

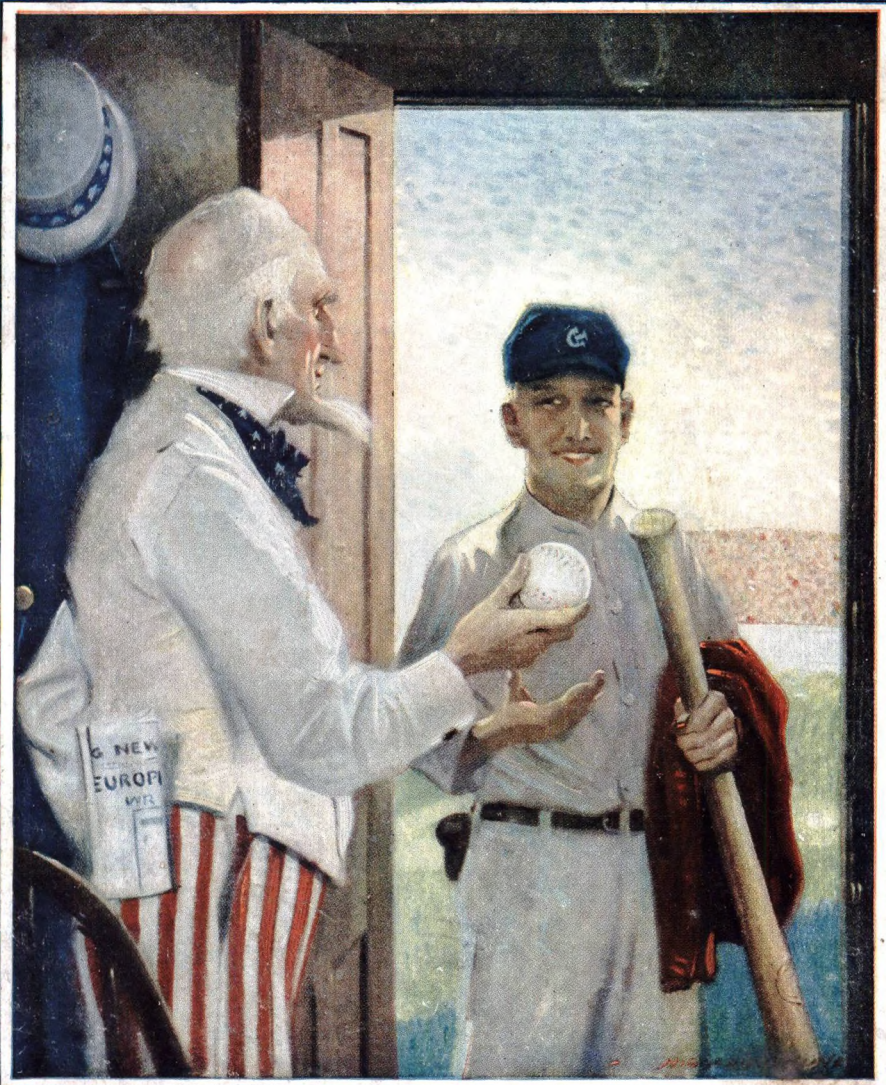
TWICE-A-MONTH

The Popular Magazine

VOL. 44
NO. 2

APRIL 7TH

20
CENTS



1917

One Man Thinks Like This:

"A man who lets this country be pulled into a row isn't patriotic—he's a traitor. If other nations come up to our fence and make faces, best thing to do is turn around and keep right on with our digging—turn our back and keep digging."

Another Man Acts Like This:

Believes in preparedness and takes a crowd of young fellows from the streets and builds up a naval militia with them—the best trained and most efficient organization of the kind on the Atlantic coast.

HOLMAN DAY, in his new novel, "The Dictator," tells about both men. One is Governor of the State; the other becomes Adjutant General. A stirring novel, and timely. Read the story complete in

NO. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46, 47, 48, 49, 50, 51, 52, 53, 54, 55, 56, 57, 58, 59, 60, 61, 62, 63, 64, 65, 66, 67, 68, 69, 70, 71, 72, 73, 74, 75, 76, 77, 78, 79, 80, 81, 82, 83, 84, 85, 86, 87, 88, 89, 90, 91, 92, 93, 94, 95, 96, 97, 98, 99, 100
TWICE-A-MONTH
The Popular Magazine

On the news stands April 20th. Price, 20 cents



Photo
White

Oscar
Saenger

The Victor Company
announces
a complete course
in vocal training
by **Oscar Saenger**
in twenty lessons
on ten Victor Records
\$ 25

Soprano; Mezzo-Soprano; Tenor; Baritone; or Bass

Every student of vocal music, every aspiring young singer, every one who has a voice, even though it be untrained, can now develop his or her talents under the direction of Oscar Saenger—America's greatest and most successful vocal teacher.

No matter where they may live, all those who wish to sing may now learn to do so under the direction of a master who is credited with having entered more pupils upon successful operatic, oratorio or concert careers than has any other teacher in the United States.

The Oscar Saenger Course in Vocal Training consists of ten double-faced Victor Records, which provide twenty lessons in vocalization.

There is a separate set of records for each of the following five voices: Soprano, Mezzo-Soprano, Tenor, Baritone, and Bass.

For each set of lessons, perfect examples of tone production have been secured through Oscar Saenger's personal choice of the artists best qualified to serve as exemplars.

The Oscar Saenger Course in Vocal Training for any of the voices mentioned above, may be procured from any Victor dealer at \$25—the cost of a *one-hour* lesson at the Saenger Studio in New York.

Write for an illustrated booklet

giving full information about the series of Victor Records of the Oscar Saenger Course in vocalization. We will gladly send a copy upon receipt of your request.

Important Notice: All Victor Talking Machines are patented and are only *licensed*, and with right of use with Victor Records only. All Victor Records are patented and are only *licensed*, and with right of use on Victor Talking Machines only. Victor Records and Victor Machines are scientifically coordinated and synchronized by our special processes of manufacture; and their use, except with each other, is not only unauthorized, but damaging and unsatisfactory.

Victor Talking Machine Co., Camden, N. J.
Berliner Gramophone Co., Montreal, Canadian Distributors

Victrola

"Victrola" is the Registered Trade-mark of the Victor Talking Machine Company designating the products of this Company only.

Warning: The use of the word **Victrola** upon or in the promotion or sale of any other Talking Machine or Phonograph products is misleading and illegal.



FORTUNE PHOTO-PLAYS



Margaret Landis in
"The Inspirations of Harry Larrabee"



Vola Vale in
"Mentioned in Confidence"



Ruth Roland in
"The Devil's Bait"



Lucy Payton in
"The Yellow Bullet"

Great stories make great pictures.

To get all the power and the punch—all the thrill and the charm—of a great story into the picture requires great players.

Fortune Photo-Plays are the greatest stories ever published made into wonderful quick-action motion pictures—stories that thrilled and fascinated you when they appeared in this and other Street & Smith magazines.

And every Fortune Photo-Play produced is just as full of life, action and beauty as the original story, because great actors and actresses play the parts.

For each Fortune Photo-Play stars are selected who have the skill, the training, the genius and the personality which fit them to make the characters in the story live again upon the screen.

DISTRIBUTED BY

Supervised by

FORTUNE PHOTO-PLAYS

Note the stars who have appeared in these great stories, now produced in Fortune Photo-Plays.

You will enjoy every Fortune Photo-Play. They are the sort of pictures you have been looking for—pictures with all the padding cut out—condensed to an hour of swift action and powerful climaxes.

They offer you the widest possible *variety* of interest, plot, motive, scenery and action—all the elemental passions and emotions—every phase of human life.

There is a new Fortune Photo-Play every week—all different—every one a picture that will grip you and thrill you with its vivid intensity and its sustained suspense. Ask the manager of your theater when they appear.

GENERAL FILM CO., Inc.

H. M. and E. D. Horkheimer



Clifford Gray in
"The Inspirations of Harry Larrabee"



R. Henry Grey in
"Mentioned in Confidence"



Wm. Conklin in
"The Devil's Bait"



Neil Hardin in
"The Yellow Bullet"

CLASSIFIED ADVERTISING

Agents and Help Wanted

MEN OF IDEAS and inventive ability. New list of "Needed Inventions," "Patent Buyers," and "How to Get Your Patent and Your Money." Randolph & Co., Dept. 63, Wash., D. C.

START A BUSINESS OF YOUR OWN. Can be handled in spare time. Only small investment required. Send today for free booklet. Niagara, Box 717, Lockport, N. Y.

RAILROADS Want Men for Traffic Inspectors. Big Pay; Promotion; Free Transportation; Chance travel overseas. Experience not necessary. Ask for free booklet G-14. Frontier Prep. School, Buffalo, N. Y.

Reliable men to handle my 1917 "Business Guide." Sells Everywhere. 60% commission. Outfit free. Prof. Nichols, Dept. H, Naperville, Ill.

AGENTS—Get particulars of one of the best paying propositions ever put on the market; something no one else sells; make \$4,000 yearly. Address E. M. Feltman, Sales Manager, 9742 3rd Street, Cincinnati, Ohio.

AGENTS—500% profit; gold and silver sign letters for store and office windows; anyone can put on; free sample. Metallic Letter Co., 426 N. Clark St., Chicago.

\$50 a Week Up. All the Free Clothes You Want to Wear simply to advertise us. Write today for self-measuring blanks, style chart, big book of samples, etc. Send no money. A postal card brings all. We pay expressage on everything. American Woolen Mills Co., Dept. 453, Chicago.

GOVERNMENT positions pay big money. Get prepared for "exams" by former U. S. Civil Service Examiner. Free booklet. Patterson Civil Service School, Box Y, Rochester, N. Y.

\$20 TO \$35 PER MONTH extra money to any employed person without interfering with regular work. No selling, no canvassing. Positively no investment. Unemployed need not apply. Address The Silver Mirror Co., Inc., 211 W. Randolph St., Chicago, Ill.

Agents and Help Wanted—Continued

BE AN AUTOMOBILE EXPERT IN SIX WEEKS. Our big book tells you how. Rahe's Automobile School, 522 E. 11th Street, Kansas City, Mo.

MEN—WOMEN, 18 or over. \$75 month. Gov't Jobs. List positions free. Write immediately. Franklin Institute, Dept. A 6, Rochester, N. Y.

Business Opportunities

IS HE CRAZY? The owner of a plantation in Mississippi is giving away a few five-acre tracts. The only condition is that figs be planted. The owner wants enough figs raised to supply a canning factory. You can secure five acres and an interest in the factory by writing Eubank Farms Company, 1087 Keystone, Pittsburg, Pa. They will plant and care for your trees for \$6 per month. Your profit should be \$1,000 per year. Some think this man is crazy for giving away such valuable land, but there may be method in his madness.

Patents and Lawyers

PATENTS—Write for How to Obtain a Patent. List of Patent Buyers and Inventions Wanted. \$1,000,000 in prizes offered for inventions. Send sketch for free opinion as to patentability. Our 4 books sent free upon request. Patents advertised free. We assist inventors to sell their inventions. Victor J. Evans & Co., Patent Attys., 767 Ninth, Washington, D. C.

IDEAS WANTED—Manufacturers are writing for patents procured through me. Three books with list hundreds of inventions wanted sent free. I help you market your invention. Advice free. R. B. Owen, 39 Owen Building, Washington, D. C.

Patents Secured or Fee returned. Actual search free. Send sketch. 1917 Edition, 90-page book free. G. P. Klimmel, 249 Barrister Bldg., Wash., D. C.

PATENTS THAT PROTECT AND PAY. Advice and books free. Highest references. Best results. Promptness assured. Send sketch or model for search. Watson E. Coleman, Patent Lawyer, 624 F Street, Washington, D. C.

Firearms and Antiques

BUY, sell and exchange all sorts old time and modern firearms. Stephen Van Rensselaer, Antiques, 805 Madison Avenue, New York City.

Games & Entertainment

PLAYS, Vaudeville Sketches, Monologues, Dialogues, Speakers, Minstrel Material, Jokes, Recitations, Tableaux, Drills, Entertainments, Make up goods. Large catalog free. T. S. Denison & Co., Dept. 19, Chicago.

Authors

WANTED—Stories, articles, poems, etc. We pay on acceptance. Offers submitted. Send Mss. to Cosmos Magazine, 1099 Washington, D. C.

Song Poems

SONG WRITERS "Key to Success" Sent Free! We compose and facilitate free publication or outright sale. Submit Poems. Knickerbocker Studios, 106 Gaiety Bldg., New York.

Motion Picture Plays

WE accept scripts in any form; correct free; sell on Commission. Big Rewards! Make Money. Write us. Writer's Service, Box 14, Auburn, N. Y.

WRITE Photoplays: \$10—\$500 each paid. Experience unnecessary; details free to beginners. Producers League, 355, St. Louis.

WRITE for free copy "Hints to Writers of Photoplays, Short Stories, Poems." Also catalog of best bookstor writers. Atlas Pub. Co., 70, Cincinnati.

Correspondence Schools

SHORTHAND—THE NEW WAY. Boyd System. The Wonder of the Age. Learned in 30 Days in Spare Time. 100 to 150 words a minute. Writers hold World's Record. Send today for Special offer. Catalog and Sample Lesson. Chicago Home Study Schools, 559 Reaper Block, Chicago, Illinois.



This Man Specialized in
**Electrical
Meter Engineering!**

Now he is superintendent of instruments and meters for a large Electric Light and Power Co. and has 25 men under him. The training he got from our easily mastered, home study course enabled him to step into this big job after only a few months study. What he has done YOU CAN DO!

Write Today for Free Literature with this man's own story of his success. Find out about the exceptional opportunities in this interesting, fascinating, profitable profession. Your name and address is enough. The book is free. No obligations. Write today—NOW. You can have a job like this.
Fort Wayne Correspondence School, Dept. 1144, Fort Wayne, Ind.



Rider
Agents
Wanted

Delivered TO FREE

Your choice of 44 styles, colors and sizes in the famous line of "RANGER" bicycles, shown in full color in the big new Free Catalog. We pay all the freight charges from Chicago to your town.

30 Days Free Trial allowed on the bicycle you select, actual riding test in your own town for a full month. Do not buy until you get our great new trial offer and low Factory-Direct-To-Rider terms and prices.

TIRES LAMPS, HORNS, pedals, single wheels and repair parts for all makes of bicycles at half usual prices. No one else can offer you such values and such terms. **SEND NO MONEY** but write today for the big new Catalog. It's free.

MEAD CYCLE COMPANY
Dept. H-38 Chicago

Come to Detroit
The Automobile Center and

LEARN THE AUTOMOBILE BUSINESS

Detroit trained men get preference and jobs quickly. Think what it means to learn in the Michigan State Auto School. Factories endorse our School, glad to employ our graduates or offer them territory. Men are needed everywhere as testers, repair men, chauffeurs and garage men. Hundreds of our graduates start in business for themselves.

Earn \$75 to \$300 a Month

We teach you to handle any auto proposition. Students actually build cars from start to finish, getting factory training in assembling, block-testing, road testing, everything. Special complete course in Oxy-Acetylene brazing, welding and cutting, separate from regular course. All leading types of starting, lighting and ignition systems in operation. Six-cylinder Lozier, eight-cylinder King used for road instruction. We have Chalmers "6-30" chassis with 2400 r.p.m. motor, a 1917 Detroit-6 and Overland; Delco System, used in Buick, Hudson, Packard Twin-6, 1917-Willys-Knight complete chassis.

Detroit is Place to Learn—Start Any Time

44 auto factories in Detroit and 140 parts factories. We operate Westinghouse, Autolite, Bijur Service Stations. Students get actual experience in handling all kinds of electrical auto equipment. We have just installed a Sprague Electric Dynamometer for block-testing purposes for students' use. School open all the year. You graduate in from 10 to 12 weeks. Enter classes any time, any day. Three classes daily: morning, afternoon and evening. Auto factories call for men constantly to fill permanent places.

AUTO FACTORY CO-OPERATION

We have arrangements with the Auto factories to put them in touch with men who intend going into business for themselves. The factories are looking for trained men to represent them. Come here and start right; get the information first-hand; don't wait.

BUILDINGS AND EQUIPMENT

33,000 sq. ft. of additional floor space, thousands of dollars worth of new equipment, plenty of room for students to work in our new building at 687-89-91 Woodward Ave. Our school has grown by leaps and bounds, students come from all over the world. Graduates have started in business for themselves; others have accepted good jobs both in Detroit and elsewhere. We are constantly adding new equipment.

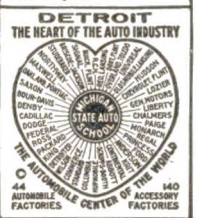
Act Quickly—Now—Don't Wait

Get full particulars, "Auto School News" and New Catalog, both absolutely free, or better still, jump on the train as business has done, and come to Detroit, the "Heart of the Automobile Industry," and learn right.

