grounds which include private bathing beaches.

"I wonder why so many people have these private beaches," commented the President one afternoon, when he was autoing up the North Shore.

"Some of them," said Hilles, "appreciate the value, no doubt, of this means of hiding the family skeletons."

The Drifting Diamond

By Lincoln Colcord

Author of "Captain Darrow's Nerve," "The Leak," Etc.

Out of the fog of life comes Rodney Lane—and loses his heart to a diamond. The thing enchants him, warps his understanding, undermines his whole nature. No ordinary gem is this Drifting Diamond, a dazzling stone as large as a bird's egg. It weighs heavy. Its light is a flaming fire. A wonderfully beautiful thing, it has an influence, a power—and that power is evil. Read this account of the fatalities that follow in its trail, and you will appreciate the reason for the belief that there was a devil in the diamond.

(In Two Parts—Part I.)

CHAPTER I.

THEY were telling old tales, by the soft light of paper lanterns, as the *Omega* swung us from the Jeweled Hill to Kowloon-side, and back again from Stonecutter's to Wanchi. Clewley had just come out from England, after an absence of years. The past cast up its buried riches. Before the night was through, a fresh chapter was added to the story of the Drifting Diamond—the final chapter, I was about to say, but who knows? More than once in the course of that story, the final word might reasonably be expected; but each time the Drifting Diamond turns up again, and the tale goes on.

Lee Fu Chang, merchant, philosopher, and unfathomable Chinaman, dropped the first hint, sitting with hands clasped somewhere in the folds of long, silken sleeves. "Captain Clewley, do you remember an individual by the name of Rodney Lane?" he asked.

Clewley looked up, gazed at his friend with a blank expression, and suddenly got a light. "Not the chap with the diamond—the year of the big typhoon?"

"The same," said Lee Fu Chang. "Perhaps Captain Nichols has already told you? The diamond drifted back to us; and a strange thing happened."

"I say!" Clewley leaned forward with interest. "Wasn't that what you named it, Nichols—the Drifting Diamond? It had turned up again, like a bad penny, before I left the East; you yourself had found it, or seen it, or heard of it, and then had lost it, or couldn't get hold of it, or something of the sort. I have a dim recollection. But I remember the chap, fast enough—and the typhoon! By Jove!"

"Yes," said Lee Fu Chang. "It was a unique experience. Nothing like it will ever happen again."

"What became of him?"

"I was about to tell," answered the Chinaman. "You recall that he was of noble birth—that is to say, the inheritor of names? Ah, but now he is a free god, husband to a goddess, and the inheritor of wisdom and peace! This is a miracle—you saw only the beginning. But the woman, his wife, is the greater wonder. In the East, such women appear seldom, and become queens or goddesses, as I have said."

"Don't delude yourself, my friend," interrupted Nichols. "They appear sel-

dom enough in the West, in all conscience!"

Lee Fu Chang bowed, his face a blank mask. "I trust that you make of them queens or goddesses, then," he said. "It is their due." Suddenly he disengaged his hands, and allowed himself a swift and expressive gesture. "Review that scene, Captain Nichols! Here sat the man; and here you sat, speaking. It was a trial of souls. Then, in a moment of tension, she arose, and took the great diamond that you held, the diamond like a bright star. I saw that her hand was calm and steady. And her husband shook beside us like a man sick with fever! I myself was shaken."

Clewley looked from one to the other for enlightenment. In the pause I appealed to Nichols. "Begin at the beginning!" I cried. "Who was Rodney Lane?"

"I never knew exactly," answered the captain of the *Omega,* "but I'll tell you his story so far as I was concerned with it." And he settled himself for a yarn.

He came to us out of the fog of life, and was our companion for one short voyage, just as a fellow might bump into you on a street corner, and accompany you to the next crossing. He told us little about himself; for a well-bred Briton in trouble is apt to be reticent as to his connections. There's no doubt that he was well bred; likewise there's no doubt that he was in trouble. The sort of trouble, too, which a fellow would want to keep his family out of; though it wasn't so rocky as the trouble that some young chaps lock up in their hearts. Lee Fu, who's had dealings with him since, probably knows what there is to know; but you'll never get it out of him. For my part, I haven't the least curiosity. I saw as much as concerns me or any one—and it was romantic beyond words.

About fifteen years ago, late one July, I was sailing from Singapore for Hongkong. Clewley and Lee Fu Chang, here, had engaged passage with me; and we were hurrying to get away before the southwest monsoon broke up. At almost the last moment, I received a note from Pembroke, a friend of mine who held a government position, asking me to call without fail. As he wasn't a man to make a needless request, I lost no time. Three o'clock of that afternoon found me in his office.

"Captain Nichols," he said, plunging at once into the business, "I want your assistance in one of the strangest cases that's ever come my way."

"Dangerous, or otherwise?" I inquired.

He laughed. "The facts are these," he said. "An old gentleman of my acquaintance, an important and influential member of the peerage, took it into his head this year to send his favorite nephew on a trip about the world. The young fellow arrived in Singapore a month ago, consigned to me, as you might say. He's twenty-four, and vastly inexperienced; his family is a power at home; and such charges have to be looked after, you know. A beastly responsibility! Now the crash has come. The fool's gone diamond mad!"

"*Diamond mad?*" I asked. "What's that?"

"He's lost his heart to a diamond—there's no other way of expressing it. How he first ran foul of the thing, what the circumstances were, I can't persuade him to tell. There's a mystery that I don't like surrounding the whole adventure. He saw a diamond somewhere, and thought of it night and day—that's about all I know. You'll have to take this story at its face value, captain, and fill in the details for yourself; I'm absolutely in the dark, even yet. Soon after his arrival, he began to speak of the diamond, and for a while I took no notice. At last he grew so extravagant over it that I became worried, and tried to find out where he'd been and who his associates were. It seems his honor was involved; he'd been pledged to silence! The young have a great notion of honor. Well, this went on; he'd sit here by the hour, dreaming, and waking up now and then to tell me I didn't understand. The most unholy infatuation you ever heard of. Why, the stone had enchanted him; a flesh-and-blood woman couldn't have hit him harder!"

"I see," said I, jumping at a conclusion. "You want me to take him away—remove him from the zone of disturbance, as it were?"

Pembroke sighed. "Too late for that," he said. "He's bought the diamond!"

I began to be interested. "Paid for it?" I asked.

"Bought and paid for it," said Pembroke. "Yesterday he rushed in, clapped me on the back, and flashed a most amazing gem in my face. The boy's really not to blame, you know; he's been brought up in wealth, without restraint—and it's a wonderful diamond. Now comes the odd part of the business. When I found that he'd put his foot into it, I started an investigation. He'd drawn on his uncle, the earl, and the banks here knew him well, and had honored him. I found that the paper had been made out in the name of one of the most reputable Chinese merchants in Singapore. I called on him, and was told with proper Chinese courtesy to mind my own business. Beyond that it was really impossible to go. I persuaded young Lane to have the diamond examined by a man who knows stones, and got the surprise of my life. It's undoubtedly genuine; and by the way the man looked at me, and the strange questions he asked, I'm convinced that Lane has managed to make an extraordinarily good bargain. The amount was twenty thousand pounds."

"Whew!" I exclaimed. "What will the old man say?"

"He'll be the angriest earl in all England for a while! Young Lane has the diamond, to be sure, and the money won't matter so much; but the principle is rotten bad! At any rate, he must leave Singapore at once; I don't want him picking up any more expensive playthings under my wing. I remembered that you were sailing for Hongkong, and knew that you'd keep an eye on him—perhaps instill a grain or two of common sense——"

"Just the thing!" I said. "Lee Fu Chang is going on the trip with me. They may meet under a lucky star."

So it was arranged; and Rodney Lane, with his diamond concealed somewhere about him, became one of our ship's company. He came readily—mere details of environment had no further interest for him; and we sailed on the last day of July. The monsoon already showed signs of breaking. It was a novel experience for Lane, to be cooped up on a little bark, and subjected to the inconveniences of sailing-ship life; but, as I said, nothing could have been disagreeable to him just then. Besides, he was a most adaptable young man—a remarkable young man, in fact. He had the physique, the face, and the soul of your fine English boy; an open, serious manner, a clear eye, a ruddy cheek, the shoulders of an athlete, the waist of a girl. You know the breed—there's none better. To cap the charm, he was to all intents and purposes in love!

Yes, the symptoms were the same, strange as it may seem. He went about smiling to himself; an inward light illuminated him. For the first few days he fairly suffered with unexpressed emotion; he wanted to share his glorious secret, to confide. Oh, I saw it plainly, as I lived with him, talked with him, and by degrees initiated him into the problems, trials, and affairs of a sailor's routine. He was hugely entertained, but had the air of a man consecrated to higher things.

We were sitting by the rail one afternoon, discussing everything from a needle to a gale of wind. It was a lazy day—the breeze light, the sea smooth, the sun dazzling—faint sounds from aloft, you know, little squeaks and groans, soft purrings of reef points against lifting sails. By this time Lane and I had become quite intimate. We talked and talked; and at last a long silence fell—we'd run down. Although he wasn't aware of it, we were both thinking of the same thing.

The moment seemed propitious, and I took the bull by the horns. "Mr. Pembroke told me of your luck in securing a valuable diamond," I said deliberately, without looking in his direction.

The silence deepened, while he weighed the propriety of my remark. "Did he?" he commented, on his guard,

and wondering, no doubt, how much Pembroke had told me. Then his boyishness asserted itself, and he leaned toward me with a rapturous expression. "It's a marvel!" he exclaimed. "The most beautiful diamond in the world! Would you like to see it?" Before I could stop him, he'd opened his coat, fumbled inside his shirt, and drawn forth an object that flashed in the sunlight like a handful of white fire!

Luckily, he was back-to the helmsman. "For God's sake, man, close your fist!" I said, in a low voice. "Behave as if you were speaking of ordinary things, and come below to my room."

He sauntered behind me down the companionway. Once inside the room, I closed the door. "You must be more cautious!" I said sharply. "Diamonds have the devil in them! Here I am with a ship on my hands, a Chinese crew forward that's equal to any crime, and a couple of Chinese officers whom I wouldn't trust as far as you can walk on water. One sight of that stone would bring the whole sanguinary crowd of 'em aft on us to-night!"

His eyes opened wide. "You don't say!" he stammered. "I had no idea! Please forgive me."

"I'm not offended," I answered. "I'm thinking of you; you're a part of my responsibility now. One can't be overcareful in this quarter of the world."

"No—I'm beginning to see." He extended his hand, palm upward. "There it is," he said.

I took the great gem, and gazed at it without speaking. Have any of you fellows ever held a diamond as large as a good-sized bird's egg? The sensation is peculiar. It's been well said that, to the imaginative, diamonds are more potent than women. I've seen beautiful, astonishing women—have even looked into their eyes—but, to me, they're soon forgotten. They leave no barb in the soul; their very humanity is an antidote; for, after all, they're your own flesh and blood, and the world's full of them. But a diamond, now! The whole round globe, miles of mountains, acres of plains, convulsions, upheavals, inexorable forces working through countless years—all these have produced but a peck or so of 'em. They're the distilled material beauty of a planet, as rare as man's few lines of poetry, or his few imperishable dreams. You understand—I'm referring to *diamonds,* not to the insignificant chips that people set in rings. This was a diamond that I held; it weighed heavy, its light was a flame. A strange dizziness overcame me, a sense of unreality, a shock of transmutation—as if, somehow, I'd never be the same again.

"What do you think?" asked Lane, breaking in upon my reverie.

The question brought me back to myself—to a diamondless life. "No wonder you wanted it!" I exclaimed, before I'd taken time to reflect. "A man would almost sell his soul for that diamond!"

He looked at me narrowly, as if a thought had for the first time occurred to him. I wondered what I could have said. Lucky fellow, he hadn't been forced to sell his soul; though maybe he'd compromised his honor a bit. But I understood. Not that I coveted the diamond; I hope I was too old for that—too conventional. And yet I had a desire to hold it a little longer.

I turned away, to get the light on it, and heard him move uneasily behind me. I suppose it had passed out of his sight for a moment. But I was still intent on the diamond. A marvel, indeed, I said to myself, turning it over and over, basking like any moonstruck fool in the clear, baleful light that seemed to hide miles deep in the very heart of the gem.

"The devil is certainly in it!" I cried. "Look at those blue shadows!" I bent over it again. "Where do you keep the thing?" I asked innocently.

An oppressive silence followed my question. I waited, expecting an answer—and suddenly realized what I'd said. One of those remarks, you know, that a fellow can't get out of. But I made the common mistake. "I mean, I should think you'd be afraid. You ought to have a safe place——" I floundered.

"Yes," he said shortly. "I have a

safe place!" He came around in front of me. "I carry it on my body. The man who gets it has to get me first! Please give it back now."

He extended his hand sullenly. "Be very careful," I said, passing over the diamond in as frank a manner as possible. "Of course, you have firearms?"

He nodded. "Good ones. Loaded."

Another pause ensued, in which I thought rapidly. What should I say? The conversation had abruptly butted into a wall. The desire to assure him that I had no designs on his infernal diamond precluded any sane remark. Silence was bad enough; but speech might have been disastrous. The thing was done—he suspected me! I saw him turn, open the door, and go out in silence, leaving me alone with my conscience. I'd been commissioned by Pembroke to minister philosophically to this boy's soul; and behold the result! Stupid ass! I, who prided myself on prudence, on perspicacity, had behaved without tact or reason. My tongue had run away with me, if you please. And yet, wasn't it something beyond my tongue—something that came from without to loosen my speech, like a stiff drink on an empty stomach?

I could see him, off by himself somewhere, going over the interview, dwelling upon it, magnifying it. What did he know of me? An obscure captain of an insignificant bark, a trader on the fringe of the world, consorting with strange people, speaking in Chinese to his crew—and personally queer, very queer! Who would have blamed him for a grain or two of suspicion? The fault was mine. But I *hadn't* wanted the diamond; I'd simply thought, or felt, how pleasant it must be to possess such a gem. As far as I could determine, the whole trouble sprang from that. Why need any idea of ownership have crept into the matter? Why, by the seven devils of darkness, had I been momentarily knocked senseless—by nothing, by a sensation that I couldn't analyze or define?

I learned why later. It was because the diamond had an influence, a power—and that power was the power of evil. I learned that it could invert truth to falsehood, that it could transform souls, that it could call forth as if by an enchantment the latent sin of humanity—could incite men to hate, revenge, murder. But all this was unknown to me then; I had only the vague intuition. A real and rather disagreeable situation, however, was quite apparent. After supper, I sought Lane out in a lonely corner of the quarter-deck.

"Mr. Lane, I evidently made a break this afternoon," I began, with a confidence that was more than half assumed. "We sailors are tactless folk. Let's fight the thing out now. You think I wanted your diamond. The fact was, I was worried about *you*. I'm still worried."

"Don't trouble yourself," he answered. "There's no need."

I was prepared for the slap. It left me with but one shot in the locker, but I trusted to my aim. "You're mistaken, Mr. Lane," I said. "There is grave need. I'm not in the habit of wasting my anxiety. In the first place, I had no idea, until I saw it, that your diamond was so valuable. That fact makes a vast difference. Now, listen to me: I have a Chinese crew—and twenty-four hours elapsed after it was known that you were going in this ship, before she sailed. Chinamen pick up news in peculiar ways; it seems to drift around among 'em, and crops out at the most unfortunate times. I take it that your purchase of such an enormous diamond might be an item of news. Oh, don't ask me to explain how! You know the details; and even if the transaction was a secret one—— You see, I've been through several desperate affairs with these people, and they leave bad memories. Try to appreciate my position. A ship captain is responsible for everything on his vessel; he's the law, the judge, and the jury—the executioner, too, if necessary; he's the moral code, the tone of the ship; and if he doesn't keep his eyes open, he's very apt to die. It was with no intention of presuming on your confidence——"

"Don't speak of it!" Lane interrupted, in a different tone. "I—I misjudged

you! I didn't understand. Captain, you aren't *expecting* trouble?"

I smiled to myself at my complete success. "That's a sailor's attitude toward life," I answered. "We're trained to expect trouble. The universe is against, not for, us. What peace we get, we have to win. All the pirates aren't dead yet, you know; nor all the mutineers hanged. Mr. Lane, do you ever consider what a dreadful force you've brought into your life—what a crystal of incipient crime, lust, and terror you carry around strapped on you somewhere?"

He rapped a nervous tattoo on the rail. "As I told you, I'm beginning to see." The iron had pricked him; and I wasn't sorry. *This* was what Pembroke had meant. Of course, I had no foundation at all for such a framework of apprehension; but the surmise was so possible, so true to the known components, that I found myself in the way of believing my own lie! It might very well be as I'd imagined. To young Lane, however, the situation was actual and imminent. He folded his arms and squared his shoulders, looking off into the void of a new and serious realization.

"I wanted it!" he burst out suddenly, passionately—then stopped. The words had penetrated even his inexperience. *"I wanted it!"* How simple, how comprehensive—how young. And yet, why not. He wanted it.

"Well, you've got it," I said. "Now you want to keep it—keep yourself, too." I took a turn up the deck. How interesting all this would be to Lee Fu, I thought. By Jove, why not use my influence? I came back to Lane's side. "Have you shown the diamond to our Chinese passenger?" I asked.

"No," answered Lane, in a tone of surprise. "I've shown it only to you. What do you mean? Why should I? I don't know him yet."

"Nonsense, my dear fellow!" I said. "You should confide in both Clewley and Lee Fu Chang—they're honorable gentlemen. We four can trust each other," I continued, laying it on as thick as I could. "And really, it's impossible to say how much my crew already knows. I wouldn't be surprised if they were at this very minute plotting to murder all of us to-night, and steal your diamond."

"It isn't possible!" exclaimed Lane. He grasped my arm suddenly. "Captain—I bought it of a Chinaman, you know! He wouldn't——"

For the time I'd forgotten that point of Pembroke's story. The fact almost startled me, coming as it did to strengthen my fictitious case. "He might!" I answered. "If he did, you couldn't have taken passage on a more dangerous ship—and I couldn't have booked a more dangerous passenger. This is decidedly a problem for Lee Fu. His knowledge of Chinamen is unlimited. More than once he's pulled me out of a bad hole. What do you say—shall we go below at once, and consult him?"