MICHIGAN STATE AUTO SCHOOL.
The Old Reliable School. A. G. Zeller, Pres.
704 Auto Bldg., 687-89-91 Woodward Ave.,
11-13 Selden Ave., DETROIT, MICH., U. S. A.

Money Back Guarantee

WE guarantee to qualify you in a short time for a position as chauffeur, repair man, tester, demonstrator, garage man or automobile dealer paying from \$75 to \$300 monthly or refund your money.



BECOME AN EXPERT ACCOUNTANT

The Profession that Pays Big Incomes

Never before have there been so many splendid opportunities for trained accountants—men whose training combines a knowledge of Auditing, Cost Accounting, Business Law, Organization, Management and finance. Few professions offer better opportunities to young men of ambition and intelligence. The tremendous business growth of this country has created a rich field for the expert. There are only 2,000 Certified Public Accountants to do the work of the half million concerns needing their services. The expert accountant i. also needed today in every big executive organization

Knowledge of Bookkeeping Unnecessary To Begin

If you are ambitious, we will train you for one of these big positions. Our course and training is under the personal supervision of William Arthur Chase, Ex-Secretary Illinois State Board of Accountancy, and other experts who rank among the highest who will give you whatever training, instruction or review on the subject of book-keeping you may personally need—and without any extra expense to you. Our big, free book on the accountancy profession fully explains how we train you from the ground up, according to your individual needs, from the simplest bookkeeping principles to the most advanced accounting problems. All text material supplied in the course has been especially prepared in clear, easy-to-understand language, so you can readily master the principles by home-study.

Small Cost—Easy Terms

Mail the coupon now and get our free book which fully describes our expert training course and tells all about our Money-Back Guarantee, C. P. A. examinations, state regulations, salaries, and incomes, and how you can qualify for a high-grade accounting position without interference with your present job. Send in the coupon and find out how we have helped over 100,000 ambitious men, and learn what we can do for you.

Remarkable Book FREE

A prominent Chicago Executive says: "Get this book 'Ten Years' Promotion in One', even if it costs you \$5.00 for a copy." Let us send it to you FREE, with literature explaining how you can train for a Higher Accountancy job without interference with your present duties. Send coupon today—NOW.

La Salle Extension University,
Dept. 463-H Chicago, Ill.
"World's Greatest Extension University"

Free Book Coupon

La Salle Extension University, Dept. 463-H Chicago
"World's Greatest Extension University"

Send at once, without cost or obligation to me, your valuable book, "Ten Years' Promotion in One," also your book of accounting facts and full details of your course in Higher Accountancy. Advise me about Special Reduced Rate and Convenient-Payment Plan.

Name.....
Street and No.....
City..... State.....

Rider Agents Wanted

1917 Model

in each town to ride and show a new 1917 model "RANGER" bicycle. Write for our liberal terms. DELIVERED FREE on approval and 30 days' trial. Send for big free catalog and particulars of most marvelous offer ever made on a bicycle. You will be astonished at our low prices and remarkable terms.

FACTORY CLEARING SALE—a limited number of old models of various makes, \$7 to \$12. A few good second-hand wheels \$3 to \$5. Write if you want a bargain. Tires, lamps, wheels, sundries and repair parts for all makes of bicycles, at half usual prices. Write us before buying.

MEAD CYCLE CO., DEPT. H-38 CHICAGO

SEND TODAY FOR THIS BOOK.

The AUTO BUSINESS

THIS BOOK FREE

It tells of big openings—for live men—in a business full of opportunities and not overcrowded. And it tells how we assist you to get started earning \$25 to \$50 a week. Best system, lowest price. Write today.

MODELS FURNISHED.

PRACTICAL AUTO SCHOOL 68 F Beaver St., New York.

GOV'T POSITIONS NEW BOOK FREE!

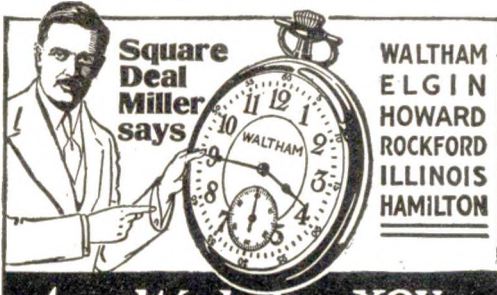
Earn \$75 to \$150 monthly at once. Rapid promotion. Easy work. Short hours, 15 and 30 day vacations, full pay. Lifetime positions. No strikes, no "lay-offs," no "straw bosses," no pull needed. Ordinary education sufficient. American citizens 18 or over can get these positions no matter where you live.

NEW BOOK FREE Office, Panama Canal, Custom House and many other Gov't positions. Tells how to prepare for Examinations under supervision of former U. S. Civil Service Sec'y-Examiner. Write today—postal #114 do. **PATERSON CIVIL SERVICE SCHOOL, 34 News Building, Rochester, N. Y.**

WRITE TODAY

SHORT HAND IN 30 DAYS

Boyd Syllabic System—written with only nine characters. No "positions"—no "ruled lines"—no "shading"—no "word-signs"—no "cold notes." Speedy, practical system that can be learned in 30 days of home study, utilizing spare time. For full descriptive matter, free address, Chicago Correspondence Schools, 976 Unity Building, Chicago, Ill.



Square Deal Miller says

WALTHAM
ELGIN
HOWARD
ROCKFORD
ILLINOIS
HAMILTON

Any Watch YOU WANT on CREDIT

One Customer Writes: "I have had my watch just a year today and our watch inspector says its the best time keeper on the road. Please find enclosed my last monthly payment of \$1.00." We have thousands of such letters on file from satisfied customers, who have bought from us on

30 Days Trial Express Paid No Money Down

You take no chances with me. I am "Square Deal" Miller and I trust the people. That is why I am doing the greatest credit Watch, Diamond and Jewelry business in the world.

Watches Guaranteed for 25 Years

I Smash the Terms

NO REFERENCES DEMANDED

My terms will surely suit you. You get unlimited credit.

A Charge Account the same kind of credit you get from your grocer. No matter where you live or what your income might be, you can now own the finest watches, a beautiful diamond or any rare jewelry and never miss the money.

Catalog FREE Send me your name and address so I can mail you Free and postpaid the most beautiful catalog of its kind ever printed. I want you to have this book. It's a gem. **WRITE TODAY.**

SQUARE DEAL MILLER, Pres.

MILLER-HOEFFER CO. 821 Miller Bldg., Detroit, Mich.

You Can Earn \$250 A MONTH with This NEW MACHINE



Make \$3,000 a year and more to start. You need no experience. Open a Tire Repair Shop with Haywood Equipment. Let the money roll in. Business grows fast. You're soon a real manufacturer. Every auto sold means more tires to mend. Demand for your work ahead of supply.



SEND FOR BIG FREE BOOK

This gives all the facts. Tells how to start. How to succeed. A valuable guide to riches and wealth. Write today. A postal will do. Get your FREE copy.

HAYWOOD TIRE & EQUIPMENT COMPANY
1005 Capitol Ave. Indianapolis, Ind.



Write me about Gov't Job

under Civil Service. You get life position, with big pay, short hours, regular vacations.

I'll coach you for Civil Service examination, and give you the MONEY-BACK

GUARANTEE of Washington Civil Service

School. That means—you get a *appointment or I must refund your money.* It puts it up to me.

282,296 protected positions in U. S. Gov't. Learn how you can get one—

by writing for "Book HA899" EARL HOPKINS, Washington, D. C.

FREE Book "How to Write" Short Stories—Photo Plays



Send for it today. Valuable instructive book. Tells how famous authors got their start and the amounts they made. How you can earn \$3000 or more a year. You can succeed with this great, new, easily-mastered method. Personal instruction right in your own home. Manuscripts critiqued and made ready to sell. Earn big money and fame in this profession.

Endorsed by Jack London and other famous authors. Special introductory offer for limited time only, sent with free book. Write now. **MOOSIER INSTITUTE, SHORT STORY DEPT.**
Desk 1144 Fort Wayne, Indiana

DO YOU LIKE TO DRAW?

Cartoonists are well paid

We will not give you any grand prize if you answer this ad. Nor will we claim to make you rich in a week. But if you are anxious to develop your talent with a successful cartoonist, so you can make money, send a copy of this picture, with \$1. in stamps for portfolio of cartoons and sample lesson plate, and let us explain.

THE W. L. EVANS SCHOOL OF CARTOONING
835 Leader Building, Cleveland, Ohio



BIG, QUICK, CERTAIN PROFITS

from Copper are now being paid to investors who secured their interests when their mines were under development. We organized, developed and own Nevada Packard, now paying dividends. Ask any bank in Nevada about us. Then get in on the ground floor with us in Wedge Copper—a debt-free fully equipped property. A postal will bring full information. Write Mark Walser, President, **Wedge Copper Mining Co., Suite A, Herz Building, Reno, Nev.**

ALL STOCKS AND BONDS

Bought and Sold

Large Loans Negotiated

L. N. ROSENBAUM & COMPANY

80 Wall St. New York City

BE A TRAVELING SALESMAN

Hundreds of good positions now open. Experience unnecessary. Earn while you learn. Write today for large list of openings and testimonials from hundreds of members who are earning \$100 to \$500 a month. Address nearest office. Dent. 506
NATIONAL SALESMEN'S TRAINING ASSOCIATION
Chicago, New York, San Francisco



Stop Forgetting

Memory the Basis of All Knowledge

The Key to Success
The secret of business and social success is the ability to remember.

I can make your mind an infallible classified index from which you can instantly select thoughts, facts, figures, names, faces. Enables you to concentrate, develop self control, overcome bashfulness, think on your feet, address an audience. Easy. Simple. The result of 20 years' experience developing memories of thousands.

Write Today for free booklet, "How to Remember", and Copyrighted Memory Test, also how to obtain my FREE book, "How to Speak in Public."

DICKSON SCHOOL OF MEMORY,
1960 Hearst Bldg., Chicago, Ill.



Prof. Henry Dickson, Principal

Money In Your Ideas

C & C PATENTS PROTECT THEM FOR YOU
Books "What to Invent" and "How to Obtain a Patent" sent free. Send rough sketch for free report regarding patentability. A C & C patent on your idea today may mean independence tomorrow. Manufacturers constantly writing us to buy patents. Patents advertised for sale at our expense.
CHANDLER & CHANDLER, Patent Attorneys
Est. 21 Years. 1017 F Street, Washington, D. C.

LEPAGE'S GLUE HANDY BOTTLES
WILL MEND IT 10¢

HOLMAN DAY'S

New Novel of politics and preparedness, "THE DICTATOR," in next issue

VOLUME XLIV

NUMBER 2



APRIL 7, 1917

THE MYSTERY. A Complete Novel,	W. B. M. Ferguson	1
Which begins in Gramerey Square and ends on the high seas. A story full of surprises, of unexpected turns, of new thrills.		
SHYLOCK. A Short Story,	II. C. Witwer	56
Witwer's funniest story—of a ball player who wanted his pound of flesh and got it.		
THE SOLDIER'S WAY. A Serial Story—Part I.,	Dane Coolidge	68
History done into thrilling fiction. Top-sergeant Bogan, formerly of the U. S. A. In action with the Foreign Legion in Mexico.		
COALS OF FIRE. A Short Story,	Albert Payson Terhune	91
An American grabs the only coal mine in the Land of Moab.		
SOMETHING TO EAT. A Short Story,	Bertrand W. Sinclair	101
Two thousand miles across the snows to eat a hot tamale.		
CAUGHT IN THE NET. Editorials,	The Editor	112
Popular Portraits: Lloyd George. Motor Powers. The Marine Corps. The Art of Attracting Buyers.		
GHOST-DRIVEN. A Three-Part Story—Part II.,	Francis Metcalfe	116
The genuineness and fakery of spiritualism.		
LOVIN' KINDNESS IN THE HOSS COUNTRY.	C. A. Bonfils	140
A Short Story. A Western story distinguished for its sheer charm, its warmth of human interest and sympathy, its true and striking characterization.		
THE WIRE DEVILS. A Series,	Frank L. Packard	150
II.—Stacked Cards.		
THE ROSIN BACK. A Short Story,	Buck Connor	167
Make the acquaintance of Glory and Cleopatra, two circus stars who were almost human.		
NO SHOW AT ALL. A Short Story,	Victor Maxwell	176
The foxiest attorney in Mill City accepts a retainer to beat the blue laws of the State, passed in Territorial days.		
STICKING TO IT. A Short Story,	Foxhall Williams	186
Running the gantlet of the police to get an option.		
"HOPE SPRINGS ETERNAL——" A Short Story,	"James Wesley Dane"	196
Under a nom de plume a convict tells of the actual conditions in prison.		
THE FIREMAN. Verse,	Berton Braley	212
THE SCAPEGOAT. A Short Story,	Charles Saxby	213
The queer things that happened in Kaffradddd because one man was dismissed from the colonial service.		

Twice-a-Month Publication issued by STREET & SMITH, 79-89 Seventh Avenue, New York. ORGANO C. SMITH and GEORGE C. SMITH, Proprietors. Copyright, 1917, by Street & Smith, New York. Copyright, 1917, by Street & Smith, Great Britain. All Rights Reserved. Publishers everywhere are cautioned against using any of the contents of this Magazine either wholly or in part. Entered at New York Post Office as Second-class Matter, under Act of Congress of March 3, 1879. Canadian Subscription, \$4.72. Foreign, \$6.44.

WARNING—Do not subscribe through agents unknown to you. Complaints are daily made by persons who have been thus victimized. IMPORTANT—Authors, agents and publishers are requested to note that this firm does not hold itself responsible for loss of unsolicited manuscripts while at this office or in transit; and that it cannot undertake to hold unclaimed for manuscripts for a longer period than six months. If the return of manuscripts is expected, postage should be inclosed.

YEARLY SUBSCRIPTION \$4.00

SINGLE COPIES 20 Cents

THE NEXT POPULAR ON SALE APRIL 20th



Her wooing was like the first love story—

Two young people, a girl and a boy shipwrecked in infancy on a desert island, do not meet until they are twenty years old. Previous to having met neither had ever seen a human being before. Naturally, their modes of living are extremely primitive and in a daring story Morgan Robertson tells of their awakening to the immutable laws of Nature. It's an idyl of young love. With mother instinct

the girl has made a crude doll out of a piece of wood and a few rags. The man objects to this rival for her affections and his attempt to destroy the doll is their first quarrel. In the unfolding drama of their existence is focused the passions, the virtues, the joys and sorrows that have marked the race of man in his struggle from the cave days through the ages of time.

This is only one of 35 wonderful, daring stories of love, humor and thrilling adventure in the new 4 volume set of Morgan Robertson's works—the books you hear people talking about. These four books cannot be bought anywhere. They are given free with subscriptions to two great magazines, Metropolitan and McClure's, who are co-operating in a wide distribution of Morgan Robertson's works. They are paying a generous royalty to Mr. Robertson's widow on every set—the only income she has.

"A master of his art. No lover of real stories can afford to miss reading Morgan Robertson's works."

RICHARD HARDING DAVIS

"His stories are bully—his sea is foamy, and his men have hair on their chests."

BOOTH TARKINGTON

How You Can Get the 4 Books Free

The 35 Morgan Robertson stories embracing his best work, are in four handsome cloth-bound volumes—1,000 pages—over 300,000 words printed in new easy-to-read type—titles stamped in gold. You send only ten cents now with the coupon. After that one dollar for five months to pay for the magazines, and that's all. You pay less than what the magazines would cost you if bought at the newsstands. The books are yours FREE. If you wish to pay all at once, send only \$4.75. If you prefer full leather binding, send \$6.75. We recommend this edition to book lovers. Magazines may be sent to different addresses. If you are at present a subscriber to either magazine, your subscription will be extended. Postage extra outside United States.

METROPOLITAN, 432 Fourth Ave., New York

Pop.
Ma.,
**METRO-
POLITAN**
432 Fourth Ave.,
New York

I enclose ten cents. Please send me Morgan Robertson's new stories in 4 volumes, and enter my subscription to Metropolitan and McClure's, each for 5 months. I promise to pay one dollar a month for five months for the magazines. The books are mine free.

Name

Street

City and State

Change terms of payment to seven months if you prefer full leather binding. If you wish credit and are not known to our Book Department, kindly send your letter-head, business card or reference with your order.

THE POPULAR MAGAZINE

VOL. XLIV.

APRIL 7, 1917.

No. 2.

The Mystery

By W. B. M. Ferguson

Author of "The Prodigal," "The Silver Cross," Etc.

A man drops over a wall in Gramercy Square, New York, into a modern Arabian Night's entertainment, with the central figure in the story a girl who has too much money. You will follow him with increasing interest on his subsequent voyage to Europe—a voyage filled with strange happenings, among others the meeting with an almost deserted craft called *The Mystery*.

(A Complete Novel)

CHAPTER I.