Lane fell in with the notion; my talk had broken him up more, probably, than he would have acknowledged. Lee Fu and Clewley were having a game of cribbage, I remember, as we entered the after cabin. "You tell them about it, captain," said Lane. They looked up in some curiosity. Very briefly, I sketched the outline of Lane's adventure. As I finished, I'll be hanged if my irrepressible young friend didn't plunk the diamond down between them on the card table.

Without moving a muscle of his expressionless face, Lee Fu drew a corner of his sleeve across the great stone. "Mr. Lane, the night has eyes!" he said, in a low voice.

I laughed. Here was Lee Fu harping on the same string, beginning where I'd left off, as you might say. Lane had glanced wildly up at the skylight, and stared as if he'd seen something. It occurred to me how different lately the world must be seeming to him. A week before he'd been an ordinary English boy, seated placidly on the throne of the convention—an inaccessible position, he'd been taught. Now, distrust and warning hedged him about, even in the midst of friends; at every turn some one shouted *"Beware!"* in his ear;

doors were shut, windows barred, voices lowered—the night had eyes! Why I laughed I don't know; for it's far from a laughing matter, this first fierce hug of the ghoul Experience.

But my laugh suddenly died in my throat. I looked around sharply, listening. In the silence I'd heard overhead the patter of departing feet!

After a moment, I picked the three up with my eye, and nodded toward my room. They followed hastily, Lee Fu bringing the diamond in a fold of his sleeve.

"There was a face at the window!" whispered Lane, trembling with excitement.

"Nonsense!" I said. "Your imagination! At any rate, the shutters are closed here."

"I saw it as plainly as I see you!" Lane urged. "It drew back as I looked."

Lee Fu's voice interrupted calmly. He was examining the diamond, holding it off between thumb and forefinger. "You bought it in Singapore?" he inquired, as if in a doubtful frame of mind.

"Yes," answered Lane, a trifle anxiously. "Do you know—about diamonds?"

"Something," said Lee Fu.

"Well, it's genuine," announced Lane. "I had it tested——"

"The stone is without flaw!" interrupted Lee Fu. "Would it be a liberty to ask from whom you purchased it?"

Lane hesitated a moment, then shook his head. "I can't tell—I gave my word."

Lee Fu's gaze remained fixed on the stone. "I beg your pardon," he said. "But this diamond is supposed to belong to the maharajah of Pancore. Dreadful results might follow if its absence were discovered!"

"Belongs to whom?" cried Lane, advancing a step, his face very white.

"It is the so-called Penang Diamond," said Lee Fu. "I have seen it once—twice. Its history vanishes into remote time. Many have loved it, many have died for it, and much crime has been done in its name."

"You mean——" began Lane, groping for words. "You mean—— The villains!" he suddenly burst out. "They told me it was——"

Lee Fu's uplifted hand silenced him. "I mean nothing beyond the fact. For the present, I have every conviction that the diamond is yours, lawfully and honestly. Perhaps it was sold for gambling debts; perhaps it was itself gambled away. The maharajah is unscrupulous, and of utter baseness. But I must warn you that this is a stone which will not be allowed to remain long absent from Pancore. It belongs more to the state, to the people, than to the maharajah; there are vital superstitions attached to it. Mr. Lane, you carry your life in your hands! My life is in danger as I hold the gem!"

Lane sat down without warning, as if his legs had crumpled beneath him. An absurd, puzzled expression came over his face—a look that said: What a devil of an adventure! That would have been the first feeling of any hot-headed young chap. But it wasn't my diamond, you see—and I was no longer young. I realized without sentimentality the excessive and instant danger that he and all of us were in.

A new thought struck him. "How much would the Penang Diamond be worth?" he asked.

Lee Fu's eyebrows lifted; he paused some time before answering. "That is a difficult question," he said at last. "Some things cannot be measured by ordinary scales. A new diamond like this might be offered in the market for one hundred thousand pounds."

"By Jove!" cried young Lane, springing to his feet. "You don't say! I made a good bargain, anyway!"

Lee Fu passed back the gem, and watched him as he returned it to its leather case. "The Penang Diamond would be a bad bargain as a gift, Mr. Lane," he said.

CHAPTER II.

You could have knocked me into a cocked hat at this last turn affairs had taken. I'd concocted a fairly strong

mixture of circumstances to frighten Lane with; but my imagination, it seems, couldn't begin to touch the fact. Another proof that truth is stranger than fiction. My nebulous fears had suddenly flamed out like a sign in the sky. And the problem increased with the danger. It was no longer a question of frightening a boy into his senses; it was a question of keeping the boy's senses inside his skull!

That night, after Clewley and young Lane had been persuaded to turn in, I had a long talk with Lee Fu behind the closed door of my room. "Lee Fu," I asked, as soon as we were alone, "are you positive about that diamond?"

"Positive," he said. "Perhaps I have never told you. Once, captain, diamonds were a passion of mine. Thus I understand perfectly the feelings of this young man. In addition, I acquired and still retain the valuable lore of diamonds. I am, if you will forgive me, an authority. Without the shadow of a doubt, Mr. Lane possesses the Penang Diamond, of priceless worth!"

For a moment I sat speechless. Lee Fu—a passion for diamonds? I could comprehend his knowing them; and now that I reflected, I saw that diamonds must belong to that rare class of things which one has to love in order to know—things like ships, or birds, or flowers. A new phase of human nature opened before me. I recalled the sensation, the emotion, that had confounded me as I looked at the diamond for the first time. A slight jar only—but out of such beginnings come the tragic wrecks of the world.

"Have you outlived it?" I asked abruptly. "Is it quite dead?"

Again my friend's eyebrows lifted. "Nothing dies that has entered the soul," he said. "It may slumber—in chains—to be freed at the falling of the house. If you ask me, I will say that I have it firmly chained." Lee Fu turned and faced me. "As for what we have seen, who could sit by unmoved? Here, captain, is a good boy, honorable, fearless, true." He snapped his fingers. "So much for honor, courage, and sincerity! They will burn and be consumed in the white flame of diamonds. The soul will wither, the body will crumble, and nothing will remain but a heap of ashes, the cold stone, and the white flame. Ah, I know! A hundred years already has this great diamond endured, and a hundred men who loved it are now consumed—a man for every year. And to him it seems fresh, clean, alluring—a young, sweet love!"

"What a shame!" I cried, carried away by the thought. "It would be better for him if he threw it into the sea to-morrow, and spent the rest of his life paying the debt!"

"Quite so," assented Lee Fu. "Would you do it?"

The question had its clever, amusing, shallow side. But I considered a second time. There it was in a nutshell. Easy enough to argue, to theorize—but *would I?* "Lee Fu," I said, "I suppose you couldn't find a man living with strength of mind——"

"Why?" he interrupted. "Men have been known to cast the jewel of life, even, into the sea!"

"But that's weakness! Life isn't evil. They should have fought——"

Lee Fu waved my remark aside. "To them, life had grown evil," he said. "On the other hand, Mr. Lane would claim that his diamond is good, and well worth fighting for. Much depends upon the point of view."

"That's why he would never throw the diamond overboard," I observed. "Not till he changed."

"Oh, surely!" Lee Fu admitted. "But men have been known to change, to grow old in a night, as the hair sometimes turns from black to white. We are in the hands of fate, my friend!"

These remarks might well claim the power of prophecy—a gift that Lee Fu has never, to my knowledge, assumed. Perhaps his fancy led him out, as mine had led me earlier that evening. But, likewise, his fancy couldn't have approached the fact—couldn't by any stretch have conceived what lay in wait for us just beyond the horizon.

"Well, this isn't getting anywhere!" I exclaimed, rousing myself. "What are we going to do about it? They're

evidently up to something forward. Did you see the fellow at the skylight?"

"No, but I heard."

"So did I. Lane says he saw a face."

"In all probability, captain, the agent of the maharajah is among your crew. Some one should have warned Mr. Lane to conceal his plans."

"At all events, they know now that we're on the watch."

Lee Fu shook his head. "Doubtful," he said. "Had this man seen that he was discovered, he would not have allowed himself to be heard also, unless pressed. Perhaps I will be able to learn something. We must wait for the cards to fall."

My brain refused to be quieted that night. Lee Fu, as I thought, could turn in and sleep calmly till a stated time; but my nervous organism wasn't so placid. I lay a while on the couch, got up in disgust, and paced the floor, then wandered out into the cabin. There my eye fell on the door of Lane's room. It appeared to me to be ajar—just unlatched, you know. "He wouldn't be such a fool as to leave his door open!" I growled. Without thinking, I turned the knob and pushed. By Jove, the door was locked, after all!

"Hello! Who's there?" cried Lane.

"Captain Nichols," I answered. "I wanted to see if you'd locked your door."

"Yes, I have!" he said sharply. "I'm awake, too."

For the second time, I realized too late that I'd put my foot into it. But I didn't hesitate now. "Don't get excited, and think I was trying to break into your room!" I said, close to the door. "I wouldn't be making all this noise, you know."

I heard him sit up on the edge of his bunk. "I think I'll dress," he muttered, half to himself.

"The idea! Stay where you are," I told him, giving the door a shake. "It's all solid—nothing can get at you. I'm the last one up, and I'm off now."

Back in my room, I cursed myself again for an idiot. I had been so long used to being my own master, alone and unqualified—and the trying of cabin doors is certainly a captain's prerogative. The presence of this diamond, I began to see, distorted all human and innocent relations. Its white eye was as jealous as the eye of a woman; in its clear depths lurked a serpent of distrust and evil. It had whispered to Lane. How in the devil was I to explain to him, if he wouldn't see?