A HEAVY, measured footfall sounded on the pavement, and, crouching on the floor, I peeped under the drawn blind of the basement window. Sure enough it was the cop whom I'd passed on the Fourth Avenue corner. Perhaps he had followed me on general principles, curious to see what a craft of my build was doing in Gramercy Square, or, it being midsummer, he had his orders to keep an extra-sharp lookout on the closed houses. Anyway, it looked now as if I were fairly trapped, for he had planted himself outside the area-way, and was squinting out the tail of a bright blue eye, as if he knew darn well I was there; a sort of Johnny-at-the-rat-hole pose that invited you to come forth and be gobbled quick.

He was a big fellow, looking mighty slick and handsome in his natty summer uniform as he stood there swinging his long, yellow locust by its leather

thong—that mechanical double roll and reverse movement which seems to help the tribe with their thinking processes. Young and clean and well fed he was, so that I envied him as he stood outlined against the vivid green of the little park, the evening sun lighting up his crisp, yellow hair.

I thought sure he was coming in, but after one tense moment he moved on in the direction of that famous old house once occupied by Edwin Booth and now turned into a tony club for highbrows.

When I'd seen the last of the cop I sneaked back into the kitchen. I'd been there before, looking for grub and not finding any, and had seen that it opened on a long garden guarded by high brick walls. It was flanked by other walls, all looking just alike, while at the back it joined a whole lot more. It was my first glimpse behind the scenes, so to speak, of a city block of houses, and it put me in mind of nothing so much

as a honeycomb, every house with its garden representing a separate cell, and each, except on the extremities, bounded on all sides by its neighbors.

Now I was in one of the middle cells—the word struck me as unpleasantly prophetic—and the problem was how to get out, for I didn't want to leave by way of the front basement—the way I'd come—fearing that the cop might be laying for me, after all, or anchored somewhere in the offing. Much as I hated to stick around, common sense told me that the best thing to do was wait until the coming of night, skin over those encircling walls, and gain one of the side streets. The sun was dipping behind the Jersey heights, and in half an hour I could start. No wall or fence ever built could stop me, and, as I had discovered, all the houses were closed up, the folks having migrated to the shore or mountains.

I had arrived at this decision when my heart was brought into my throat by hearing a sudden noise—the creaking of the front-basement window. I knew it at once, for it had uttered the same small complaint when I had entered. This was enough, and I bolted into the garden, thinking no more of where I was going or how I should get there than a derelict running before a howling nor'easter.

I scaled the wall at the back, the stout Virginia creeper lending more aid than I needed, and as I dropped over on the other side I caught the flash of a blue uniform coming through the kitchen door I'd just quitted. This supplied the last ounce of motive power, and I set sail ram-stam for the side street, scaling wall after wall in record time.

At this sort of obstacle race or cross-country run I knew myself the better man, and I'd navigated three back gardens before I spotted the cop's peaked cap topping the wall I'd started from. I dropped again before his eyes came up, and I knew in that maze of cells he'd have more than a hard time guessing the route I'd taken. There was now only one more garden between me and the side street, the neighborhood

was dead—I hadn't seen a soul—night was coming fast, while the natty policeman had evidently taken the wrong turn, and was combing the coast toward Fourth Avenue instead of Third.

So when I dropped over into the last garden I felt absolutely sure of a safe get-away. But you can't run a long course by dead reckoning without fetching up on the rocks, and I was to find that at least one house wasn't closed up and the family absent. For when I took a two-hander over that wall it was to land smash on a wheel chair and a female—about the last combination I expected or wanted to find.

I saw her just as I swung over, too late to avert the collision; saw her in mid-air, you might say, and yet in that fraction of time my eye caught and held every detail of the picture. For the human eye is the best camera on the market, and mine was a trained one, registering in that brief glimpse more than the girl and the chair. For instance, I saw that this garden was far larger than any of the others, occupying as it did a corner plot. It had flower beds and shade trees, a rose-embowered pergola, and a little fountain that twinkled in the soft light of the afterglow. The girl was alone, lying back in the chair with half-closed eyes, a neglected book in her lap, and a faint smile on her lips that was half wistful and wholly sweet. Her dress was of some creamy white material, her hair was golden, and there was a big jack rose, with a single vivid-green leaf, tucked in her bosom.

I'm no hand at writing fine descriptions, and I can't begin to say how the whole scene struck in on me even during that fleeting glance. I had no idea there could be such a paradise in the heart of the hot, dirty, teeming city; such a place of perfect peace, freshness, youth, and beauty. It was that hour which Millet has immortalized in the "Angelus," the time when even the busiest or basest among us give over messing with our earthly affairs and take off our hats, in spirit at least, to the dying day. I, who have watched

the sun set on the Seven Seas, could understand why the girl had laid aside her book and feel the meaning of that wistful, lonely smile.

Into this paradise I came, not in the insinuating fashion of the serpent of old, but like a forty-two-centimeter shell, my two-hundred-odd pounds overturning the chair and its occupant. Now I hadn't forgotten the blue-eyed cop and the possibility of his cutting my wake; I was still in a desperate hurry, and if the girl had screamed blue murder or got up and lit into me she wouldn't have seen me for dust. But she did neither, and I put a big one to her credit for nerve.

She lay in a crumpled heap, just where she'd fallen after being catapulted out of the chair, and she looked at me with a pair of big, pansy-colored eyes that were startled and inquisitive but not a bit afraid. I'll never receive even an honorable mention in a prize-beauty contest, being built something like a Flanders horse, and what with the lateness of the hour and method of my arrival, it was enough to throw any regular girl into hysterics. I expected her to yell and to see an army of relatives and servants come pouring from the house; but nothing happened, and for a moment our eyes clinched in the afterglow, while the fountain tinkled and the birds fussed over going to bed.

Even on a person of my equine strength and constitution a forty-eight-hour fast—and a mighty slim menu for weeks before that—is apt to tell, and what with all I'd been through I felt my knees beginning to buckle and my head going light. Then, when I saw the girl was making no attempt to get up, I pulled myself together and forgot about my hurry.

"Are you hurt?" I asked.

She shook her head with a faint smile. "But all the same I can't get up. You see, I'm a— a cripple. Won't you help me, please?"

So I lifted her like the child she was, and placed her in the chair. She couldn't have been more than fourteen or so, and a queer pair we must have

made, she so dainty and fair, I a big black brute. And a brute beast I felt.

"I'm so helpless," she said apologetically. "I hate to give you trouble. You're very kind—and gentle. I—I never had any one lift me like that."

"Gentle?" I stammered. For you might as well call a steam roller gentle. "Why, it isn't my fault I haven't killed you! Are you sure you aren't hurt?"

"Oh, not a bit: And now please tell me why you were in such a hurry and came jumping over the wall like that." She cupped her chin, and looked at me with a lively curiosity and interest. There was an elfish attraction about her, a curious blending of the woman and child which I can't explain.

"You see," she added confidentially, just as if I'd known her all her life and my coming over the wall like that was a mere everyday incident, "I never meet strangers. I'm not very entertaining, you know, and most people don't like to look at—at cripples. I sit here most of the time and wonder what's going on in that big, busy world outside these four walls. Nothing ever happens to me like it does to people in storybooks; it is all so dull and matter-of-fact. But this is what you might call a real adventure, isn't it? It's just like the beginning of one of the 'Thousand and One Nights!' B-but are you still in a great hurry? Perhaps I'm detaining you?" she finished quickly, suddenly shy and with the stiff formality of the schoolroom.

"Not a bit of it," I lied. "But what would your folks say if they found me trespassing here?"

"Why, they'd thank you for entertaining for five minutes a lonely, bored, and useless bit of anatomy who must be a great nuisance to them and everybody. But they won't come, for they know I prefer to enjoy my sunsets alone—if I can't have people about that I like. Some people manage to spoil the nicest sunset, don't you think so?"

"That's true," said I, thinking of the cop.

"And now for your story, Mr. Humpty Dumpty."

"Well," I began, entering into the

spirit of the thing, "we'll call it the 'Caretaker's Story,' like they do in the 'Arabian Nights.' You see, I'm caretaker in one of those houses back there, while the folks are away for the summer, and, among other things, I've a big black cat called Jim." And I unreeled a wonderful yarn about this valuable, highly gifted, and sensitive animal that I prized above everything; how he'd taken offense at something I'd said and run away, I chasing him over half a dozen back yards.

I've something of the story-teller's art, and I got so interested in the yarn and my audience as to forget everything else. Of course it was rank insanity, a piece of midsummer madness, but somehow I couldn't help it. I started off by trying to amuse the girl, and ended by amusing myself. Children—and I looked on her simply as a child—have a knack of getting through my tough hide first crack; they can make a fool of me, and they know it. Perhaps, too, my head was light with fasting and I'd sort of lost my bearings. Everything seemed strangely unreal, especially the fact of me being in a paradise like that, talking with a little pansy-eyed angel. It was like a marvelous piece of cloth of gold worked by some mischance into a dirty patchwork quilt, something I didn't want to let go of in a hurry and which I'd treasure all my life.

The girl listened, absorbed, I squatting at her feet like the romancers of old who went about from place to place with the magic square of carpet.

"No, your cat didn't come here," she said as I finished. "It must be a wonderful animal, and I hope you'll bring it round and let me see it some day. I do hope you'll find it—perhaps that's it now!" as a slight noise came from the other side of the wall. "Yes, it must be your Jim!"

But I knew better. It was the cop, all right, and he came sailing over the top like a bird just as I got to my feet. It mattered little to me if I'd been led into a trap by the pansy-eyed angel; I'd no longer heart to put up a fight, and I felt too weak to run. I

just stood there while the cop drilled me with his blue eyes and swung his locust in an enticing sort of way.

The girl hadn't made a sound or move; she just sat there, her eyes very dark and bright, cupping her chin and looking at us both as if she were at a play and didn't know what was going to happen next. The jack rose in her young bosom seemed to pulsate with every breath she took.

The cop seemed as if he didn't know quite how to size up the situation. He gave over drilling me, and turned to the girl. Evidently he knew her, for he touched his cap and showed more teeth in one face than I'd ever seen. "Hope I didn't scare you, Miss Somers," he said politely. "I've been trailing a sneak thief who broke into a house on Twentieth Street—big fellow in blue serge and a gray Fedora," his eyes swiveling back to me.

I still sported the blue serge, all right, but the gray Fedora had been knocked off when I hit the chair, and had rolled under a rosebush. He might have seen it if he'd known where to look.

"A sneak thief!" exclaimed Miss Somers in a frightened voice. "Was anything stolen?"

"No, miss. He hadn't time, I guess."

"And did he come this way, Mr. Riley?"

Patrolman Riley sort of choked. "Did he? He did," he said emphatically. "I seen him lepping over the back wall, and I've searched every house and yard from here to Fourth Avenue. He must have come this way—a big fellow in blue serge and a gray Fedora," he insisted, staring at me.

"Dear me!" exclaimed the girl, with the most innocent and puzzled air in the world. "Captain Ledyard and I have been here for the past half hour, and we've seen no one. Mr. Riley, this is my friend, Captain Ledyard, one of my uncle's employees," she finished, introducing me in a regal sort of way that wasn't a bit childlike.

Reaction had come, and my hinges felt like buckling again, my head spinning round, but I managed to favor

Officer Riley with a cool stare and friendly nod.

"Happy to meet you, sir," he jerked out, growing as pink as a baby and gripping his club as if he wanted it to meet me also. He was young, evidently bore the pansy-eyed angel in great esteem, and her calm, audacious lie had taken him between wind and water. I could see he was no longer so cocksure about me being the strange craft that had passed him on the Fourth Avenue corner.

"I hope you'll catch your man wherever he's gone," said Miss Somers fervently. "And if he should happen to appear here, Captain Ledyard will prove more than a match for him. He'll turn him over to you."

"Very good, miss," said Riley in a voice like sandpaper, but with a subdued gleam in his blue eye that suggested generous appreciation of the humor underlying the girl's last remark. "You'll be sure to know him—a big fellow in blue serge and a gray Fedora. Indeed, miss, he might be a ringer for your friend, Captain Ledyard." He saluted her respectfully, stared hard at me, and retreated the way he had come, scaling the wall with agility and grace.

And then I did what I'd never done in my life; everything suddenly went black, and I keeled over, fainting dead away like an old woman.

CHAPTER II.

I've heard it said that the greatest liking isn't capable of keeping alive one person's interest in another; that the only real, lasting emotion is hatred—meaning that if you only dislike a person hard enough, you won't forget him even when he's dead. This may be true or not, but anyway it was the sound of a certain voice that brought me back from the black abyss into which I'd tumbled.

I found myself on a couch in a room on the ground floor at the back of the house; the casement windows were open, and I heard a voice saying: "But you must. It's the best, and, indeed, only way. You must prevail upon her."

It was this voice which had brought me back with a jerk from No Man's Land, and I now scrambled off the couch and went to the window. The afterglow had deepened into twilight, and I saw two men walking slowly toward the front gate. I couldn't see their faces, but one was a tubby little fellow, hatless and showing a bald patch like a monk's tonsure. The other was tall, and every line of his erect figure spoke to me like his vibrant voice, awaking echoes of the past. Surely, long though the arm of coincidence may be at times, it was asking overmuch for two men to have that voice and figure. And yet what an equally remarkable coincidence if, under such circumstances, I was destined to meet with Paul Shipway again!

A manservant now came in, switching on the lights and pulling down the shades. He was a rubicund, hearty-seeming fellow who looked as if his oats did him good, and he went about setting the table with the silence and quickness of his tribe. Then he brought in a tray loaded with more real food than I'd seen in a month. There was nothing but hunger the matter with me, and I had all I could do from jumping him and bolting the stuff whole.

"There you are, sir," said he, pouring a bottle of ale and waving a hand at the spread. "The missus' compliments, and will you be so good as to ring for anything you want." He beamed at me and withdrew, and, thankful there was none to put the soft pedal on my table manners, I fell on that Arabian Night's entertainment and wolfed it.

It's funny what mere food can do, making cowards or heroes of even the best of us. In ten minutes, with that first-class cargo stowed safely in my hold, I felt ready to face the world again and take whatever was coming to me. I guess the battles that are fought and won on empty stomachs are the ones that count, but I never pretended to class with the Valley Forge bunch. I'm a poor, material devil that must have food, plenty and often; I've

a big carcass that demands its upkeep, and a forty-eight-hour fast is about my limit. After that I'd be ready to swap all the Declarations of Independence going for a fair chance at a good beef-steak.

When I'd taken a final survey of the damage, making sure I'd overlooked no bets in my hurry, the door opened again, but instead of the sunset face of the butler I saw that of Miss Somers. She peeped in shyly, and seemed delighted with the havoc I'd wrought. Then she came in, hopping on her crutch as if to show how well she could use it, accepted the chair I offered dumbly, sat down, and looked at me.

Again I caught myself wondering whether she was a young woman or an old child. The doubt had come to me pretty strong when she was talking with Riley, for she had been as cool, impudent, and dignified as any "finished" miss of twenty. And though she wore her skirts well above her silk ankles, you can't tell anything from these newfangled fashions. Anyway, Miss Somers was a mighty trim-built little craft, so spick and span and taut that it was mighty painful to see that bad limp in her gait.

I felt the hot blood coming up under my collar as her clear eyes kept looking at me, and she never saying a word. "Why did you tell that lie?" I blurted out, hardly knowing what I said.

"Why did you let me?" she countered, her head on one side.

"You've hit the nail on the head," said I. "Because I was a rank coward. I let a woman—you—lie for me. I'll never forget your great kindness, charity, Miss Somers. I'm no hand at a speech, but before I go I'd like you to know you've put back a whole lot into my life; something no one can afford to do without, something I can never repay. I—I don't mean the food."

She laughed at that, though I hadn't meant to be funny. She laughed with every part of her—hearty, spontaneous, like a child, screwing up her eyes and showing every tooth, white and sound

as a puppy's. "May I ask what you intend doing when you leave here?" she gurgled.

"Give myself up for entering that house."

"Wouldn't that place me in rather an awkward light with Officer Riley? Let us look at this matter sensibly, Mr. —"

"Holt. Judson Holt."

"Well, Mr. Holt, I'm not an authority on burglars, but all the same I know very well you're not a regular one. A true ornament of his profession, when pursued by the law, doesn't stop to pick up anything or any one he happens to knock over. Nor does he stop to entertain lonely and bored children with—fairy stories. Let us say it was your first attempt; that you were starving and found a window open——"

"That's true enough, Miss Somers, though I don't know how you knew it. I was looking for food, and nothing else. But the police won't believe it. I did wrong, and I'm ready to pay for it."

She shook her head. "It shows you've never been in jail, or you wouldn't speak so lightly about wanting to go there. Would you mind telling me, not a fairy tale, but the real story about yourself? You see, it isn't every day I meet a new acquaintance, and, though I don't mean to pry into your private affairs, I should like to know something about you. I'm awfully curious about people. I see so many, though I know so few, and I'm always wondering about their lives—what they think and feel and do. You see, I don't live, I only vegetate. I'm not an actor in life, but merely a useless spectator."