With that, I put the foolishness out of my mind, and attacked the more serious situation. I was disturbed about it; and yet, on my word, the sense of unreality was still strong. One reads of such affairs; in a dim way, one knows that love and lust, diamonds and murder, exist for the romantically inclined; but to be pitchforked into the stew in this summary fashion was a bit too rich for my assimilation. I had a disagreeable feeling that something quite trivial was getting the better of me; that I ought to lie down like a rational man, and go to sleep. I changed to pajamas, threw myself on the couch, and must have dropped off sooner than I'd anticipated.

A touch on my arm aroused me. In a second I leaped up, fully awake. The lamp had burned low. At the head of the couch stood Lee Fu.

"Are you aware that when you shook Mr. Lane's door, the key fell out inside?" he asked. I gazed at him blankly. He returned me a scornful glance. "Neither of you noticed!" he said. "Thus men lose their lives—by the width of a hair! Are you aware also that one key fits all doors in the cabin?"

"Yes," I snapped, a little nettled. "What of it?"

"A small matter," he said. "Come outside. I have soiled your cabin floor."

CHAPTER III.

I followed Lee Fu with misgivings. He stopped in the center of the cabin, and pointed. In the dim light, I made out the figure of a man piled against Lane's door—a Chinaman, by the blue-cotton garments. I ran forward, stepped into something wet and warm, and jumped back with a cry. A wild pounding suddenly began behind the

door. "Let me out! Let me out! I can't find the key!" shouted the voice of Lane. Lee Fu extracted a key from another door, picked up the skirts of his long coat, leaned over, and released the prisoner. As the door flew back, the body fell inboard across the threshold. Lane's face appeared above it, white and terrified. "For God's sake, what's happened?" he asked huskily.

"Careful, Mr. Lane," said Lee Fu. "Here is a dry place." he turned to me. "I think it is your steward," he explained.

All this passed so quickly that it is impossible to impart the shock of it. Blood oozed between my toes, and I was obliged to sit down at once and wipe it off with my handkerchief. Clewley appeared suddenly, in pink pajamas, carrying an army revolver. Lane, out in the cabin now, was demanding further explanation. Lee Fu stood before him calmly, relating what had taken place. I gathered that he had caught a man at Lane's door, and without a word had stabbed him in the back. The man was evidently dead.

"Good Heaven, sir, was this necessary?" I heard the young fellow ask, with all the vials of wrath and outraged conventionality.

"It was imperative," answered Lee Fu. "The first blow of a contest should be sure and strong."

"Didn't you give him a chance—ask him what he wanted?"

Lee Fu smiled. "You will find a key in his hand. He wanted to enter your room."

"But—but—he's *dead!*" cried Lane. "You've *killed* him!"

Lee Fu turned on the boy. "Yes—as he would have killed you had I waited a moment longer. Bear in mind, Mr. Lane, that death hovers always near your diamond."

This, too, seemed unreal—a scene in a dream. I sat there, I remember, holding my foot in one hand, and a bloody handkerchief in the other, and listened as they argued a point of morality. Lane couldn't get over the utter lack of amenities; a man's life shouldn't have been taken without the proper ceremony. His law-bound British soul was fearfully shocked. I watched their faces—the one blanched by an entirely new horror—the other inscrutable, schooled to conceal all expression, as undisturbed as you see it now. There stood the West and the East—the West, so timid, so squeamish, so saving of its worthlessness, so supercivilized, so insincere; the East, so outright, so wise, so fundamentally true.

"What are you talking about?" I demanded. "Lee Fu is right—the man deserved to die!"

Lane stepped gingerly toward the body, and stared at it with wide eyes. I could imagine his sentimental reflections—how often had that lifeless clay served the morning coffee, how often had it polished the very threshold across which it lay! He'd probably never seen a dead man before! Suddenly he spun about like a cockchafer, and threw up his hands. "My God!" he said solemnly. "This is barbarous!" The next minute he'd fled to my room—fled as if from blood spilled by his own hands. I heard the door slam behind him.

"Too bad!" commented Lee Fu at my elbow. "As time goes on, and he lives with the diamond, he will grow calloused. He will learn—even this. Perhaps it would be kindness in me to show him the proper ribs, and the direction of the stroke."

"Lee Fu, you're stronger than I am!" I exclaimed. "That's a hard thing to do." I pointed to the body.

He smiled. "Oh, disagreeable? Yes! But that is beside the point. When the mind knows, the sensation becomes an illusion, and may be for practical purposes disregarded."

I looked at him in wonder. No sensation—when necessary! The memory of a certain game of poker came to me—the memory of my own fear, and of Lee Fu's unshaken composure. In the face of death, he'd played his cards with absolute indifference. Such is the triumph of the Oriental mind!

My own faculties were gradually coming back to me. "How did you happen to hear what was going on?" I asked.

"I felt that an attack would be made. Instead of retiring, I stood inside my door," answered Lee Fu simply. "There I waited three hours. The anxiety of friendship—— Captain, some sensations are not good to kill."

"By Jove—the ungrateful young cub!"

Clewley interrupted us sharply—he'd been examining the body. "It's all very well for you to sit there discussing your souls, but here's a dead man and a gallon or so of blood! What's to be done?"

"A very pertinent inquiry," observed Lee Fu. "Understand, Captain Nichols," he went on, turning again to me, "one death to-night is better than a holocaust to-morrow night. I know my own people; secrecy and dispatch impress them more than great power. If you will pardon me, I suggest that, as a sailor would say, you hold the turn that I have taken."

I understood—the stage was set for a climax. "Clewley, conceal your gun, but be ready to shoot in case they attempt anything," I said. "Have you a gun, Lee Fu?" He nodded, touching the bosom of his coat. I went to the after companion, and called loudly for my mate. He was there at once, as if conjured from a bottle: "Bring two men by the forward way, through the dining cabin," I commanded.

A deep silence followed; nothing seemed to move in the whole ship. I leaned against the chart table, picked up a pencil, and fingered it nervously. It was necessary that I assume a nonchalant attitude. I stood directly beneath the lamp and the skylight, a mark for the poorest shot in the world. "Here's a chance!" I said to myself. "No sensation—no sensation!" But it was a poor effort. My mind *would* break loose, and chase after disquieting shadows. Why didn't my mate come? What were they doing so silently above us? What had *we* better do? The suspense grew maddening; I couldn't stand it any longer.

"Lee Fu, are they gathering for an attack?" I demanded.

"I think not," he answered. "I think they are, as you would say, a trifle adrift. They are asking—where is Hong Ti, the steward? No one knows; he went below, but has not returned. And now the white men are awake. The captain has commanded the mate and two men to enter; but what will be the result? The doors are narrow. Who will lead? Thus they whisper. In fact, captain, I think they are afraid!"

"Then I'm going out."

"No! They are not afraid to fight, especially in darkness. They are afraid to face the unknown!"

"But we can't wait here all night—with this thing."

Lee Fu rose before he answered. "I am a devotee of the great god Chance," he said, with his enigmatical smile. "Also, there are other games than poker which I play. It has occurred to me. Let us, as you would express it, try our luck." Suddenly he lifted his voice, and recited in a high singsong something in a dialect strange to me. It seemed to be an incantation—one of those weird utterances from the mysterious heart of the East—words which are the embodiment of power and doom.

Deathly silence again succeeded, to be broken by a startling and prolonged wail. Through the skylight a voice answered: *"Master, we hear! We come!"* There was a scurry of feet overhead; other voices took up a moaning chorus, a low sound, like the rising of wind in trees. For the fraction of a second that inscrutable smile flickered on Lee Fu's face.

"Once more the god favors us, Captain Nichols," he said over his shoulder. "We win!"

"Win what?" I cried, utterly bewildered. "What's up now?"

He raised a hand in one of his expessive gestures. "Ask nothing, and you will not be refused," he said. "That is a Chinese proverb. You will see—what you will see!"

The words weren't out of his mouth, when three men came into view in the forward cabin, crouching and half running, as if closely pressed. Lane's door made a square corner with the door between the after and forward cabins; and the lower part of the steward's

body, across the stateroom threshold, blocked their way. My mate, in the lead, brought up with a jerk, looked down, and emitted a single grunt. The others halted behind him, and glanced at the body; then the eyes of the three rose to Lee Fu, standing like a stone image in the middle of the cabin.

"A man came with a key, on an errand of doors," he said, still motionless, and apparently without interest or excitement. "This man was a fool. The key was the key to the door of Death, which he opened and entered. Being now unlocked, the door stands wide. All has been revealed to me, and will be remembered. The Sign lies in his hand!"

Simultaneously they uttered a wild cry and fell upon the body. They snatched its hand—the left one, I noticed—gazed with staring eyeballs at what they saw in the palm—then sank to the floor, their heads between their knees. Lee Fu seemed hardly to notice them. They crawled to his feet, they clasped his ankles, they fawned about him like dogs, making low guttural sounds of terror and supplication. This went on some moments—long enough for Clewley to ask a question with his eyebrows, and for me to shrug my shoulders in reply. At last, through the frenzied chattering, came a few words which I could understand:

"Master, we did not know! We did not know!"

"We are fools, and madmen! Be merciful! Let one death suffice!"