I was about to oblige with a short, expurgated autobiography when the little bald-headed fellow whom I'd seen in the garden came in. He had a small, pointed beard and two very sharp eyes that weren't mates, one being brown and the other gray.

"Ah," he said, looking me over as if I were a professional panhandler, "this is the fellow you were telling me

about? Knocked out with the heat or something, eh? I can't say he looks much like a confirmed invalid. It's a pity Doctor Shipway didn't have a look at him."

The girl seemed vexed at the interruption, and more so at these words, which suggested clearly enough that I was an impostor. "Yes, this is Mr. Holt," she said quietly. "Mr. Holt, my uncle, Mr. Heppelwhite. I've told him that you're looking for work and that your trade is the sea. He has promised to do what he can, and he understands you don't want charity, but merely a chance to help yourself."

Now all this showed that her eyes were as keen as they were pretty, that she had brains and knew how to use them. I hadn't said a word about my being a sailor, but somehow she had doped it out. And I understood from what she had left unsaid and the look she now shot me that she hadn't given her uncle the true account of our meeting; that she had said nothing about me being in that house, and, moreover, didn't want me to say so, either.

"I'm never averse to helping the deserving, as you know, Phyllis," said Mr. Heppelwhite. "Now you run along, like a good little girl, while I have a talk with Mr. Holt." I could see that while he evidently deferred to her in small things he was master on his own quarter-deck, for, though she didn't fancy the order, she obeyed.

When she had gone he bit off a cigar and looked me over leisurely. "My niece has a weakness for the poor and unfortunate which, I dare say, you've observed," he said dryly. "The natural result is that she's imposed upon shamefully by every loafer that can bring himself to her attention. I suppose you're one of the army of mendicants down on her ever-growing list, eh?"

"My meeting with Miss Somers was entirely accidental. I want work, but perhaps I can find it somewhere else."

"Hold on," he said shortly, as I reached for my hat. "It doesn't pay to be too high in the shoulder, my man. It's my duty to protect my niece

from impostors, but when once in a blue-moon she happens on a deserving case, it's a personal pleasure for me, I assure you. I try to humor her in everything but subsidizing grafters. Now sit down and tell the tale; if it's a straight one, you won't find me unresponsive. To begin with, where do you hail from?"

"New Bedford, sir." For I was dead anxious to find some kind of a berth, and, after all, he had a perfect right to cross-examine me. If I didn't like the way he went about it, still beggars can't be choosers.

"New Bedford, eh? They breed a good line up there. Whaler?"

"No, sir, a Grand Banks man till I went into the merchant service."

"What was your last berth?"

"First officer on the freighter *Wilmington*, of that line, and I had the watch when she struck off Barnegat last year."

"Oho!" he said, whistling softly. "If I remember rightly, Captain Taylor lost his life and both of you were found guilty of gross negligence?"

"Yes, but it was all along of those cursed deckloads, sir, as any man in the game would understand. It's the cupidity of owners that's responsible for deckloads—trying to squeeze the last ounce of profit out of bottoms——"

"Hold on!" he said dryly. "You're talking to an owner of bottoms right now. I'm Heppelwhite, of the Blue Band line."

Well, I seemed to have put my foot in it good and solid, as I generally do. I had lost touch with shipping circles, but I remembered now, when too late, that an Amos Heppelwhite, a newcomer in the game, had acquired control of the Blue Band line some time before I went on the rocks. The concern, none too flourishing at that time, ran a line of freighters between New York and Rotterdam, and I guess Heppelwhite had scented the coming European war and the big boom in bottoms. He hadn't been bred to the shipping game, but was seemingly one of these fellows who can nose out a prospective profit, no matter where, as a

vulture scents carrion. They said there was nothing the matter with the Blue Band line that money couldn't cure, and I guess he had made a good thing out of it.

"I needn't tell you," said he, after a moment's silence, "that no owner can afford to take on a man that the insurance people are down on; so I can promise you nothing in your own line. However, come around this time tomorrow. In the meantime——" And he pulled out a little clasp purse and squinted into it, half turning his back and hugging it to his chest as if he were afraid I was going to grab it. Finally he selected a nickel and offered it to me.

"No, sir," I said. It wasn't the smallness of the sum; though I hadn't a red cent in the world. I simply couldn't have accepted charity from him, no matter what the amount.

"Go on, my man, take it!" he urged, with a princely gesture, as if he were offering me the freedom of the city. But when again I thanked him and refused, he replaced the nickel carefully in the purse with an air of secret relief.

And so I left the house, meaning to sleep in the park and ignorant where my next meal was coming from—until I chanced to put a hand in my pocket and found a crisp five-dollar bill. It must have been slipped there by the little pansy-eyed angel when I was dead to the world, for it didn't seem the sort of charity that Amos Heppelwhite dispensed.

I had no intention of keeping the date with Mr. Heppelwhite, for I believed his promise to be the stereotyped put-off with which I was only too familiar. Yet the following evening found me back at the house.

Miss Somers was in the garden in her wheel chair, and she hailed me to berth alongside, saying her uncle wasn't home yet. "I was afraid you wouldn't come," she added in her direct fashion.

"I didn't mean to—until I found that five-dollar note. It was more than good of you, but I can't think of robbing your bank of that amount——"

"Oh, the child's savings bank will be able to spare it very well," she interrupted, with her whimsical smile. "So you only came to thank me for that? You don't believe my uncle will get you a position? On the contrary, he's going to offer you one—never mind what," nodding her head mysteriously, "and I only ask, Mr. Holt, that you take it."

"Take it? I'll be only too glad to take anything the law allows me. But I'll have to tell Mr. Heppelwhite about entering that house. I've been worried because I didn't."

She looked down and played with her hands. "No," she said slowly at length, "I wouldn't if I were you. My uncle understands that you were down on my list, that I asked you to call last night—in fact, I told him so, Mr. Holt. It was a downright fib, of course, but I'm not repentant. I feel sure that if you told him about entering that house, it would mean the loss of this offer. There are some things he can't understand, and therefore can't condone. You didn't steal anything, and you're not a criminal, but all the same he would consider it his sacred duty to society to hand you over to the police.

"Here comes my uncle now," she finished. "I ask you to take my advice, Mr. Holt, for I know him far better than you do. Remember, say nothing."

CHAPTER III.

Mr. Heppelwhite received me in the study, his manner agreeably different from that of our last interview, for he was affable and even cordial. No doubt he'd been looking up the truth of the story I'd told, for there was none of that sharp suspicion of the previous evening.

"I've decided to give you a chance, Mr. Holt," he said, coming to business at once. "The berth of first officer on the freighter *Latonia*, of the Blue Band line, has become vacant, and you may have it."

I was staggered by the generosity and unexpectedness of the offer. The best I had looked for was some tem-

porary job ashore. After the weary months of itinerant dock-walloping and hunting for a decent berth it seemed impossible I had actually got one and in such a strange fashion.

"You may lay this offer to the whim of a sick child and my desire to humor her," he continued, as if reading my thoughts. "My niece is a person of strange fancies, and, for some reason or other, she has taken an interest in you. On hearing that the first officer of the *Latonia* had resigned, she insisted on my offering the berth to you. I know you won't presume on that interest or misunderstand it; she is nothing but a child, a child who has suffered almost from the cradle, and who has, therefore, I may say, a morbid sympathy with the sufferings of others. The more unfortunate they happen to be, the more she is interested in them."

He fetched a sigh, his expression becoming very grave and preoccupied. "The best things of this life can't be reckoned in dollars and cents," he said. "I'm reckoned a successful man, Mr. Holt, but I'd give it all twice over to see that little girl walking on her two feet again. Yes, it's hip disease, and incurable, according to the best specialists in the country." The barriers seemed to be down; he spoke unreservedly, as men do when under some great emotion.

"How about that Dutch doctor, Vanzandt, sir?" I ventured, knowing just how he felt. "I don't know enough about the game, but I understand he does everything with his hands—breaks the bones and resets them or something like that. He has made some wonderful cures. Have you tried him?"

"What do you know about Vanzandt?" he asked, eying me curiously. "He's never been in this country, and never will be. He has such an aversion for the water that under no consideration will he consent to leave Europe."

"So I've heard, sir. But I've been in Amsterdam, where he lives. And I've personal knowledge of one or two

supposedly hopeless cases of hip disease that he cured."

"You have?" he exclaimed. "This is excellent, Mr. Holt, and Providence must have sent you in my way. You see, I've had Vanzandt in mind for some time. Doctor Shipway, our family physician, said he was the only hope, our last chance. I offered Vanzandt any sum to come to this country, but he refused. Nor would Mohammed go to the mountain. I mean that my niece also has an aversion for the water, one of her inexplicable and tenacious whims there's no circumventing. Even the possibility of a cure couldn't shake her, so you may guess how strong it is."

This, then, was the meaning of the conversation I had overheard the previous evening, Doctor Shipway urging it was the girl's only chance, and that she should be compelled to go. Certainly it was a strange state of affairs, the great Dutch specialist and his prospective patient being kept apart by a mutual fear of the Atlantic. Yet I wasn't surprised, having met more than one whose mortal dread of the sea there was no explaining or overcoming. And now, with the European war going at full blast, the water route wasn't made any more alluring.

"Matters were at this deadlock when you happened here last evening," continued Mr. Heppelwhite. "And now, thanks to another of my niece's whims, I think she may consent to go. In fact, she as good as promised that if I gave you this position she might sail on the *Latonia*. There are excellent accommodations for a few passengers, and, under these war conditions, I believe such a vessel is safer than a liner. Unfortunately, owing to urgent business, I won't be able to accompany her, but she will be under the immediate care of Doctor Shipway.

"Now, Mr. Holt," he finished, "I have been quite frank with you, and you see how, through the inscrutable workings of Providence, you have become vitally necessary for the moment to me and mine. Thanks to the whim of a sick child, you may be able to do what all my love and influence were

unable to accomplish—persuade her to make the trip. Half her objection arises from the fact that she has no faith in the ability of Vanzandt to cure her. But you, who have personal knowledge of such cures, should be able to go a long way toward convincing her. Again, you are a sailor and can talk her out of this nonsensical fear of the sea.”

Well, it seemed as if the Arabian Night's entertainment was keeping up, for what could be stranger than to find myself vested with such power, made arbiter of the destiny of these people? It was like a beggar man being made king.

So I went into the garden, ready to turn loose the Demosthenes stuff and make the speech of my life; but it wasn't necessary. When Miss Somers heard I had got the position and that I had personal knowledge of the cures made by Doctor Vanzandt, she said very quietly: “Then I'll go, Mr. Holt.”

I asked about her fear of the sea, and she said: “I've always loved it, though my longest trip has been to Block Island. It isn't the sea itself I hate, but this trip; ever since it was first suggested I've hated it. Don't ask me why, for I—I don't know. I've just an overpowering feeling that something dreadful is bound to happen.”

I pointed out that though we should traverse the fringe of the war zone the danger was practically nil. “And,” I added, “what little danger there may be doesn't weigh against the supreme necessity of your going, for I'm quite sure Doctor Vanzandt can cure you. You know, if there was any real danger, if the odds were the least against us, your uncle would be the last person to want you to go. And may I add that I should be one of the last to urge you?”

“I feel quite sure of that,” she said, eyeing me very intently. “Let us say no more about it, for you must think me a great coward. I suppose it's all a question of health, as Doctor Shipway says; I've nothing to take my mind off myself, and so I get morbid. Of

course I read a great deal, but there's a limit to that.”

“But you've relatives and friends, of course; companions of your own age?”

“And what is my age?” she asked, with a quizzical smile. “I'm only fourteen in years, but ever so old otherwise. Oh, ever so old!”

Mr. Heppelwhite came out at this point, and, after expressing his delight at her decision, called me into his study and closed the door. He eyed me fixedly for some time, and then said, with an air of one making up his mind: “You're a man of some discernment, Mr. Holt, and there's no use trying to conceal the obvious from you. I dare say you've noticed by this time that my niece is—well, eccentric?”

“Yes, sir—if you can call taking an interest in me eccentricity. Otherwise I'd say she was uncommonly bright. She has morbid fancies, perhaps, but that's not to be wondered at. I guess few of us have any idea, sir, what it really means to be crippled like that.”

“That's very true, but—the truth is, Mr. Holt, her mother, a very brilliant woman, died in an asylum. And, though I hate to say this, my niece has made one or two attempts on her own life—at least she was found in circumstances that could only point to that fact.”

He walked up and down the room, plucking at his beard and frowning heavily. “This isn't known outside,” he said sharply, “and I've decided to tell you because I can't well do otherwise. In one way or another you may see a good deal of her during this trip, and I want you to help me. Of course Doctor Shipway will be in charge, but it would ease my mind greatly if I knew there was another whom I could rely on keeping a secret watch. I mean what has happened once may happen again—and this time successfully.”

“You may rely on me, sir, doing all I can. I'd no idea Miss Somers was taken that way, and I'm more sorry than I can well say.”

“Don't let her see for a moment that you suspect anything,” he added earnestly. “You understand that by no

means is she irrational, and God grant she never will be! She is merely eccentric at times, but we all pretend not to notice it. If Doctor Vanzandt can effect a cure, it may mean her mental as well as bodily salvation, for her affliction is preying on her mind. In any case, the sea trip should do her a world of good. I don't believe in segregating such mental cases; in my opinion, that only aggravates them. The best cure is to let them mix with society so far as possible and keep them from seeing that they're different in any way from other people. Even should the worst come to the worst, I could never consent to her being placed in an asylum.

"Now you see the real reason why I've chosen the *Latonia*," he finished, "for you know that life aboard a liner is so intimate that my niece's peculiarity could hardly escape detection, and she would suffer accordingly. She is morbidly sensitive about her physical deformity, and hates to appear in public. It was the knowledge that there would be no other passengers, aside from her maid and Doctor Shipway, which made the proposed trip less repugnant."

"May I ask, sir, if this Doctor Shipway is a brain specialist?"

"No, but I've consulted the best in the country, and they only repeated what he had already told me. He's a very clever man, and I've the utmost confidence in him."

And so I said nothing more.

I slept aboard the *Latonia* that night. The cargo was broken in, but I was in time to finish the dirty job of coaling her. At first glance I wasn't greatly impressed with her, for she was under five thousand tons and one of the queerest built craft I'd ever seen. She seemed to have been planned without system, as if her designer had been drunk and mixed up the blue prints so that she got sections belonging to other ships. It didn't take me long to explain this by the discovery that she'd been cut in half and a big section taken out. She was, in fact, an old Clyde

liner, and long had a British register, being originally in the passenger-carrying trade on the Cape route. But, for all her mutilation and years of service, she was a good boat still. The stuff they turn out on the Clyde is meant to stand the gaff, as every seaman knows.

I got her history from Willie Campbell, the first engineer, who had served on the ill-fated *Wilmington* with me. Of course he was a Scotchman, for by some occult rule most every deep-water engineer is. Willie had a fatal fondness for the bottle and a wife in "Glaesga" whom it was his permanent ambition to avoid; but aside from these little foibles, which had stood in the way of promotion, he was a rattling good sort.

I found him below, cursing the coal, his chief pastime, and bawling in his villainous dialect the old chantey: "Oh, give me time to blow the man down"—which he was more than capable of doing, having come aboard after a heavy bout with John Barleycorn, so that his breath was anything but fragile.

He was a little, saffron-colored fellow, with the bandy legs of his home town, he telling me once that there's a lack of something in the Glasgow water that doesn't make for bone building. But in all justice to that splendid city I must add that I never knew "Wullie Cawmel" to be prodigal in the use of water either inside or outside.

He had a round, puckered face like a crab apple, and a pair of hideous, ginger-hued whiskers, of which, for some reason, he was immensely proud. And he was a cool hand; nothing ever surprised him, and I never saw him excited or angry, even his duty of cursing the coal being performed in a mild, impersonal sort of way, though, like all he did, remarkably thorough. Common sense was his middle name, and yet he was very superstitious, always looking for signs and omens of which he knew a whole army. He had predicted the loss of the *Wilmington* because Captain Taylor had shipped a black cat that trip. But as he was always predicting, he couldn't help guessing right sometimes, though he

never remembered all the occasions when he had been dead wrong.

"Weel, Mr. Holt," he greeted in his dry, expressionless voice, just as if I'd parted from him only yesterday and there was nothing uncommon in finding ourselves shipmates again, "so it's yersel'? Sit ye doon and ha'e a wee drap, for ye'll no' be gettin' ony when the Auld Mon comes aboard. Aye, he's a strict T-T, but a guid auld buster for a' that."

It was good to see an old face amid new company, and men who have almost tasted death together have a bond in common, though they may have nothing else in common. And Campbell was particularly endeared to me through his admirable behavior on the night that saw the last of the *Wilmington*.

Naturally the first thing we now did was to review that tragedy, our seventy-two-hour battle with the top-heavy deckload that had cut loose in the gale, every man, down to the engine-room staff and "Black Squad" having taken part in the fight. How, when at last we had caged it again, Captain Taylor, fagged to the bone like us all, had gone below for a moment's rest. Of the fog that came up, sudden, deep, and blinding when the wind went out; of my dozing off all-standing on the bridge— Of course there was no excuse; Captain Taylor shouldn't have gone below, nor should my faculties have been benumbed even for a moment. But a man can't do without sleep forever, nor is he made of iron, and that fight with the runaway deckload had crippled some of us and spent us all. But rules are rules, and I'd got my year's suspension, while Captain Taylor had cheated the penalty by going down with his ship.

"Ye made the mistake of losing your temper, Mr. Holt," said Campbell, speaking of the trial. "And ye shouldna ha'e said onything about deckloads. Ou, aye, it was the truth, but the truth doesna always pay in this sinfu' warld—unless ye're a meelionaire. Some day when I'm awfu' reech I'm going to cut loose and gi'e mysel' the luxury o'

speaking the truth about everything and everybody I ken. But it doesna pay for a poor mon, Mr. Holt. It's a luxury, I tell ye. Ye'd ha'e got off licht but for that, instead o' getting the company doon on ye. Ye got their backs up fair, and so they broke ye."

"You know that what they said about Captain Taylor was the foulest lie ever sworn to by man!" I exclaimed.

"Aye, but we couldna deesprove it," said Campbell, as cool as I was hot. "Ye'll admit it was a muckle grand lee, Mr. Holt. If they'd said it was whusky, every mon jack could ha'e ta'en his oath it was a lee. Weel, he's gang to a place whaur the Almichty alone is judge. And, when my ain time comes, may I show as clean a log as Captain Horace Taylor," he finished with sudden solemnity.

"In the meantime there's the widow and boy," I replied. "Have you thought what their position means? Have they, too, got to wait for justice until the other side of the grave?"

"Aye, if it depends on the *Weelmington* people," said Campbell dryly. "Ye'll find justice in the dictionary, Mr. Holt, and nowhaur else I'm thinking. They've no money, and ye canna fecht wi'out it. And, onyway, ye canna—"

"There's a whole lot I can't do; I've found that out. All I ask is to have that lie nailed to the table. That charge is going to make Mrs. Taylor's and her boy's life a hell. It makes all the difference in the world, and it *must* be removed."

"Hoots! As weel try to remove your ee, Mr. Holt. There's muckle difference between suspectin' and provin'. Are the *Weelmington* Philistines gang to admit subornation o' perjury? And whaur's their tool? Ye've to find him."

"I have found him. Doctor Shipway sails with us."

I've explained that Campbell was never outwardly surprised at anything, and now he merely lifted a sandy eyebrow and said: "Aye?" He hadn't heard of Miss Somers and her maid being passengers, too, and so I ex-

plained it to him, saying nothing of the girl's mental trouble. For even Captain Baxter wasn't supposed to know of it.

"Weemen!" exclaimed Campbell as if I'd mentioned snakes. "This is awfu', Mr. Holt. I wouldna ha'e come this trip if I'd kenned that. All weemen bring bad luck, but a hunch-back is the worst luck in the world! I'd sooner ship wi' a cargo o' black cats."

I pointed out that little Miss Somers was neither a woman nor a hunch-back, but he only groaned, saying it made no difference what their age might be or how they were malformed. Having, I inferred, Mrs. Campbell in mind, he said all women were malformed spiritually and that they were sure to bring trouble and disaster. He ended with the affirmation that the original Jonah was a woman in disguise, probably a suffragette.

"Mark my words, Mr. Holt," he added solemnly, "this is going to be an awfu' trip."

"It will be for Doctor Shipway if I can make it so," I replied. "Before it's ended I'm going to have the truth out of him, if I have to wring his neck for it. No, of course he doesn't know I'm aboard; otherwise he'd have spoked my wheel. And I'm going to keep out of his way, if I can, until we're past the Hook."

"And ye didn't tell Mr. Heppelwhite anything about him?"

"No; what was the use? He said he had every confidence in him. What could I prove?"

"Aye, what can ye prove? Ye think this doctor body's gang to confess himself a perjurer? Dinna be fey, Mr. Holt," said Campbell earnestly, laying a hand on my knee. "Let sleeping dogs lie and dinna try the impossible. Ye canna get bluid from a stane nor truth from a leear. Here we are wi' a berth at last; not muckle, to be sure, but a fatted calf syne the husks ye've eat in the wilderness. Take an old mon's advice; ye can do naethin' but ruin yersel' all ower again. If ye dinna

think o' yerself, think o' the bonny lass waitin' for ye in New Bedford."

"If the bonny lass is still waiting, it's not for me, Mr. Campbell."

"Aye? You mean she broke troth?"

"Well, she discovered, after my suspension, she had never really cared for me." The wound had burned badly at the time, and, like many another who has been thrown over, I thought never to survive it. It was like losing the last sheet anchor, and I drifted, with little thought or care where I fetched up.

Unknowingly, however, time had done much for me, so that now I did no more than wince inwardly when Campbell said solemnly: "Mon, ye've had an awfu' lucky escape! Let it be a lesson to ye all the days o' your life."

It seemed as if the bad luck which the superstitious old Scotch engineer predicted for the trip had set in already, for that night there broke upon us one of those sudden midsummer storms that play the mischief with all small shipping caught out of harbor. The Hudson was churned into big gray lumps, and the *Latonia* boomed like a tin can. Campbell had assured me she was a good sea boat, but I was just as glad we weren't outside the Hook and carrying a deckload.

Sleep was impossible, but it was my thoughts that kept me awake. I hadn't the least idea how I was going to extort a confession from Doctor Shipway, but I felt I would be a coward, a traitor to the memory of Captain Taylor, if I didn't try.

CHAPTER IV.

There are fakes in every calling, but it's surprising how far they can go in the medical profession without being caught. Simply because a man claims to be a doctor we trust him with our life when we wouldn't trust him with our purse. They say every profession is a conspiracy against the lay public, but I know of none whose members have more arbitrary power or who are more shielded by their fellow

workers under the plea of "professional etiquette." If I put a ship on the rocks, from whatever cause, I pay for it in one way or another; but if a doctor kills a patient through gross ignorance or negligence, he's rewarded. His bill is paid and nothing said. It seems to me the whole system is all wrong, putting too big a strain on human nature; for when a man can only make money by your ill health where's the sense of making you well?

I'd never seen Paul Shipway up to the day he took passage with us on the *Wilmington*, but I'd made up my mind that he'd got his diploma from one of these snide medical colleges that sell them to all comers or that he knew his business all right, but was thoroughly unscrupulous.

He was a large man in the prime of life, and he did things in a large way, and by that I mean he had a manner of talking and laying down the law as if all knowledge began and ended with him. He was one of these fellows who, when the boss isn't around, talk as if they controlled even the law of gravitation. And even if he was dead wrong in an argument he could pulverize the average spellbinder by sheer weight of manner and his booming voice, just as Doctor Samuel Johnson used to bawl out opponents when he couldn't down them any other way.

I've heard it said that if you only repeat a thing often and loud enough you'll come to have it believed, and I guess that was the way with him. He was always impressing on the public what a great man he was, and the world had come to believe it. His appearance helped him a lot. He had a leonine head and a sort of Horatius-at-the-Bridge look, as if he were ready to die for his country and humanity at the drop of the hat, and wouldn't know how to tell a lie if he wanted to. He had a trick of throwing back his tawny hair, one hand stuck in his chest like the pictures of Daniel Webster, while he glared about him with what some lady writers would call "fearless blue eyes." And he did it all so well that you'd never think it was the bunk.

He had been an impressive and telling figure at the inquiry into the *Wilmington* affair, and I can still remember his imposing attitude and his words: "Sir, I am a qualified member of the medical profession, and my reputation speaks for itself. I have no affiliation whatsoever with the *Wilmington* line, and am here to-day as a voluntary witness, as a survivor of the tragic disaster, in the interests of justice.

"Sir, I was a passenger on the *Wilmington*, choosing a freighter and the consequent slow passage for the sake of my health." He really meant pocket. "I had every opportunity of observing intimately the late Captain Taylor, and, though it is far from my inclination or custom to testify against one who cannot appear in person to defend himself, I must, in the interests of justice and my duty to the public, unhesitatingly concur in the charge that the unfortunate man was a cocaine fiend and helpless under its influence at the time the vessel founded.

"Sir, the victim of the cocaine habit can, and does, conceal successfully his secret vice from his most intimate associates, but he cannot deceive the trained eye of the expert physician. I suspected at once the true nature of these supposed attacks of indigestion, of which evidence has been given, which induced Captain Taylor to keep his room on several occasions. Sir, I state here under oath that he confessed the true nature of his complaint to me, admitting that he had formerly engaged in the practice of smuggling cocaine into this country, and in that manner had acquired the vice."

It was here that I prejudiced my case by losing my temper and calling the expert physician a liar. But there was nothing to refute his evidence; the steward who attended Captain Taylor, and who might have been able to do so, had gone down with his master, while even I couldn't prove its immediate falsity. A thing like that can't be controverted successfully except by the subject himself and opposing medical testimony. But Campbell and I

based our belief in the utter falsity of the charge on our knowledge of Captain Taylor, just as Mrs. Taylor based hers. You don't have to be as thick as thieves with a man to know him intimately, and little things, if you read them right, show him up better than big ones. He had always kept Campbell and me at our proper distance, but we *knew* the man; knew that he was incapable of smuggling cocaine or of being a slave to anything but duty.

The doctor had had it in for the captain and me, for, though at first we'd been inclined to be overawed by his manner, the night of the wreck had shown him up. He had lost his head and run about like a duck in a thunderstorm until we canned him. I guess we were pretty rough, but it was no time for kid gloves, and he was spoiling his only chance of escape.

I figured it out that his evidence at the inquiry served both his spite and his pocket. The Wilmington line was a snide concern, taking a flyer in bottoms to see what they could squeeze out of it during the boom, and they knew their ship was unfit to carry such a deckload. But if I'd said nothing about it, they wouldn't have landed into poor Taylor like they did. When I said the *Wilmington* was unseaworthy they trotted out Doctor Shipway to prove that it wasn't the fight with the deckload that had made Captain Taylor unfit for duty, but cocaine. Campbell and I, outside Shipway, were the sole survivors; Campbell's partiality for the bottle was well known, and it was insinuated that I myself wasn't too sober that night.

So I considered myself responsible, in a measure, for this filthy slur on a dead man's reputation, and, aside from the esteem I had for the memory of Captain Horace Taylor, I felt it up to me to help remove it. But, as Campbell had said, it takes money to fight, and neither Mrs. Taylor nor I had any. We hadn't anything to spend on lawyers, and nothing to go on but our faith in a dead man's character. For the better part of a year I'd hunted round

after Shipway, feeling pretty murderous and with no clear idea what I'd do to him, short of slipping a knife in his gullet when I found him. And now that he'd cut my wake again I was no better off. His position, social and otherwise, must be pretty secure for him to have wormed himself into the confidence of such a man as Amos Heppelwhite. But then he was the worming kind, and had fooled more than him.

I didn't meet Shipway until, as I'd hoped, we were past the Hook and there was no chance of his using his pull with Mr. Heppelwhite and having me canned at the last moment. Legitimate business kept me out of sight, and, anyway, I'd done away with the mustache I'd worn a year back, so I doubt if he'd known me at a distance.

But when we'd dropped the pilot and were taking the first swells of the Atlantic, I came face to face with him near No. 2 hatch. He paused, stared at me hard, and then struck his Websterian attitude, frowning heavily.

"Am I mistaken," said he, "or is it possible you are Judson Holt, of the lost *Wilmington*?"

"That's still my name," I replied.

"This is most unfortunate," he added. "Had I known, I would have hesitated long before intrusting the safety of my patient, Miss Somers, to a ship in any way controlled by you. Sir, on the occasion of our last meeting, you grossly insulted me; you called my veracity in question——"

"And I haven't changed my opinion since."

He purpled, and glared at me. "If I had you for a minute on dry land, within reach of the law——"

"But you haven't. We're beyond the three-mile limit, where a man can speak his mind." And I went below, leaving him standing there glaring after me. Of course I hadn't been what Campbell would call "deplomatic," for Shipway would complain to Captain Baxter, and probably do his best to have me discharged by cable when we touched Rotterdam. But my batting average in

the diplomatic game has never led the league, and the mere sight of him, sleek and handsome and full of himself as a tabby, was enough. I couldn't have kept a civil tongue to save me.

Some time later I came across Miss Somers stretched out in a deck chair and gazing listlessly at nothing in particular. She had strange, apathetic moments, during which she was indifferent to all about her, and indeed seemed hardly conscious of being alive. I suppose it was one of her moody, eccentric days, for she hadn't displayed any great emotion over parting with her uncle and her native land.

Her maid, a silent, middle-aged person, she treated with complete indifference, calling her always "Mrs. Bryson," instead of by her Christian name. I hadn't seen this woman before, and somehow she put me in mind of a needle with two very sharp eyes.

It was the first time I had been alone with the girl since learning of her mental trouble, and what with my great pity for her and the effort to keep from showing what I'd learned I felt very awkward, being no hand at this dissembling business. And so, meaning to cheer her up, I pointed out how lucky it was the storm had come yesterday and that now we should have fine weather for the trip.

But she didn't seem to cheer any, just sitting there cupping her chin and looking like a deserted bride. And then, without a word, she suddenly burst out crying, not loud, but very quiet, as if she'd learned the trick of not disturbing folks. And when I went over to her she clung to me as if I was her daddy, and buried her head in my brass buttons like a kid afraid of the dark. "Oh, I'm so frightened!" she said in a teary whisper. "I'm so frightened!"

I didn't say anything, being no silver-tongued orator, and, having found that when words won't come there's no use trying to make them. So I just gave a good imitation of a dummy, and let her rub her nose in my best blue serge to her heart's content. But I was doing some thinking in my slow, heavy

way. I was thinking Mr. Heppelwhite and I had underestimated the girl's morbid dread of the sea, and that, after all, we might have done better to leave well enough alone. In the light of her mental trouble I could now better understand that morbid fear, and it would be precious little use to cure her hip at the expense of her reason.

She seemed to get strength from my big carcass, for presently she gave over crying, sat up and dried her eyes, calling herself names and apologizing for having ruined my new uniform. And at that Mrs. Bryson hove in sight and dropped anchor alongside, holding out a cup of bouillon. The girl waved it away, and Mrs. Bryson shot me a significant glance and shook her head. She seemed to have a lot of patience and a trick of moving about like a shadow. No matter how cranky or indifferent Miss Somers might be the other received it all with the same sweet, patient smile. She now sat down, and began to read aloud in a low, sweet voice. But as even the dropping of honey can become monotonous, I suppose it got on the girl's nerves, for she got up suddenly and went off, the other following.

Captain Baxter had a word to say to me when I got back to the bridge. Campbell had characterized him as a "guid auld buster," and his harshest epithet for him was "auld clashbag." He was a harmless, ineffectual sort, far different from the general run of masters of tramps or cargo boats. I'd soon found that the real business of working the ship fell on his first officer—hence the resignation, as Campbell told me, of my predecessor, who had the strange idea that he should be paid what he earned. Baxter had no prominent vices, but he had gradually slid down the ladder until he'd fetched up in his present berth to which he was hanging tooth and nail. Age was overtaking him fast, and he was one of those pathetic figures who, through no great fault of their own, are doomed to fight the wolf to the last. I guess doing for others had done for him; I heard his boy had gone wrong, and it

had taken all the old man's little savings to square matters, while he had a couple of married daughters who needed more help than they could get.

As I had expected, Doctor Shipway had been making a complaint against me. Baxter seemed to hold no downright opinion on anything but prohibition. His weakness, I could see, was a desire to propitiate everybody. He had taken a liking to me, and knew I was a sort of protégé of Mr. Heppelwhite's, but on the other hand he evidently knew that Doctor Shipway's influence with the other was far stronger. Aside from any question of discipline, Baxter thought only of pulling a good stroke with his employer, which was only natural.

"It won't do, Mr. Holt," he said, "and let me hear no more of it. Between you and me, I think you're taking a very wrong course. I didn't know Captain Taylor personally, but I read the evidence in the case. Loyalty toward the dead is a fine thing if it doesn't lead us into injustice toward the living. It isn't fair to hold a grudge against Doctor Shipway for his part in the matter, for he did no more than his duty."