"Oh, master, lift the curse! We did not know!"

They spoke in hushed tones, oblivious of their audience, as men might speak in a temple, or alone with a spirit in the night. He heard without a sign, without a sound. The effect was extraordinary; a force seemed to be about us, occult and nameless—a force evoked by the fear of three prostrate men. I was Chinaman enough to attach no religious significance to the scene, for the Chinese bow to nothing but the material. In fact, I knew without thinking that it was the manifestation of some secret society. And yet it excited my emotion, it inspired my awe. The dim light, the shuddering voices, the contrasted figures, symbolic of the deepest and most primitive instinct of man—here was a sight not often seen, a glimpse through the gates of the impenetrable.

"Be still!" said Lee Fu sharply. "I have spoken! Much depends upon the future. For the present, carry forth this meddler with doors, and prepare him for burial to-morrow. Also send a man with water and a swab."

They departed silently, bearing their burden; and when they'd gone, Lee Fu closed the door between the cabins, and stood with his back against it. "We were speaking of sensations," he resumed, folding his hands across his stomach. "It is the part of a philosopher to have no sensation when he has lost. But when he has won! Ah, then he may indulge himself—not too much, for fear of the god's anger—but a little, a very little. As, for instance, to consider the odds against which he played. There was one chance in a thousand, my friends, that I held the proper cards!"

"You're always lucky, Lee Fu!" I exclaimed. "The god never fails you!"

He gazed at me reproachfully. "Such things should not be said—or thought," he answered. "Once or twice, captain, you have seen me win; but of the times that I have lost you know nothing. They are for me alone—some to forget, others to remember. To win once should be enough!"

"Just how much have we won, in this case?" I inquired.

"Oh, all!" he told me. "There is no more danger. As you would say, the tables are turned. Where we watched, they are now watching. Where we feared, they fear."

"It can't be!" Clewley put in. "I can't believe it, Lee Fu!"

The Chinaman smiled pleasantly. "Yours is an unbelieving race, Captain Clewley. You must have proof, explanations; and these it is impossible for me to give. I assure you, however, that we are as safe now as we were in peril before!"

I'd been reviewing the affair from my obscure standpoint. "What about the maharajah's agent—if there is one?" I asked.

Lee Fu gave me a glance of approval. "If there is one, he will now find himself working alone. He will find himself working, not against four men in the cabin, but against a whole shipful. He will not be able to learn the cause of this change. Also, when I give the word, he will die!"

"Wonderful, wonderful!" I cried, half amused at the fantastic situation. "Lane will be relieved."

Lee Fu stopped me by an upraised hand. "I have a strange request to make," he said, in a low voice. "It is that neither you nor Captain Clewley reveals to Mr. Lane what you have just seen. Perhaps he has heard through the door; if so, no matter—we will make other arrangements. But if not, let him remain in ignorance of our change of status. He would not understand; I am afraid it would seem a joke to him—or worse, something to be discussed, proved, explained. Likewise, he might tell of it. You are older men, and, in a measure, acquainted with Eastern customs; it is needless for me to remind you that never, under any possible circumstances, should this scene be mentioned! A careless word might endanger my life—perhaps your own!"

Of course we agreed to the condition. For my part, Lee Fu's seriousness brought me up with a round turn; I felt the force again. It's a *fact,* that force, not a fancy; always hidden, latent, but never to be disregarded or aroused. "Just as well for young Lane to worry a bit longer," I observed. "The great thing is that he's safe!"

"Exactly," said Lee Fu. "I had that in mind, also. How will he bear himself, as knowledge grows upon him day by day? Will his love remain constant? For this time, as you say, he is safe, and among friends. What of times coming, in which he will have to watch alone? I tell you, captain, it is best that he gain all possible knowledge while he is in our care. And for this lesson, the surest teacher is anxiety!"

CHAPTER IV.

I've often wondered what sort of a sign Lee Fu left in the palm of the steward's hand. Was it a cut, a brand, an ink mark, or had he closed the dead fingers upon some talisman? I'd rather know that point than all the rest; it lures me yet, from the background of a fascinating memory. You needn't ask him, you fellows, for he won't tell—it's forbidden ground.

I've also wondered what impelled Lee Fu to make that singular request—why he was so emphatically opposed to freeing Lane's mind. It seemed natural enough at the time, as natural as anything could have seemed just then. Lane had proved himself a very incautious youth; and Lee Fu was justified in distrusting him. Silence, too, was absolutely imperative. I wouldn't be yarning about the matter now, by the way, if Lee Fu hadn't once before given me permission to tell the story; I presume a change has taken place in the Chinese underworld.

I found young Lane sitting on the couch in my room, with his head between his hands. He barely glanced at me as I entered. "What have you been doing all this time?" he asked sulkily. "What was all that talking?"

"We had some men in to take away the body, and Lee Fu questioned them," I answered. "He thought that he might discover a plot. I'm reasonably sure that nothing more will happen to-night."

Lane shuddered. "I can't bear to think of it!" he cried, clenching his fists. "Captain—that cold-blooded Chinaman has——"

The boy's simplicity vexed me. "He sat up inside his room door, watching, while you and the rest of us went to sleep!" I said severely. "There's no question but that he saved your life!"

"Yes, I know—you told me——" Lane began, and then looked up, as if struck by an entirely new thought. "Did he?" he asked slowly.

I made no answer, but let him find his own bearings. After a moment of thought, he spoke again: "Then—then it was really either me or the steward!

It doesn't seem possible—I might be dead!" He turned to me in his boyish, impulsive way. "What must you—he—think of me!"

I couldn't resist the opportunity. "You mean, what must you think of yourself?"

He took it like a man. "Yes! He sat up—saved my life, and I insulted him! While I was moping here, with the door shut, you were out there running chances, running *my* chances—on account of me."

"On account of your diamond," I corrected. "It's well to keep the debts separate."

He cursed the diamond heartily. "I wish I'd never laid eyes on it!" he cried. "You're sure it's all over for the night? Where is he—where is Lee Fu Chang? I want to see him!"

Lane was on his feet by this time, waving his arms—a most explosive boy. "Lee Fu!" I called. "Lee Fu, come inside for a moment!"

The young fellow met him with outstretched hands. "I seem to be always asking some one's pardon since I boarded this ship!" he said, hanging his head a little; you know how a decent chap acts when he's convinced that he's in the wrong. "I've just been telling Captain Nichols that I'm ashamed of myself. I owe you my life——"

"My dear sir, what of it?" exclaimed Lee Fu, with his blandest smile. "I have read in one of your quaint old authors, that we owe our lives to every man we meet, for not killing us as we pass by! If I remember, the author was discussing the fragility of the human organism. There is much truth in that fancy."

"But you did!" insisted Lane. "You see, waking out of a sound sleep, and all that I'm an awful ass! I didn't realize how much——"

Lee Fu regarded him steadily for a moment, and then shook his head. "Why," he queried, "why did you sell that soul to a diamond?"

"Because I'm a fool, I suppose!" Lane blurted out, missing the significance of the question.

The Chinaman gave him a slight bow. "It takes a wise man to call himself a fool," he said. "That is another Chinese proverb, Captain Nichols." He paused, as if perplexed. "But I understood that you loved this diamond!"

A look of consternation came into Lane's eyes. He remembered. If he had been confronted with a silly love letter, he couldn't have looked more foolish. He went to the couch, and sat down heavily.

"I feel years older!" he said.

"Ah!" cried Lee Fu. "What did I tell you, captain?" He turned to Lane, and noticed that he wasn't listening. "Mr. Lane, may I see your diamond again, if you please?" he asked, raising his voice.

Lane fumbled listlessly inside his shirt, and passed over the gem. Then began a silent and subtle play. Lee Fu interposed his body between us and the diamond—shut us out, as it were. By the expression of his back, by the way he hovered over the stone, I'd have known that the object of his attention was rare, exciting, perhaps a little dangerous. He held it off at arm's length, got the light through it, and smothered an exclamation; he drew it nearer, examined it from every angle, and shook his head as if overwhelmed by thoughts beyond words. During this pantomime Lane had evinced a growing interest. He rose at last, strolled across the room, and looked over Lee Fu's shoulder.

"See, captain!" cried Lee Fu, moving the diamond between the lamp and me. "Observe the color! Look deep; there are distant blue lights!" For the first time he seemed to notice that Lane was behind him. "Look, Mr. Lane; there are blue lights like shadows—beyond, and beyond, and always another beyond! It is like pursuing a ghost through the clear, empty sky! Very, very beautiful!"

"By Jove!" breathed Lane. "It *is* a wonder!"

Lee Fu laid the diamond tenderly in his hand. "It is one of the most beautiful in all the world!" he said.

Two spots of color appeared on Lane's cheeks. He backed to the couch, and sat down once more, holding the

diamond in both hands. A far-away, dreamy look came into his eyes; his lips parted in a smile. Lee Fu glanced at me—but I comprehended without the hint. The relapse was over—Lane was pursuing the blue ghost again!

CHAPTER V.

Dawn had come while we'd been talking in my room. That day found us about one hundred and twenty miles west of Cape Bojeador, the northern point of Luzon. I had come up through Palawan Passage, and inside Scarborough Shoal, in order to be to windward in case the northeast monsoon set in, and also to get the land breeze off the Luzon shore. The weather so far had justified my judgment—nothing but light southerly wind, calms and puffs off the land at night. The old *Omega* had been crawling along at the rate of a hundred miles a day, and was already two weeks out from Singapore. The monsoon had held on so well, however, that I began to have hopes of its carrying us in; another week, even of drifting, would land us in Hongkong.