So I said he'd have no further cause for complaint, and Baxter then pulled a letter from his pocket, saying it had been given to him by Mr. Heppelwhite at the last moment for me. It looked as if I were on very confidential terms with my employer, and I could see had impressed Baxter. But something prompted me to wait until I was alone before breaking the envelope, and it was just as well I did, for the captain would have seen from my face that the news it bore was anything but good. Mr. Heppelwhite wrote:

I am sorry you didn't find your way to be entirely frank with me, for I have learned of the abortive burglary. It all depends on yourself whether, on your return, you will have to face a charge of breaking and entering. I mean I am ready to forego my duty to the law and society, continue to give you a chance, if you prove worthy of my trust and confidence.

That phrase "abortive burglary" stung, showing as it did that Mr. Hep-

2A P

pelwhite, as was but natural, believed I'd meant robbery, and had been only prevented by Patrolman Riley. It was too late now to think of the proverb about honesty being the best policy or to regret that I hadn't confessed to Mr. Heppelwhite, as I'd meant to. I was now a sort of fugitive from justice, with perhaps a jail term standing against me if Amos Heppelwhite only said the word. He had acted in the matter far better than his niece had led me to believe, but you don't like to feel under the thumb of even the best of men.

CHAPTER V.

It was in the gray of the following morning that we raised a vessel on our port quarter, a big, three-masted schooner. She was evidently a victim of the previous day's storm, for her fore top-hammer had gone by the board, while the Stars and Stripes were flying upside down, the signal of distress.

She lay, a bit down by the head and with her cloth in ribbons, like a crippled gull, yawing in the stiff breeze as if she were rudderless, her ragged sails slatting every time she came about. Abandoned and a derelict from the way she was careening, and she made no answer to our signals. But presently, as Captain Baxter and I watched her through the glasses, we saw a head pop over her rail, and a pair of arms began waving like crazy semaphores until their owner disappeared as suddenly as he'd come.

"Drunk, most like," said Baxter, who held John Barleycorn responsible for many things of which he was innocent. "Call away the first boat, Mr. Holt, and board her."

When we came alongside we found that her name was "*The Mystery*, New York," and the name seemed to suit her down to the keel. Sailors are proverbially superstitious folk, but there was something about her that would have impressed the most unimaginative landlubber. It wasn't only her *Flying Dutchman* looks nor the blank silence that greeted our hail; it was something

intangible, but which we could all feel like when you enter a room of death.

And death there was aboard, or something very near it, for when I went over the rail I came slap on a fellow lying in the scuppers, dark and foreign looking and with a great gash on his skull which might have been due to an accident or a belaying pin. Evidently he was the fellow who had signaled us, and with his last flicker of strength, for he looked like a pretty dead fish, though his heart was still pumping.

We slung him into the longboat, and the bos'n and I went below, the former to see if there was any money in a salvage job, and I to the ship's papers. But I didn't find any—not a scrap; the log and everything had gone.

McDevitt, the bos'n, came in when I was hunting round in the captain's quarters, and he reported near a foot of water in the hold. "And, barrin' ballast, as bare as my hand, sir," he said. "Not an ounce of cargo and devil a sign of anything human but that wop we picked up. Where did she clear from, sir?"

He was a sensible-seeming fellow, by far the best of our scrap crew, and I told him that the ship appeared to be a mystery more than in name; that with the exception of her home port painted on her stern there was absolutely nothing to show where she came from or whither she was bound. Of course mutiny was the first thing that had jumped to our minds, but if she'd been scuttled it had been done very badly, and, barring the wounded seaman, we found no signs of a fight. Yet there was no apparent reason why she had been abandoned; she hadn't been hurt much and could have been easily worked. Nor could I see the profit of traveling in ballast when tonnage was fetching such a figure. Well, the sea has more mysteries than ever will be told, but we could have this one cleared up by the survivor when he regained consciousness. Meanwhile we could do nothing but leave her as we found her.

"And, by the way, McDevitt," I said,

"it might be just as well if the fo'c's'le didn't know what we found, or, rather, failed to find here. They didn't like her looks, and they might be thinking we'd spoken the *Flying Dutchman* and were in for a spell of bad luck. It's hard enough to get good work out of them as it is."

"That's true," he nodded. "Mostly foreigners, and scum at that, sir. This war has taken the best of 'em. They're an igerant, superstitious lot, but I don't mind sayin' I didn't fancy the smell of this ship the minute I seen her and I like her less now— What's that?" he finished with a jerk, jumping round as if a ghostly hand had plucked him by the arm. "Didn't you hear it, sir?" he added apologetically. "Seemed sort of like a sigh."

We listened, but there was no sound save that of a ship complaining in the trough of the sea. "I was sure I heard it," said McDevitt, poking his head cautiously round the swinging curtains of the door. "Have you been in them rooms, sir?" pointing down the passage.

"Of course. There isn't a living thing aboard but us two. You're imaginin' things——" But just then I heard it myself, heard it clearly. It was something made by neither wind nor sea, a sort of heavy sigh that was half a groan.

McDevitt backed away from the door, his florid face a shade paler. The sun had topped the horizon, and was pouring its first glorious, golden flood into the cabin, but somehow it seemed to heighten rather than dispel the gloom which wrapped the vessel as in a shroud. I'm no believer in spooks and all that sort of rubbish, nor am I long on imagination; but all the same I'd been affected the same way as McDevitt.

"Come," I said roughly, disgusted with myself and him, "there's nothing supernatural in that sound. There must be another hurt man aboard that we've overlooked." And I led the way to the nearest cabin, from which the voice had seemed to come.

But it was empty, just as I'd seen

it before. This trip, however, my scrutiny was more careful and less hurried, and I went over and flung aside the flowered curtains of the upper berth.

"Hokey!" said McDevitt over my shoulder, staring bottle-eyed. "It's a woman!"

And it was. She lay on her back, half clad and breathing stertorously, and as we looked she gave that same choking sigh, flung her bare arms about, and sat up with a jerk like one bouncing out of a nightmare. She was quite pretty, plump and hearty, and on the right side of thirty, I judged. No roving beauty, but with plenty of dark hair, a very white skin, and wonderful eyes, so brown that they looked black; the kind that can go from soft velvet to flashing jet all in a moment. I knew a bit about the races of southern Europe, and something of their polyglot lingo, and I put her down for a Pole or Russian, for you don't get eyes quite like that anywhere else.

Well, it was a rather queer prize package for two unmarried men—certainly the last we'd expected to find—and McDevitt backed off, looking red and foolish, while the girl grabbed the quilt and pulled it up over her gleaming shoulders. The action was purely instinctive, for she was like one waking out of a trance and ignorant as yet where she was at.

She looked wildly about her, the pupils of her fine eyes greatly enlarged as they fastened on mine. Fear and mistrust were there, and she cowered back as if expecting a blow or worse. And then, without warning, she became very sick, overcome with a deadly nausea. Except for a small, rough, reddish spot on her left cheek bone, I could see no sign of violent treatment, but I guessed she'd been dosed with some sort of dope.

We did the best we could for her, but nature did more, and presently she was able to take stock of us again. All this time I'd been administering soothing sirup in the various limping lingo I knew, but it was not until I landed on a few words of Russian that her face showed any animation. Then the

change was wonderful; she pounced on those words like a starving dog on a bone, while her eyes and teeth flashed.

"And Eenglish I onderstan', too," she said naively. "Do you?"

"A bit," I replied, wondering why I hadn't tried it before. "I guess we'll get on better if we use it. But it's no time for questions, ma'am, for this ship's sinking under us. You want to get your things together pronto and come along—not any elaborate packing, mind, but just what you need. Understand that your troubles, whatever they may have been, are over. I'm first officer of the freighter *Latonia*, standing by, and we'll see that you make whatever port you want."

"And my brother—Captain Laskey, of this ship?" she asked, clasping her hands.

"Oh, he's all right," I lied, believing it no time for post-mortems or that she was in any condition to hear them. "Now, ma'am, we'll be ready whenever you are."

She seemed to have plenty of horse sense and get-up to her, for McDevitt and I hadn't been outside long before she opened the door, showing a neat but strongly built figure in blue tailor-made, topped with a hat having some red stuff that went wonderfully with her midnight hair.

"I haven't much, and it didn't take me long to pack," she said in her quaint English, which I won't attempt to reproduce, as she pointed to a small cabin trunk which McDevitt proceeded to heave up on his big shoulders.

She left the room and the ship without a single backward glance; hurriedly, in fact, as if she were mighty glad to get rid of it. Of course her appearance made a great sensation among the men, and they eyed her with open admiration and wonder, a scrutiny which she bore with dignity. In the open sunlight she looked prettier than ever, the fresh sea air whipping color to her pale cheeks and blowing the last traces of dope out of her system.

She seemed almost happy until her roving glance happened on the still unconscious sailorman huddled in our

bows, his dark, saturnine face upturned to the morning sky; instantly her eyes dilated and took on that look of a hunted animal. She shivered and drew nearer to me in the stern sheets, at which some of the hands nudged one another until I scowled them down.

One of their number especially, pulling stroke oar, was the sort that best understands a bucko mate of the old school. He was a squint-eyed swab owing to the funny name of Ney, and for that reason, I suppose, was called "Horse" by the foc's'le, who had its own ideas of humor and history. I mean the name was funny as applied to him, because he was no more French than I am; he looked and spoke like the sweepings of Whitechapel, and I guessed had got out of England while the going was good to keep from becoming cannon fodder. But he needn't have had any fears on that head, for he seemed the sort whose legitimate finish is the rope or chair. He was a natural-born sea lawyer, one of these fellows who have always a grievance; the kind that breed trouble in a fo'c's'le or anywhere else, as a cheese breeds maggots. If he'd been called "Mule," it would have been nearer home, for he was always kicking.

I'd fallen foul of him before we were six hours out for complaining about the grub, and now I didn't like him any better for the way he kept sizing up the girl at my side when he thought I wasn't noticing. There's a compliment in a look of honest admiration, but there are others which are an insult, and this squint-eyed boy had the latter, whether he knew it or not. The girl pretended indifference, but when at length she flushed hotly I reached over on the quiet with my number ten and let him have it on the shin. He cursed me with his eyes, but soon dropped them, and put his broad back into his job.

"Where's my brother?" asked the girl suddenly, turning to me, after looking round as if she expected to find him in the boat.

So, as she was bound to know sooner or later, and, moreover, seemed to guess

what was in the wind, I explained as gently as I could that but for herself and the wounded sailorman there wasn't hide nor hair of Captain Laskey or his crew.

She took it like the fine, brave girl she evidently was, never saying a word, but just staring out to where the dancing blue water merged with the still bluer sky. And so she sat in silence, with the patience and stoicism of her race, until we made the old *Latonia*.

CHAPTER VI.

You'll have seen by this time that I haven't the story-teller's art down pat; for, I've been told, it's bad workmanship to have more than one plot, and that you shouldn't break the thread and trot in some new characters after the reader has got interested in the doings of those you first started off with. But everyday life isn't a work of art—certainly mine hasn't been—or, if it is, it seems to me like a piece of tapestry whose hidden meaning we only see by turning the other side. Things don't happen according to schedule, and we keep meeting and getting interested in new folks and events, though that doesn't say we forget the old. I'm telling the yarn just as it happened and—

Well, to go ahead, the wounded sailorman was hustled to the sick bay, where, not having any regular sawbones of our own, Doctor Shipway went to look him over and pronounce sentence. Meanwhile, Katya Laskey—that was our new passenger's name—was telling her story to Captain Baxter and me.

I needn't make a long tale of it, though, with her limping English and our questions, it took a fair time in the telling. To begin, she had come over the previous year from Riga on a visit to her brother, who owned and captained *The Mystery*, that was in the lumber-carrying trade between New York and Portland. She kept house for her brother, who had sent for her on his wife's death, and during the spring and summer occasionally made

the round trip with him as a sort of holiday.

Last trip *The Mystery* had failed to ship its usual cargo, there being a fight over delivery or rates or something, and they had put out from Portland in ballast. Then the storm had caught them, and the crew had mutinied to a man. The fellow we'd rescued was the first mate and ringleader, a Spanish half-breed by the name of José, and what the rest of it was Miss Laskey didn't know or care.

What with her emotion and make-shift English we couldn't get quite the hang of the tale; but, though she didn't say so plump out, we gathered that this José had made a desperate play for her, even to having the galley cook dope her food. It seemed there was bad blood between him and her brother, also between the latter and the crew. Of the actual mutiny she knew nothing, being doped before it broke out, and lying unconscious for twenty-four hours. The last thing she knew was her brother ordering her to her cabin and going to his for his revolver. When she regained full consciousness it was to find McDevitt and me staring at her.

Well, it was a queer yarn, but I've known queerer to happen, and queerer ones yet will never be known. As she was finishing it, Doctor Shipway knocked and came in without waiting for Captain Baxter's say-so.

"That fellow has concussion of the brain," he announced in his ex-cathedra manner, "and it's two to one whether he'll ever regain consciousness again." He didn't pay any more attention to me than as if I wasn't alive, his eyes being all for Miss Laskey. And when he'd got the drift of her story he sat down beside her and began pawing her over.

"Ah," he said, examining her eyes, "you've been poisoned with laudanum, and the fact that you've had an overdose has saved your life. The rascal must have doctored your coffee." And he started on a learned dissertation on vegetable poisons and their antidotes, designed either to impress the girl or

just because he couldn't help showing off.

She listened submissively with folded hands, giving him now and then a swift, appraising glance. At first she had seemed afraid of him, but his benignant manner was soon putting her at ease. For, when he wanted to, none could be more persuasive than this same Paul Shipway.

"Now, ma'am," said Captain Baxter at length, having been sidetracked like myself, "unfortunately we've no wireless or we might get word of your brother. We're only a freighter, you know, and don't come under the law, while the owners haven't seen fit—" He pulled up short, and glanced apprehensively at Shipway. "As I was saying," he continued smoothly, "our first port is Rotterdam, but I'll be very happy to transfer you to the first home-ward-bound ship we speak."

The girl considered for a moment. "No," she said slowly at length. "I feel quite, quite sure my brother is dead. And now I have no one in America. For why, then, should I return? No, I couldn't bear it." And she closed her eyes tightly.

"There, there!" said Shipway, patting her on the shoulder, something I wouldn't have dared to do.

"I am homesick for Russia and my people," she went on passionately. "It so happens I have a married aunt in Rotterdam who will see that I get back to Riga. So please let me stay. I—I can pay," she finished eagerly, holding up a little purse.

"Not a cent," said the doctor in his large way before Captain Baxter could reply. "I'm only too glad to be of help. There's an extra stateroom which will be entirely at your disposal, and I'll make it my personal business to see that you reach your aunt's safely. Leave everything to me, Miss Laskey."

She looked rather bewildered by this sudden transfer of authority from the captain to Shipway, no doubt thinking that the latter could be none other than the owner of the *Latonia*. And, to my disgust, Baxter never said a word; he just sat there, twiddling his withered

old thumbs and trying to look as if the big, full-blooded doctor was merely his mouthpiece. But the attempt was a miserable failure. Of course I daren't say anything, so the two of us looked like stuffed supers while Shipway, as usual, filled the stage. One would have thought he had conducted the rescue single-handed.

"Come, Miss Laskey," he said benignantly, "we'll go below now, and I'll give you something to counteract the effects of that laudanum. Then Mrs. Bryson will show you your room, and you will take a good sleep. I'm the doctor, you know, and I expect my orders to be obeyed," and he proceeded to shepherd her out in his large, fatherly style.

She was no fine lady, accustomed to position and command, and Shipway showed by a subtle distinction in his manner that he had discerned it from the first. For he was a shade too familiar, for all his professional privilege and paternal manner. But if she hadn't birth and money, she had the fine lady's instincts, and she showed it now by turning at the door and bowing with simple dignity and a smile of singular sweetness to old Captain Baxter. Then, as she passed me, she said in a low voice: "I thank you, sir, for—everything." And somehow it came to me that she must have seen that surreptitious kick I'd landed on the Horse.

I was about to leave the chart house when Captain Baxter said: "One moment, Mr. Holt. About this ship, *The Mystery*, I understood you to say there were no signs of a fight?"

"Well, none to speak of, sir. There was a bit of blood amidships, which at first we laid to this fellow José, for he had bled pretty freely. There was nothing smashed—but a pretty lively fight can happen without that. And most of the boats were gone."

"It's a queer yarn," he said.

"But a straight one, sir. It explains everything. They scuttled her and took her papers so she wouldn't be known if boarded before going down——"

"Aye, but why leave her name and home port as large as life?"

"But who's to say it's her real name, sir? You'll remember Miss Laskey had no occasion to speak of it by name; it was always 'the ship' or 'my brother's vessel.'"

"That's true," he nodded. "You suggest, then, that they painted out the name and substituted '*The Mystery*'?"

"It could have been easily done, sir, and not the first time, either, as you well know. It wasn't any elaborate lettering. What object would Miss Laskey have in making up such a romance? And what else but mutiny could explain the case?"