On deck that morning, things seemed unchanged; the mate greeted me with his customary "Hoo morn, sa'"; the helmsman gave me the course in a matter-of-fact voice; the port watch went about its business of washing down decks without the quiver of an eyelid. I watched the men closely for a trace of self-consciousness, wondering all the while if I'd been the victim of a violent nightmare. Had anything out of the ordinary really happened? Since dawn, the details of the night seemed somewhat confused; and I was trying to fix upon a point where I might have waked up, when the cook brought along my morning coffee.

"Hello, cook!" I said. "Where steward? He no sick?"

My cook was a dried-up old Chinaman, who'd been with me years and years—a talkative old chap, wise as an owl, and deep as the unfathomable sea. The moment I set eyes on him, my memory cleared. He had been one of the two men to come below with the mate! I hadn't thought of it till then, but recalled the scene perfectly. He shrugged his shoulders at my question, and put on a look of profound concern.

"Me no savvee, cappen," he said. "Fi', ha' pas' fi', stewal' he no comes galley. Me go he loom, me lap, lap, lap on door. No ans'. Me go in. No stewal'. Flowal', af', no can find. He smokes too muchee—mebbe he fall ovelboa'. Me tell him lots time, you smokee too muchee dam' opium. Bumby you go on deck, no see, stub toe, fall ovelboa'. 'Notha man I know, he do samee one time." The old rascal blinked at me, and shrugged his shoulders again. "No got stewal'—me blingee cloffee," he said, with finality.

"H'm-m!" I exclaimed, feigning great surprise. "You tell mate?" The mate was near by, and I called to him. "Cook he say steward no come galley, no can find. He say he think he fall overboard. You have look—see everywhere?"

"Ye', sa'! No can find!" My mate seemed much distressed at the news he was obliged to communicate. "Me t'ink too he fall ovelboa'!"

This was the way they wished the matter to rest. I presume some one's face was saved, though I don't quite know whose. There was an element of truth in their explanation, however; for the steward must have been overboard sure enough by that time. I never saw him again.

The cook's voice broke in at my elbow—his most insinuating tone. "S'pose stewal' he no come back, s'pose no get Hongkong fi', sis more day, how can do? Have got two plasseng' af'. How can makee bed, sweepee flo', washee dlish, blingee chow? All time galley, plenty cook! Have got one China boy flowal', s'labl' watch, he goo' boy, savvee plenty. You tellee he come galley, makee him fine cabin boy. S'pose no got, no can do!"

If Lane could have heard that, now! But he wouldn't have admitted a similarity to one of the stock expressions of his own race: "The king is dead! Long live the king!" Furthermore, he wouldn't have been interested at that moment. I'd left him on my couch, in-

vestigating the crystal mysteries of the Penang Diamond; and the next time I had occasion to go below, he'd vanished into his room. I heard him moving behind the door, and shouted to him to come out and have some breakfast, but got no reply. The others slept soundly; I had the ship all to myself that morning.

It turned out to be another calm day, dazzling hot, close as an oven, the sort of a day that draws in on one, that presses down. I paced the deck in a bit of shade, considering the matter of Lane and the love that obsessed him—the love of a diamond. Perhaps I took it too seriously; I remember grinding my teeth that morning in a sort of baffled rage. What to do? What to do? The idiotic question tore madly through my brain—the question that's as old as the complications that beget it. As if, by Heaven, each one of us upheld the world on his shoulders—as if time and gravity and the great nameless forces had stopped in despair, and left the work for us to carry on—as if down there beyond the horizon, the clouds weren't rising that would either drown or spare us in the next twenty-four hours!

CHAPTER VI.

That noon, just as I was screwing the sun down for the last time, a tremble went through the ship, her nose lifted about three inches, and dropped again. All the morning she had been motionless, resting on a calm sea. She nodded slowly, lifted on a second long swell, then on a third. I looked around—not a breath of wind, not a change, not a sign! The three waves were so low that I could hardly detect them on the still water. They had passed evenly, almost imperceptibly, like the ripples of some deep and hidden disturbance—as if an enormous fish had crossed our keel a mile below.

I stepped to the rail; and at the same moment, the first of another trio of glassy swells caught us under the bows. A yard creaked loudly aloft; a low, swishing sound followed the wave along the vessel's side. No change—but for us everything was changed! Perhaps you fellows don't know the sensation, the thrill; perhaps you've never received a message from beyond the horizon, an undulation sent out into still waters from the very heart of elemental wrath. Perhaps you don't know what it meant—but I did. It meant typhoon!

I turned to find Lee Fu behind me. He watched the *Omega's* bow rise and fall past the line of the horizon; the swell was very faint; but regular and long. A sense of motion had come upon the ship; sounds multiplied—unexpected sounds, unnatural sounds. The sails flapped, the spanker tugged at the boom tackle, the topsail yards squeaked and groaned against the masts, ropes snapped as they tautened.

"It is early for typhoons!" said Lee Fu.

"Yes!" I answered. "Too blamed early altogether! I've been through five, and I've circumvented half a dozen more; but they were all later in the season. They tell me that the first one is a law unto itself, and you never know what it's going to do next!"

Lee Fu nodded. "That is true," he said. "I have seen one travel from west to east for a short distance."

"Good Lord!" I cried. "And we're in about the worst place in the whole China Sea! A typhoon coming in through Bashee Channel is apt to turn sharp west just here—or it's apt not to! If we catch the wind from south of west, that means that the center is to the westward of us, and we ought to be all right. I don't believe it would back to the eastward here, Lee Fu, with the shoulder of Luzon to throw it out into the China Sea."

"It would seem not," he answered. "At least, Captain Nichols, you have plenty of sea room."

All that afternoon we waited. The sky grew coppery, and distant clouds hung like heavy black smoke on the northern horizon. By degrees, the sun changed color, and shrank to a fiery ball swimming in the midst of impure vapors—of vapors that crept stealthily above us, enveloping the world. The swell increased, gathered power; it

caught the little bark with a swing that had something terrible in it, something purposeful, something that muttered with every lift: "A little stronger—a little stronger! *Look out!*"

I must have walked miles that afternoon—couldn't keep still. The calmness of the sea was a mockery; everywhere I looked, tremendous and awful forces were massing; and there we lay, motionless, impotent.

Lane had been on deck since dinner, watching the weather with the rest of us. The meaning of that wild sky was too plain to be missed, even by a landsman. And then he couldn't fail to see the anxiety on our faces, though our talk was no doubt beyond his grasp. He seemed very quiet, and asked no questions. The thought came to me, I remember, that at last something had occurred sufficiently important to drive the diamond out of his mind!

We were eating supper, a silent four, when the *Omega* careened sharply. Dishes slid about the table, something fell with a crash in the after cabin, and we didn't need the mate's shout to inform us that the wind had struck us on the port beam. We rushed on deck, and a glance at the compass told me that we'd caught it from due north. We were on the western edge of the typhoon; the center was between us and Luzon! Was it moving south across our bow, or coming directly toward us?

The breeze was fresh, steady, and sweet with the odor of flowers. I sniffed it a while, trying to make up my mind. "I'm going to run to the southward, before the wind," I said at last, turning to Lee Fu. "The storm *ought* to be traveling west. If it is, we can slip away before it gets here."

"Exactly," he answered. "I should do the same, Captain Nichols. In a few hours we will learn more."

What Lee Fu doesn't know about typhoons isn't worth knowing, and it was a relief to have his support. I at once took in the royals, gaff topsail, and outer jib, and put her off before the wind. Night fell swiftly, and the darkness was tangible, touching us on either hand. We felt our way about decks, with arms extended like blind men. The wind rose little by little; it moaned overhead in the rigging, it hissed in the sails. Low sounds came to us through the night—faint echoes of thunder, vibrations of distant concussions, wandering down the lanes of the storm. And still that heavenly sweetness hung about us, as if, all unseen, we were sailing between banks of fragrant flowers.

The glow of the binnacle seemed to be the only light in an immense void; I hovered near it like a night moth, watching for a shift of wind! But at ten o'clock there was no change. We'd been holding a south course for four hours then, and must have covered a good forty miles. I took in the two topgallant sails, double-reefed the spanker, and went below to consult Lee Fu.

I found him playing solitaire on the chart table. "I'm going to haul her up on the port tack, and get away to the westward, Lee Fu," I said.

"How is the wind?" he asked, holding a card poised above the pile.

"Still due north, and blowing on harder. The center's evidently moving along with us, and edging a bit nearer all the time."

He placed the card on its proper stack, and looked up. "It will probably turn and follow you," he said.

"What would you do, then—keep on?" I demanded. "It doesn't seem good sense, Lee Fu; we can't look into the future!"

He played another card. "No," he said. "Except that if the typhoon is to catch us, it will catch us. Nothing that we do will be of avail."

I felt like sweeping his confounded cards on the floor. "In your opinion, then," I inquired, "is this particular typhoon booked to catch us? For Heaven's sake, say something definite!"

"That, captain, is beyond my province," he answered, with an exasperating smile. "The thing to do, however, is exactly what you have proposed—stand to the westward."