"That's true," he nodded again, plucking at his white beard. "If only we'd a wireless outfit, we could find out in a minute if such a ship is on the register and if it sailed from Portland. Mind, I'm not saying for a minute that the girl's lying; she's simple and ingenuous, as any one can see, and there'd be no earthly reason why she should lie. Nor, as you say, could anything else explain it. Yet there were one or two things in her story——"

"I know, sir. But you must remember her poor knowledge of our tongue and that she was in no condition for talking. And then she couldn't give details of the mutiny, for she didn't see it. We should be able to get the full story from this fellow José."

"Aye, if he's ever able to talk," said Captain Baxter. "But he won't be wanting to help put the rope around his neck."

As may be imagined, the chief engineer wasn't overjoyed at the presence of another female aboard us, however others might feel. "Weemen and more weemen!" he said disgustedly. "Is it a weemen's home we're settin' up?"

Already he had got the story of the mutiny aboard *The Mystery*—it's wonderful how news travels aboard ship—and he now said it was a fine example of the mischief wrought by the daughters of Eve. "This lascar weeman—and the lascars are a slippery people, mind—brought bad luck to yon craft, and she'll bring it to us. She's ane o' them syreens, devourers o' men, like Helen o' Troy. And," he added, with

a grin, "she seems to ha'e cast a spell over Doctor Sheepway a'ready, for I hear he's been rinnin' roond like an auld hen after a chick."

Campbell's blithering nonsense got on my nerves, and, it being my watch off, I went into the sick bay amidships to have a look at José, more out of idle curiosity than anything else.

He wasn't a bad-looking fellow, for all his rather saturnine expression, and he was in delirium, his dark eyes open and staring. He kept muttering incessantly, in Spanish and English, but the only phrase I could pick out was something about an island—quite like the old-time stories of pirates and buried treasure. Only so far he hadn't said anything about doubloons, pieces of eight, or the inevitable map.

I asked the cabin steward, doing duty as orderly, if the other had talked of anything else. "No, sir," he said. "Of course I can't get next to his foreign chatter, but he seems to be bughouse over some sort of island. Can't get it off his chest."

"Maybe it's Blackwell's," I said. "That would seem the sort he was most familiar with."

When I went on deck I saw the lonely figure of Miss Somers, propped on her crutch, leaning over the lee rail and looking at the water as if she were thinking of making a hole in it. Doctor Shipway seemed to leave her pretty much alone, but I saw Mrs. Bryson keeping tabs on her from the shelter of the companionway, out of earshot. She was always on the job in her silent, efficient fashion.

The girl turned as I was about to pass. "What's the matter, Mr. Holt?" she asked. "What have I done that you're trying to avoid me? Oh, yes, you are," she went on as I started a denial. "You're not on duty all the time. You haven't been the same since you came aboard, and something happened yesterday which has made you worse. Was it that letter you got from my uncle?"

"Well, yes. I'd have done a lot better to have told him myself about entering that house."

"What's this?" she said. "You mean he knows?"

"Of course. Wasn't that what was in the letter?"

"How should I know?" she snapped. "I didn't know you'd got one until you told me just now. It was only a guess. Let me see it, please," holding out an imperious hand. And, to humor her, I passed it over without demur.

Her face flamed as she read it. "And you think I told him?" she cried. It was hard sometimes—indeed most of the time—to regard her as a child, and now she spoke with the passion and force of a grown woman. "You think I told him, and that's why you've avoided me!"

"Not a bit of it," I said. "It doesn't matter who told him, for I should have. But I never thought for a moment you had."

She looked at me long and intently, that curious, searching gaze of hers that seemed to probe one's soul. Then she said very gently: "Forgive me, Mr. Holt."

"No doubt Mr. Heppelwhite learned it from the policeman," I said.

"On the contrary, I'm quite sure he didn't." She seemed about to add something, but Mrs. Bryson came up, and she turned to the rail, resuming her old attitude of brooding melancholy.

We learned that night from Miss Laskey that, as I had conjectured, *The Mystery* was a fictitious name, one she had never heard applied to her brother's vessel. It was really registered and known as *Grand Republic*. Yet we all continued calling it by the former name, nor was this merely an example of the tenacity of a quickly acquired custom; to most of us the vessel, now resting on the floor of the sea, still remained a good deal of a mystery.

CHAPTER VII.

Of course it was nothing but coincidence that our bad luck should begin almost from the hour our new passenger set foot aboard us. It started that night with Mr. Green, the second offi-

cer, pitching headfirst down a hatch and escaping with a broken leg instead of neck. Then one of the hands got mixed up with the for'ard donkey engine while trying it out, and lost a perfectly good finger, while another, changing watches in the crow's-nest, missed his footing and came within an ace of kissing the deck. Moreover, mean weather set in, unseasonably cold and dirty, instead of the fine spell we'd every reason to expect. A wintry fog pounced on us from nowhere, and the nights were what sailormen call as black as the Earl of Hell's riding boots.

There was nothing in all this but the mishaps and discomforts attendant on most every voyage, but mutterings began in the fo'c's'le, the usual grumblings with here and there a more or less jesting allusion to the *Flying Dutchman*. On top of this came more complaints about the grub, and, truth to tell, there was room for criticism here. Food is a serious item to the foremast hands; I mean not as a necessity, but a sensual pleasure. It's one of the few they have, and they work hard for it. They ask for no luxuries, but at least they're entitled to be able to tell the difference between soup and coffee without holding a preliminary inquest. It wasn't the fault of the cook, but the ship's stores; but when I suggested that some rascal or clique was making a handsome thing off Mr. Heppelwhite, Campbell laughed as if I'd made the joke-of the year.

"The mon wha' could do him, Mr. Holt, could sell overcoats in hell. Amos Heppelwhite? Mon, he's awfu' fond o' the siller, didn't ye ken that? Aye, worse than a Scotchman—if sic a thing be possible."

It came back to me now how Mr. Heppelwhite had hugged the little purse and the struggle he had undergone before nerving himself to part with a nickel. But I've known men who are miserly in small matters and princely in big ones; who'll haggle over a penny and yet give away thousands. Campbell, however, scoffed at this idea of his character.

"You say he was verra generous to

you? In what way, Mr. Holt? Did he gi' ye onything above what ye earned—or as muckle? No, nor to nobody else, either. If he did, then depend on it he'll get his poond o' flesh—aye, and the last drop o' bluid, too."

"Nonsense! You don't know him."

"True, I've no' a callin' acquaintance," said Campbell dryly, "but ye dinna ha' to drink a mon's whusky to ken him. Look about ye, Mr. Holt; this matter o' the grub's only a sample o' the cheese-parin' methods. Cheap coal, cheap food, cheap wages, cheap everythin'. A job wi' the Blue Band line is the worst billet a mon could have."

"It's a wonder you took it, then."

"Would I ha' ta'en it if I could ha' got ony ither?" he demanded. "Would you or Captain Baxter or ony o' the rest? Na, na, Mr. Holt; Mr. Heppelwhite puts up wi' oor faults and shortcomings, not for the sake o' sweet charity, but for the sake o' his pocket. He canna get better men for the money. Maist o' us should be on Cunarders but for oor weaknesses or meesfortunes. I thocht ye kenned weel that the Blue Band line is only fit for them wha are fit for naething better—meanin' no disrespect to yersel'."

"You forget I'm not up on the latest thing in shipping gossip. I knew, under its former owners, the line was run down, but I thought the new management had changed all that. Surely it's not a question of money?"

"A question o' making money," said Campbell dryly. "I dare say Mr. Heppelwhite isna rinnin' the fleet for his health."

Our own saloon fare was nothing to brag about, but that didn't apply to Doctor Shipway's table, where sat the "weemen," now including Miss Laskey. Under the plea of providing for his patient, I suppose, the doctor had an elaborate menu. He was a hearty eater and drinker, nor was Mrs. Bryson by any means food shy; but the other two weren't much with the knife and fork, and more often than not Miss Somers stayed on deck or in her room, contenting herself with biscuits and fruit. I

had thought Miss Laskey a fine companion for her, one that would help to take the girl's thoughts off herself and relieve the monotony of the voyage, but they didn't mix any more than oil and water.

"I've tried to be friendly, but she avoids me," said Miss Somers to me. "I tell you people don't like to talk with cripples."

"I'm sure that has nothing to do with it," I replied. "You must remember Miss Laskey is in mourning for her brother, and, I believe, would much prefer to mix with nobody if she had her own way in the matter."

She looked at me sideways. "You don't approve of Doctor Shipway?"

"I hardly know him well enough to approve or disapprove."

"Really? Now I imagined, Mr. Holt, that you and he were old friends—or enemies."

"Where did you get that idea?"

She laughed in her elfish fashion. "Oh, it came to me since we've been aboard. I warned you that in many ways I'm far older than fourteen. I tell you when you've nothing to do but sit all day, watching and thinking, you come to find out far more than people imagine. I've been watching and listening almost from the day I was born; watching people's faces, listening to their voices. It's what they don't say, what they don't look that always interests me."

"You're a rather terrible young person," I said. "I'd hate to have a guilty conscience when you're around."

"You needn't be afraid, Mr. Holt. For all that appearances were so against you, from the moment I saw you I knew you for an honest man and a loyal friend. If I were ever in trouble, you are just the sort I'd like to have near me."

"I haven't had many flowers handed me in my life, but that's certainly the nicest bunch possible, Miss Somers. I'll try to preserve them always."

But for all my lightness I felt pretty deeply moved, for there was heart and sincerity back of what she had said, and it's a great thing to have even a child

believe in you—even an eccentric one. Yet, as I have explained, in talking with her I forgot both her eccentricity and youth; except for a maturity of mind far beyond her years, her elfish precocity, I could see no sign of that abnormal mental condition to which her uncle had referred.

But that night I was sharply reminded of it. It was late, and, coming aft through the fog, I was suddenly brought up all standing by the dread cry of "Man overboard!" followed by a splash on our port quarter. In a second I had kicked off my shoes, slipped out of my coat, and gone over, a flare buoy hitting the water at almost the same time, thanks to the quickness of McDevitt, who had been the one to sing out.

A man overboard at night is a ten-to-one shot at the best of times, but in a fog few would take the bet. The *Latonia*, however, was no greyhound, the water was like oil, and we had been creeping along so that Miss Somers wasn't so far astern. Of course at the time I had no idea it was she until I happened on her more by good luck than good guidance. Indeed, it was all good luck, for I might have passed her a dozen times and been none the wiser. I simply laid the right course by chance, and blundered on her when she had bobbed up for the second time, gasping and full as a tank, for she couldn't swim a stroke.

I come nearer being graceful in the water than anywhere else, though I'm no Annette Kellerman, at that. But my hands and feet don't get balled up like they do when I try to tango, and I've been bred to it from a kid. Also in the water my horse strength and staying power are of some use, while you can't dance by main force. And so, though I don't know anything about the scientific kind of life-saving you read of, I was equal for this job, the girl being so far gone she could only try one strangle hold, which I broke easily. I had nothing to do but tread water and keep the float till McDevitt, led by my foghorn, rowed up in a lifeboat.

I was fresh as a clam at high tide, but the poor kid was all in, and it wasn't until I laid her over a thwart and worked on her, all during the back trip, that she showed any signs of having an interest in things.

After she had been hustled below and put between the blankets, I gave out that the whole thing was an accident, going so far as to say that I'd seen her hat blow off under one of the lifeboats and she, foolishly going outside for it, had been pitched over by a sudden lurch of the ship. There being no sea running and no wind to speak of, this was a poor enough lie, but the only one I could think of at the time, and I hoped it would get by. Anyway, there was none to contradict this revised version. McDevitt, if he had any difference of opinion, didn't say a word, and he and I were the only ones who had been anywhere around.

When I was taking a rubdown in my room, Doctor Shipway came in. "I hope you'll pardon the intrusion," he began, "but I thought you'd like to know that Miss Somers will be none the worse for her terrible experience, barring the shock to her system and perhaps a cold. It's a very providential thing you happened to be where you were, Mr. Holt, and I can't say how much I admire your action. There isn't one man in a thousand who would go over like that in such a fog, and I shall certainly make it my business to see that your conduct receives the official recognition it deserves."

"I'm looking for no Carnegie medals, sir, and there isn't a man in a thousand who wouldn't have gone over if he knew the water like me."

"You won't take a deserved compliment from me, eh? Look here, Mr. Holt, I think you and I have sadly misjudged each other, and it's high time we came to a better understanding. I wouldn't have troubled to set matters right between us but for your conduct to-night, for I'm not one to sue for any man's good opinion, my actions speaking for themselves. But, aside from all else, you've done me a mighty good turn by this air-raising scene.

That girl is the apple of Mr. Heppelwhite's eye, and if she'd succeeded —" He pulled up short and added: "I mean he would feel like blaming me for accidents that nobody could prevent.

"Now," he went on, "what I want to ask you is this: Do you honestly believe in your heart that I gave false evidence, and knowingly, in the matter of the late Captain Taylor? I ask you man to man, and I want an answer in the same spirit."

I came nearer liking him at that moment than I ever had, for he squared his big shoulders and looked me straight in the eye. It was the same old Horatius-at-the-Bridge stuff, but somehow, for the first time, I found myself wondering if it mightn't be genuine, after all. I've spoken of his persuasive powers; undoubtedly he had great personal magnetism, or whatever you like to call it, and it was the first time he had brought the full battery to bear on me. Anyway, I like a clean cut, even in a dirty deal, and so I told him straight out that, as the legal folks say, the answer was in the affirmative.

"And why do you think I'd perjure myself?" he asked. "Let us have it out, Mr. Holt. As you said the other day, we're beyond the three-mile limit, where a man can speak his mind. I see now that it's not merely a case of spite with you, as I thought at first, so you needn't think I'll complain to Baxter or Mr. Heppelwhite. You've got a fixed idea, and I'd like to get at the root of it."

So I told him what I had told Campbell, and which I needn't go over again here.

He swore, then laughed. "What a character you must think me! Well, Mr. Holt, you've been frankness itself, but you've done me and the Wilmington people a very great injustice. I'll be as frank and tell you that you're a person capable of only one idea at a time, and when it comes in, whatever it may be, everything else goes out, including your sense of proportion, justice, and fair play. In your blind, unreasoning loyalty to the memory of

Captain Taylor you've lost even the saving sense of humor."

"That may well be, sir. I was never one to see a joke in everything, and I'm not what you could call a clever man. Maybe I'm only capable of one idea at a time—and my idea now about Captain Taylor is pretty solid."

"But try and use your head!" he cried. "What under the sun do you know of me to think me capable of doing such a thing either for money or spite? And how can you say Captain Taylor wasn't a cocaine fiend? What do you know about it, anyway, to set your opinion up against expert medical authority? Be reasonable, Mr. Holt. I give you my solemn word that all I testified was the absolute truth. Come, do you believe it or not?"

"I might believe, sir, you were honestly mistaken in your diagnosis, so to speak. And I can well believe, as was shown by the evidence, that my old master had a bit of dope when his pain was bad. But nothing can make me believe he ever smuggled the stuff or was a slave to it, nor, when his ship struck, that he wasn't as fit as you or I—and for that last I have the evidence of my own eyes."

"God send me such a loyal friend as you, Mr. Holt!" he exclaimed, with an angry sneer. "Loyalty being another name for ignorance and pig-headedness. However, I'm sure it's a great concession that you think me an honest fool instead of a clever scoundrel."

"I haven't said that, sir. My belief isn't based on what I know of you, but what I knew of Captain Taylor. Until he comes back from Davy Jones' locker and says it's all true I'll hold to my opinion of him, with all due respect to courts of inquiry and expert medical authority."

"Do, then, and be damned to you!" he exclaimed. "You're one of these bigoted die-hards, impervious to reason or argument, and I'm sorry I wasted a word on you. You may find, Mr. Holt, before you're done with the world that it's better to have a man's friendship than enmity."

"I think it all depends on the man, sir."

"Very good, Mr. Holt." And he slammed out of the room.

CHAPTER VIII.

The "accident" to Phyllis Somers was regarded by the fo'c's'le as another proof of the ill luck attending us, and even I myself was getting into the frame of mind where I was thankful if a day passed without another mishap of some sort. The men were still sore over their grub and the weather, and I had had another run-in with Ney about shooting off his mouth.

A shark had begun to follow us, another ill omen among the foremast hands, presaging death and disaster. I have seen few in those latitudes, but the great war has even had its influence on sea birds and the denizens of the deep, and I've no doubt that the shark scare along the New Jersey coast could be traced to that cause. Anyway, this fellow, a monster hammerhead, picked us up the morning following the "accident," and hung on to our wake like a tax collector, disdaining all lures and baits. Of course he wasn't a favorite with the fo'c's'le, either; they called him the "Submarine," and spent their spare moments thinking up new ways of discouraging him. But he stuck to us with a loyalty worthy a better cause.

On the night following my talk with Shipway I happened upon Miss Laskey crying quietly in the shelter of a ventilator; crouched behind it in the dark, and having her trouble out all by herself. She was very reluctant, rather frightened and incoherent, and it took me some time to get the hang of things. That done, I went to Captain Baxter.