Young Lane had been sitting on one of the side couches, smoking hard, and listening to the conversation. "What

if it does catch us?" he asked suddenly. "What will happen? Is a typhoon——"

"Mr. Lane, I don't want it to catch us!" I said. "The *Omega* is too old. Anything might happen!"

He clutched at his belt, and a deathly pallor came on his face. "You don't mean that there would be any danger?"

"It's dangerous to be alive, Mr. Lane!" I snapped, in disgust.

Lee Fu placed the last card on the table, and showed me four neat packs, each covered by a king. "I have it!" he exclaimed.

"Have what?" cried Lane, jumping up eagerly, his mind fixed on escape.

"The game," said Lee Fu.

CHAPTER VII.

As the significance of Lee Fu's remark dawned upon him, Lane flushed to the roots of his hair. Without a word, he turned away sullenly, and went to his room. I couldn't exactly blame him; I'd been touched myself at Lee Fu's indifference. To a mere mortal, a philosopher is a trying companion in time of trouble. I knew, however, that the moment Lee Fu took exception to my handling of the ship, he'd assume quite a different attitude. No one can be quicker or surer in an emergency than Lee Fu. This knowledge gave me confidence. I went on deck, brought the *Omega* up on the port tack, and off we dashed in another direction.

There was something big and glorious, after all, in this skirmish with the elements; the sailor heart answered to it, the soul of dead sailor generations awoke at its call. I clung to the weather rail, exulting in the bound of the ship beneath me, in the crash of far-flung water, in the song of straining sails. She swooped bravely as the big swells passed under her; she stood up stanchly to the wind that was now a gale. It seemed as if she, too, had renewed a measure of her youth and fire—had scented the race, as an old horse will, and tossed her head with the spirit that triumphs over time and change.

The black night engulfed us, the invisible phosphorescent waves streamed by us, the flower-scented gale careened us; we headed for nothing, we were bound nowhere; we shot like a bolt through the dark—like a bolt fired at random—silent, unswerving, powerful, and showing dim lights that were lost in the amazing gloom. God pity any ship that had stood in our way that night! We were incarnate fear, loose upon the waters—men in our hollow wooden engine, fleeing madly for the sake of our small but terribly important lives.

And the typhoon turned, and followed us! Oh, yes, flee as we would, maneuver as we would, it leaped along our wake in giant strides, it tracked us like a hound on a fresh trail! Somewhere in the inexorable schedule, it was written that we were to be caught; and from that decree there was no immunity, as Lee Fu had said.

The wind held north—due north—and blew on harder every hour. At three o'clock it was howling; by that time I had the ship under a main upper topsail, with both courses hauled up. Since midnight we had been stripping her as fast as we could get the sail furled. It was slow work on such a night; but the Chinamen behaved splendidly. There was already a heavy sea from north, kicked up by the wind that we had; and underneath that, the big swell still rolled in from about northeast. Between the two of them, the old bark had begun to labor heavily. Too late then to think of running off to the south again; I wouldn't have dared to put her before it! Besides, by the feeling of every fresh gust of wind, I wanted to get the rest of the sail off her as soon as possible.

It was while they were trying to furl the mainsail that I felt a touch on my arm. I was standing by the forward end of the house at the time; the sail made a great slatting, and the wind screamed a steady note. Some one was speaking to me; a few words came to my ears: "Captain Nichols—you——"

"Yes!" I shouted, grabbing the arm that had touched me, and following it in till I found a man's shoulder. "Who is it?"

"It's I—Lane!" the voice yelled. "This is awful!"

Holding him by the shoulder, I couldn't even see a vague outline; I couldn't see my own arm! How he'd found me, I don't know; he must have stumbled on me. "What do you want?" I shouted. "What are you doing here?"

"I want to know——" A fierce squall struck us, the sail thundered overhead, and I lost his voice completely. He pulled himself toward me, and put his mouth close to my ear. "Is this a typhoon? Is she sinking?" he cried.

Idiotic landlubber, he'd groped his way on deck in a gale of wind to ask me that! It started my temper; you can imagine that I wasn't in a placid frame of mind to begin with. I swore. "Go below!" I screamed. "This is no place for you! You'll be overboard next!" I gave him a push. "Go below—I'm coming down soon."

The moment he'd gone, I reproached myself. It's one thing for a sailor to find his way about decks in the night, and another thing for a landsman. Lane might have become bewildered, and taken the wrong direction; he might have lost his footing; a dozen mishaps might have befallen him. I worked myself into a panic about it; and was glad enough, later, to find him safe in the cabin.

TO BE CONTINUED.

The second and concluding part of this novel will be published in the first August POPULAR, on sale two weeks hence, July 7th.

HIS LAST THREE-DOLLAR BILL

THIS illustrates the tremendous, astounding, and gorgeous value of making a big show as a last resort. It indicates that brass, bravery, and bunk, properly connected with an opera hat and pearl shirt studs, can make the conquests of Alexander the Great look like a five-cent moving-picture show when the lights are bad.

The hero is Fred T. Dubois, who has been many things at many times. Once he was a merchant, and once he was a Republican United States senator, and once again he was a Democratic senator. At quite another time, however, he was dead broke in Chicago. Carefully searching himself at five o'clock in the afternoon, he discovered that he had three dollars in his pocket and a feeling of great dreariness in his heart. He did not know whether he would retire to the almshouse or retreat to the lake when that three dollars had given out. The sun was setting in clouds of red, and the breeze that swept down Michigan Avenue was cold. Fred shivered and concluded in a flash of unusual sagacity that this was a sad and weary world.

"Well," he told himself, "I'll put up the best front possible until ruin lays its cold and clammy hand upon my throat. I'll go to the opera this evening."

Whereupon, he arrayed himself like a bridegroom, strolled down to the theater, tossed out his last three dollars and bought a ticket for a seat near the stage. He was particular that it should be an aisle seat. Then he walked down the aisle with the demeanor of a hero and the haughtiness of an indicted millionaire.

The upshot of it was that his seat happened to be next to a man who was unaccompanied at the theater. At the first intermission the stranger invited Dubois out to have a drink. As they strolled up the street after the performance, the other, impressed with Fred's superb appearance and clever conversation, closed a business deal with him that set him on his feet and gave him a new start in life.

All of which indicates that, while you have a dress suit, you stand a chance to hypnotize ready money.

A Chat With You

WE have already mentioned in these columns the tragic and heroic death of Jacques Futrelle. Enough has already been written about the last and greatest of the wrecks of the Western ocean. To express adequately the personal loss felt by those who knew him, and the much wider spread sense of loss felt by those who knew him only through his stories is beyond our power. It is well to remember, however, that every man must die some time, and that there is no finer fashion of death than that which came to Futrelle. As a writer he was interesting not so much for what he had done as for the splendid promise his work held for the future. Every one who knew him or his work felt that his best stories were yet to come.

WHEN Futrelle sailed on the *Titanic* he was at work on two pet conceptions. One was a new series of detective stories in which the central figure was "Darracq," a fresh and vital creation of Futrelle's. The other was to be a new series of mystery stories, in which the author's famous "Thinking Machine" was to dominate the action and interest. THE POPULAR MAGAZINE had contracted for the publication of both series. We had planned to give them to you during this summer, and through the fall and winter. All the stories had been planned out. Some had not been written, some went down with the *Titanic*. Of them all there now remain to us seven stories. Four of these are "Thinking Machine" stories, the other three concern themselves with the new character, "Darracq."

FUTRELLE had planned to make his new narrative of the "Thinking Machine" consist of ten short stories, each complete in itself, but all more or less connected through the dominating personality of the central figure. He had expected to make them better than any detective stories he had ever written; in fact, the best piece of work he had ever done. When we read the first four we felt that his expectations would be realized. They are like no other mystery stories we have ever read. They have a brilliancy, an intensity of interest we can recall in nothing else. You remember, perhaps, what a charm and holding power the original Sherlock Holmes stories had. These new tales of the "Thinking Machine" have the same quality. Of their kind they stand in the very first rank. Many a writer can put together the skeleton of a detective tale, and clothe it in some sort of literary habiliment, but to do what Futrelle has done in these four stories requires a special sort of talent that is scarce found once in a generation, and which, were we not a little shy of the word, we would call genius.

THE first of these stories will appear in the first August issue of THE POPULAR, out on the stands two weeks from to-day. It is called "The Tragedy of the Life Raft." Coincidence, when used in fiction, is sometimes interesting,

sometimes amusing, sometimes ridiculous. When it appears in real life it may be almost uncanny. This story of Futrelle's, which had been rewritten and polished only a short time before his death, records the sinking of an ocean liner. In fact the keynote of the narrative, the dominant strain that runs through it, is given us in the sentence, repeated over and over with telling effect in the story: "A lashing mist-covered sea, a titanic chaos of water, and upon its troubled bosom a life raft, to which three persons were clinging." Need we ask you to be sure to read the tale? It is the first of four which will appear in successive numbers of the magazine. Following these will come the three stories of Futrelle's other uncompleted series. We part with the creator of "The Thinking Machine" with a regret it is easier to understand than to express. We are glad that his last and best work is to appear in this magazine.

ANOTHER novel by Henry C. Rowland opens the next issue of the magazine. Rowland has already proved his versatility, and gift as a writer of stirring narrative. This new novel, "Corrigan the Raw," is a story of the Philippines. Corrigan is an East Side boy, of ready wit and godlike physique. The other three characters are an old Spanish padre, a two-fisted, domineering Australian sea captain, and a charming mestizo girl. Corrigan has been a U. S. soldier, and has lost his regiment. His wanderings take him through strange adventures, and the whole story is as delightful a romance of the Orient as we have ever read. Like everything that Rowland writes it is patterned on nothing else, it is new, and refreshingly original. The telling is never hackneyed, the action and incident are never forced, the characters, good, bad, and indifferent, are all intensely human, and all, even the bad, likable in their way. No matter what the weather, the July day on which you read this story will be a pleasant one for you.

SLEDGE'S WAY" is the title of a big new serial story by George Randolph Chester, creator of "Get-Rich-Quick Wallingford," and author of half a dozen other successful books which you remember without our mention. You have already met Sledge in the four or five novelettes which Chester has written for you in the past. In this serial you will learn to know him better, you will see that there are human emotions under his sluggish, impassive exterior. Can you imagine Sledge in love? You will find him so in this serial. His method of wooing is original and characteristic. If the lady wants roses he buys out a florist shop, and sends them to her by the wagonload. If she wants to ride he sends two or three automobiles, so that she can choose and pick. There is plenty of comedy in the story, but aside from the comedy it is a stirring narrative of modern business and politics. It is one of those stories which stirs you, as you read, to wonder how it will ever turn out. It is a succession of surprises, but each surprise is logical and inevitable. The first installment will appear in the next issue of the magazine. We have mentioned three features of this next POPULAR. There are half a dozen others just as interesting. Doesn't it sound like a good number?

WE INVITE

EVERY THIN MAN AND WOMAN HERE

EVERY READER OF THIS MAGAZINE TO GET FAT AT OUR EXPENSE

This is an invitation that no thin man or woman can afford to ignore. We'll tell you why. We are going to give you a wonderful discovery that helps digest the foods you eat—that puts good, solid flesh on people who are thin and under-weight, no matter what the cause may be—that makes brain in five hours and blood in four—that puts the red corpuscles in the blood which every thin man or woman so sadly needs. How can we do this? We will tell you. Science has discovered a remarkable concentrated treatment which increases cell growth, the very substance of which our bodies are made—a treatment that makes indigestion and other stomach troubles disappear as if by magic and makes an old dyspeptic or a sufferer from weak nerves or lack of vitality feel like a 2-year-old. This new treatment, which has proved a boon to every thin person, is called Sargol. Don't forget the name—"S-A-R-G-O-L." Nothing like it has ever been produced before. It is a revelation to women who have never been able to appear stylish in anything they wore because of their thinness. It is a godsend to every man who is under weight or is lacking in nerve force or energy. If you want a beautiful and well-rounded figure of symmetrical proportions, of which you can feel justly proud—if you want a body full of throbbing life and energy, write The Sargol Company, 401-U, Herald Bldg., Binghamton, N. Y., today and we will send you, absolutely free, a 50c box of Sargol that will prove all we claim. Take one with every meal, and in five minutes after you take the first concentrated tablet of this precious product it will commence to unfold its virtues, and it has by actual demonstration often increased the weight at the rate of one pound a day. But you say you want proof! Well, here you are. Here is the statement of those who have tried—who have been convinced—and who will swear to the virtues of this marvelous preparation.

REV. GEORGE W DAVIS says:

"I have made a faithful trial of the Sargol treatment and must say it has brought to me new life and vigor. I have gained twenty pounds and now weigh 150 pounds, and, what is better, I have gained the days of my boyhood. It has been the turning point of my life. My health is now fine. I don't have to take any medicine at all and never want to again."

MRS. A. I. RODENHEISER writes:

"I have gained immensely since I took Sargol, for I only weighed about 106 pounds when I began using it and now I weigh 130 pounds, so really this makes twenty-four pounds. I feel stronger and am looking better than ever before, and now I carry rosy cheeks, which is something I could never say before.

"My old friends who have been used to seeing me with a thin, long face, say that I am looking better than they have ever seen me before, and father and mother are so pleased to think I have got to look so well and weigh so heavy for me."

CLAY JOHNSON says:

"Please send me another ten-day treatment. I am well pleased with Sargol. It has been the light of my life. I am getting back to my proper weight again. When I began to take Sargol I only weighed 138 pounds, and now, four weeks later, I am weighing 153 pounds and feeling fine. I don't have that stupid feeling every morning that I used to have. I feel good all the time. I want to put on about five pounds of flesh and that will be all I want."

F. GAGON writes:

"Here is my report since taking the Sargol treatment. I am a man 67 years of age, and was all run down to the very bottom. I had to quit work, as I was so weak. Now, thanks to Sargol, I look like a new man. I gained 22 pounds with 24 days' treatment. I cannot tell you how happy I feel. All my clothes are getting too tight. My face has a good color and I never was so happy in my life."

MRS. VERNIE ROUSE says:

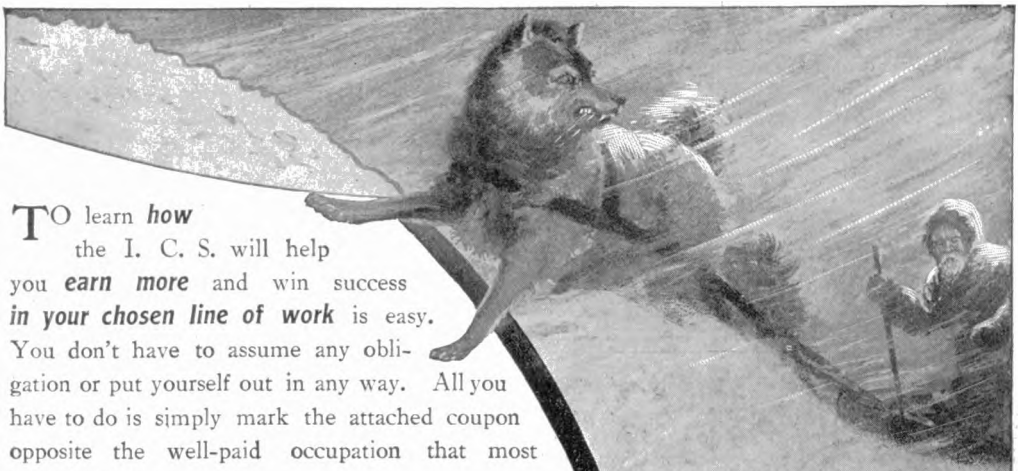
"Sargol is certainly the grandest treatment I ever used. It has helped me greatly. I could hardly eat anything and was not able to sit up three days out of a week, with stomach trouble. I took only two boxes of Sargol and can eat anything and it don't hurt me and I have no more headache. My weight was 120 pounds and now I weigh 140 and feel better than I have for five years. I am now as fleshy as I want to be, and shall certainly recommend Sargol, for it does just exactly what you say, it will do."

You may know some of these people or know somebody who knows them. We will send you their full address if you wish, so that you can find out all about Sargol and the wonders it has wrought.

Probably you are now thinking whether all this can be true. Stop it. Write us at once and we will send you, absolutely free, a 50c package of the most wonderful tablets you have ever seen. No matter what the cause of your thinness is from, Sargol makes thin folks fat, but we don't ask you to take our word for it. Simply cut the coupon below and inclose 10c stamps to help cover the distribution expenses and Uncle Sam's mail will bring you the most valuable package you ever received.

COME, EAT WITH US AT OUR EXPENSE

This coupon entitles any thin person to one 50c. package of Sargol, the concentrated Flesh Builder (provided you have never tried it), and that 10c. is inclosed to cover postage, packing, etc. Read our advertisement printed above, and then put 10c. in stamps in letter to-day, with this coupon, and the full 50c. package will be sent to you by return of post. Address: The Sargol Company, 401-U, Herald Bldg., Binghamton, N. Y. Write your name and address plainly, and **PIN THIS COUPON TO YOUR LETTER.**



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Building Contractor	Lettering & Sign Painting
Architectural Draftsman	**Advertising**
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Concrete Construction	Commercial Illustrating
Mechan. Engineer	**Industrial Designing**
Mechanical Draftsman	**Commercial Law**
Refrigeration Engineer	**Teacher**
Civil Engineer	**English Branches**
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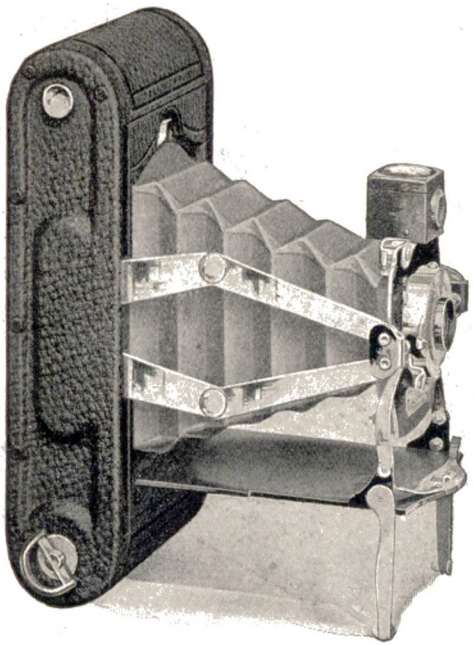

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