"I wish you'd drop a word, sir, to Doctor Shipway," I said. "He's forcing his attentions where they aren't wanted." And I told of my talk with the girl.

"Oh," dismissed Baxter, "he only means to be friendly and helpful."

"So I've tried to think, sir, up till now. But he's making her life fairly miserable."

"Then why doesn't she tell him so and send him about his business?"

I pointed out that this was easier said than done when dealing with a man like Paul Shipway. "Consider his position, sir, and hers. She's a guest, a poor girl who doesn't want to make trouble or give offense. And she wouldn't have said a word if I hadn't forced it out of her."

"Huh!" said Baxter irritably. "She made trouble on her brother's ship, and now she wants to make it here. If a woman will flirt, she must abide by the consequences."

"That's hardly fair, sir. All she asks is to be let alone."

"I'm not a chaperon for stray females nor am I running a passenger ship," said Baxter. "Nor are you, either, Mr. Holt. That isn't what you draw your pay for. Look here," he went on, as if ashamed of his petulance, "am I to insult Doctor Shipway on the mere word of a woman I know nothing about? Be sensible, Mr. Holt, and mind your own business; it's the only thing that pays."

So I saw that even if he believed Miss Laskey's story he wouldn't take her part against Doctor Shipway through fear of losing his job. He was afraid of the other's influence with Amos Heppelwhite. I felt sorry for him rather than angry; he was a man of decent impulses, but his job was an altar on which he had had to sacrifice much.

I, however, having no one dependent on me, didn't greatly care what happened to my job, and I determined that this underhand annoyance of Miss Laskey should cease. The matter wasn't an easy one to handle, for the girl had begged me not to let Shipway know what she had said, she seeming to have a great dread of offending him. As he was virtual boss of the ship in a way, I suppose she was afraid he might make it hard for her to get back home. So I would have to wait until I actually saw something that would warrant my interference.

But matters took a new and unex-

pected twist, for that same night when I went below to turn in, Miss Laskey met me at the foot of the stairs. We all bunked together in the same part of the ship, the corridor where Baxter, Green, and I slept being on the port side, the other four rooms in the starboard corridor opposite. Not being meant to carry passengers, these rooms comprised really the officers' quarters—or, rather, had before the *Latonia* was cut down. Now we hadn't any third officer, McDevitt filling that berth, though rated simply as bos'n and bunking for'ard. The mishap to Green, our second, had naturally put the work on McDevitt and me, so that my hours were irregular.

"Excuse me, sir," said Miss Laskey in a whisper. "I have been waiting for you. Will you come to Miss Somers' room? It is urgent."

"Is she worse? Did you call Mrs. Bryson or Doctor Shipway—"

"They have retired, and Miss Somers wishes to see you alone."

There was something very mysterious and secretive in her manner, and she proceeded to lead me, not down the starboard corridor, but along my own one and through the aft connecting passage, thus avoiding Shipway's room. She walked silently, and I followed on tiptoe, wondering what was in the wind. It was late, and there was no sound but the "thump, thump" of the engines. So quietly did we go that Green, whose door was partly open, did not hear us.

Phyllis Somers was sitting up in her bunk, her eyes very bright and hard. She pointed silently to a chair close beside her, and, without a word, I went over and sat down.

"I'll be outside," said Miss Laskey, in her low, calm voice. "If I knock, you will know what it means." She went out and closed the door noiselessly, as if nothing out of the ordinary had happened. For coolness and the ability to hide her real feelings she seemed the equal of Campbell. I had never thought any confidence existed between Miss Somers and her; in fact, I should have said they cordially disliked each other. I had never seen

them exchange a word, yet here they were as thick as thieves.

"Mr. Holt," said the girl, fixing me with her clear eyes, "are you a friend of mine—a very great friend?"

"Well, I don't think there's much I wouldn't do for you—or try to."

"Will you be as loyal to me as you have been to the memory of Captain Taylor? Never mind now how I know about that. Mr. Holt, you risked your life for me the other night; that was a very great thing, but what I'm going to ask is perhaps greater—implicit faith in me, the belief that what I tell you is the absolute truth and not the imaginings of a disordered mind. Oh, yes, it is part of the clever plot that I should be considered, not exactly insane, but eccentric and with occasional impulses toward suicide. But, you see, I didn't fall overboard the other night, nor did I throw myself; I was pushed by Doctor Shipway or one of his confederates."

I needn't say how all this fairly knocked me off my pins. I have confessed to my lack of astuteness, and though, no doubt, the reader may have guessed long ago the pattern forming on the reverse side of the tapestry, I certainly did not. Besides, the spectator can always see more than the participant. Naturally my first and only thought was that the girl had gone completely off her head, yet she never looked more mistress of herself.

"But," I stammered at length, "why should Doctor Shipway attempt your life?"

"What is the motive of half the crimes in this world, Mr. Holt? Money! I'll tell you something you don't know; I stand between my uncle and a great fortune—and I haven't died soon enough."

Mr. Heppelwhite! This was another stagerer. But it came to me, as vagrant thoughts will, the look on her face that day when I tried to return the five-dollar note, and her words: "Oh, the child's bank can spare it very well."

"Do you think," she went on calmly, "it was ever intended I should reach

Amsterdam and Doctor Vanzandt? No, that was only the bait for getting me to take this trip. And do you think you would ever have got this berth if I hadn't made it a condition of my sailing? And why did I want you to have it? Because something told me I could rely on you, Mr. Holt. I read your character that evening in the garden as I've read many another. I had no friend, no one whom I could trust—and then you were sent to me in my hour of greatest need. Why didn't I say something then or before this? Because I had merely suspicions, suspicions of weeks and months, which were only verified the other night. And one hardly likes to think one's own relative guilty of plotting murder. It—it has cost me something to tell you even now. But I am afraid, afraid." And she broke down suddenly and began to cry in her silent fashion.

"Now," I said, taking her hands, "you just look on me as your daddy and tell me everything you know or suspect. You're as safe here as a church, and the person who puts you away has first got to settle with me, understand? That's as true as you sit there. What's more, I'll believe everything you say as I do the Bible—is that good enough? Well, then, steam ahead!"

So she told me that the Blue Band line was on the verge of insolvency; otherwise Amos Heppelwhite would not have been in such a mortal hurry to collect on his prospective inheritance. Contrary to general belief, his flyer in bottoms had wrecked him as it has wrecked many a man who, unlike him, knew the game blindfold. He had sunk his own pile, bit after bit, and now the only way of pulling out was by dumping in more capital—which he couldn't raise. It was the same old story, which could apply even to a soup kitchen or peanut stand, of greed leading even the cleverest of men into a game they knew nothing about instead of resting content with the velvet they had made in their own particular stall. For Heppelwhite had closed out a paying dry-goods business to make this "winning" coup in bottoms.

Of course the precarious condition of the Blue Band line wasn't known generally, but the girl had heard her uncle and Shipway talking it over one night when she was supposed to be in bed. And they had spoken of the urgent necessity of more capital, as being the one way of saving the game. This she could not supply, being able only to touch the income of the principal, which, on her death, would revert outright to Amos Heppelwhite. As it was, she owned the house in Gramercy Square—mortgaged by her uncle—and paid most of the living expenses. In fine, he found a pretty soft thing in her and had carefully fenced her off from other would-be exploiters, her crippled condition and distaste for society making this easy.

She spoke of him with reserve; he was her mother's half brother, and she, Miss Somers, had had little to do with him until he became her guardian. But she flared up when I said Mr. Heppelwhite had told me her mother had died in an asylum.

"It's not true!" she exclaimed. "And if he could say that, he could say anything. My mother died in a sanitarium of typhoid. And it's not true that any specialist was ever consulted about my mental condition and verified Doctor Shipway's opinion."

"Does Doctor Shipway own any stock in the Blue Band line?"

"I don't think so. I've only known him during the past few months, when my uncle engaged him as the family physician when our other one died. I don't think he was very prosperous at that time, and I believe he is a man who would do anything for money. I don't think he's even a qualified doctor. I never trusted him, but I couldn't quite make up my mind about him one way or the other, for he has a strong personality and can almost hypnotize a person into thinking what he pleases. When he's talking to me I generally think the best of him; when he is absent I can't help thinking the worst."

"I can understand that very well." And I told of my interview that night. "Only for the *Wilmington* affair I

could well believe him all he represents himself to be."

"I'm quite sure, Mr. Holt, my uncle didn't know you were acquainted with him nor that Doctor Shipway, if your name was mentioned, thought of you being the first mate of the *Wilmington*. And I'm quite sure my uncle must have overheard you telling me about entering that empty house and kept it back for his own reasons—as a sort of club over you. You see the whole point is this: It would be a mistake to try and do away with me on land or by poison or anything like that, for there are such awkward things as inquests, and it is known my uncle will profit enormously by my death. So there mustn't be any hint of his interest in the matter; that's why he pretended such love and concern about me, for I'm supposed to be the apple of his eye."

I needn't go into all the intricacies of the plot, whose diabolical cunning the girl now proceeded to analyze in her remarkable way.

"So, you see," she finished, "this trip was the logical thing. What more natural than that I succeed in taking my own life? Weren't you even ordered by Mr. Heppelwhite to watch me? And would you or Captain Baxter, if you had any suspicions, dare to speak of them? That's the hidden meaning in my uncle's letter to you, Mr. Holt. If you should have any small suspicion, it would pay you to say nothing."

"I understand. What about Mrs. Bryson? I can't believe she has any guilty knowledge."

"No, though for a time I was ready to suspect everybody. Mrs. Bryson believes what she has been told. She earns her money and asks no questions. She is completely under the influence of Doctor Shipway, and so I daren't tell her anything. She would only think it a natural result of my 'mental condition,' and straightway tell him."

"Now just what happened the other night? You said Doctor Shipway or one of his confederates pushed you overboard, so that would mean you can't identify them?"

"No, I didn't see any one. It was

late, you remember, and I had waited until I thought Mrs. Bryson and Doctor Shipway had retired. I went on deck for the purpose of waylaying you, Mr. Holt, as you came off duty, for I had half made up my mind even then to tell you everything. Well, I was leaning over the rail when I was suddenly seized from behind and a hand clapped over my mouth. I'm not very big or strong, you see, and they simply lifted me bodily and threw me over. I know Doctor Shipway was supposed to be in his room at the time, but he could have followed me and returned without being seen. You and Mr. McDevitt couldn't have been more than a few yards away, yet you saw nothing because of the fog."

"Does Miss Laskey know about all this?"

"No. You know, we haven't been intimate, she keeping so much to herself. But to-night, when Mrs. Bryson had gone, she came in, asking how I felt. 'Poor little girl,' she said in her broken English. 'You are in great trouble. It is your mind, not body, that is sick. Is there anything I can do? You may trust me wholly.' She didn't try to kiss me or anything like that—in fact, didn't come near me—but I felt suddenly like I do about you, Mr. Holt. I felt she could understand things without being told, and that I could rely on her. So I told her that if she could manage to bring you here without anybody knowing it was all I wanted. Now she is watching the corridor from the shelter of her door, and if anybody should come she will knock on her wall. Though I didn't say anything, she seems to understand that I'm afraid of Doctor Shipway."

"Perhaps because she doesn't like him herself," I said.

Just then a knock sounded on the other side of the bulkhead, and the girl went white to the lips. She looked at me, terrified. "It's Doctor Shipway! He's coming!" she breathed. "You can't get away without him seeing you—"

"Lie down," I said. And I got up and put away the chair as if I had

only entered the room. Then the door opened silently, and Doctor Shipway came in, wearing a flowered dressing gown.

CHAPTER IX.

He wasn't one to show his feelings, but as he caught sight of me I glimpsed something in his eyes which told me plainer than words that the girl hadn't been making up any fairy tale or indulging a riotous imagination. Suspicion, fear were there, coupled with enmity toward myself. It was gone in a moment, however, and he was his old bland, superior self.

"Now, now, Mr. Holt," he said, "this is no time for visiting. Surely you know that. My patient should be sleeping instead of talking."

"All the talking Miss Somers has done won't do her any harm," I said indifferently. "I thought I'd look in, in passing, that's all."

"I can't sleep, anyway," added the girl petulantly, taking her cue, "so there's no harm done. Good night, Mr. Holt, and thank you for dropping in. My cold is better, and I will be up tomorrow."

"I'm not so sure about that," said Shipway, eying her sharply. "You seem to be in a high fever at present—overexcited."

"Probably with looking at the four walls," she snapped. "Go away, please, and turn off the light. My eyes hurt."

Outside in the corridor, Shipway paused and looked at me. "What's this crazy talk of somebody pushing her overboard that night?"

"What do you mean?"

"Oh, I thought maybe she'd told you. I couldn't make head nor tail of it myself. Either it was part of her delirium or——" He shrugged. "I'm afraid, for all your story to the contrary, Mr. Holt, that she made a deliberate play for her own life that night. Are you aware that she's not mentally sound and has attempted suicide before this?"

"So Mr. Heppelwhite told me."

"Well, then, you see there's no ac-

counting for the vagaries of an unsound mind, Mr. Holt."

"Quite so," I agreed. "Nor a sound mind, either, for that matter."

He looked for a moment at me, plucking at his incipient double chin, then bade me good night and went to his room, while I went to mine, but not to sleep. It was a strange story I had been asked to believe, and, paradoxical as it may seem, my long-standing mistrust of Paul Shipway tended to make belief harder rather than easier. For I was anxious to do him strict justice. I could believe him a fake, an adventurer and even perjurer—but a cold-blooded, calculating murderer, the accomplice of one equally unscrupulous?

It really needed a better head than mine to cope with the problem, and so, late though it was, I went and sought out Willie Campbell in his room. I knew his habits of old, and now found him enjoying his two favorite diversions—Scotch whisky and the Bible, both of which he was sincerely fond of. Of course the former was contraband, and would have been confiscated had Captain Baxter known; yet Campbell never got drunk while at sea, reserving that luxury until he was paid off. It was a private point of honor with him, and he restricted himself to one drink a day. This he took before turning in, while reading his nightly chapter, and it generally equaled three ordinary man's size drinks. Yet Campbell could say with truth that he never exceeded his self-imposed number.

He was considerably older than I, and there had always been more between us than is usually the case with the engine room and bridge. Aside from his evil habit of prophesying—which I attributed to overindulgence in the Old Testament—I had come to have great regard for his sharp wit and sound sense.

So now I sat down and told him what, through a sense of shame, I hadn't told before—how I had come to meet with Amos Heppelwhite.

For once he was amazed, pushing up his spectacles and staring at me, the

Bible open on his knee. "Mon, mon," he said, distressed, "can it be yersel' wha entered a place ye had na richt to? Aye, and chased ower back fences by the law! Mon, ye dinna tell me!"

"I do, Campbell. I don't wonder you ask if it was really I, for when I look back on it now it seems as if it must have been some one else. I was only after bread, but even so——"

"Aye, what profiteth a mon if he gain the whole warld and lose his ain soul? Lad, lad, it's what micht ha'e happened to an auld sinner like me, but not you. Not you."

"I guess there's no knowing what may happen to any of us in this world or what we may do under given circumstances. I don't know how I came to do it; I was hungry, the window was open—and there you are. But I'm making no excuses, understand, for I've no one to blame but myself."

"Aye, I onderstand, lad. We canna be sure o' onything, least of all our sinfu' natures. Ha'e I not tried, ower and ower again, to gi'e up the bottle? And juist when I'm pridin' mysel' on walkin' strong in the paths o' glory and righteousness—plump! I'm doon flat and it's a' to do ower again. But this business o' yours, lad; it was a sair mistake not to tell Mr. Heppelwhite, for he's no' the kind o' mon——"

And so I told about the letter and of all Phyllis Somers had said.

Campbell's sandy brows went up, and he took a gulp of his toddy, his sole emotional display. I had thought the story would find little credence with one of his hard common sense, and I was prepared to argue its points; but it was just the contrary.

"You were saying there's na kenning what a mon will do under certain circumstances, and here's a case in point," he said. "Aye, it's murder, and they're verra respectable gentlemen—or thocht such. But what line hasna been crossed for sake o' the good red gowd? Na, na, it's a verra likely tale; verra, indeed, the mair I think o' our twa fine gentlemen. I've seen the bit lass, and she's no daft whatever else she may be. About as daft as Andy Car-

negie, Mr. Holt. The point is, does Sheepwa' ken what she's told you? For in that case your ain life may be worth lookin' after. It's no nonsense, Mr. Holt; there's big stakes on the table, and sich a mon will stop at naething."

We proceeded to discuss the thing from every angle. It was agreed that our hands were tied, for obviously Shipway couldn't be charged directly and put where he would be unable to attempt further harm. We lacked all evidence. An advantage lay in his not knowing what I had been told—yet when I remembered that fleeting look in his eyes, on finding me in Phyllis Somers' room, I wasn't so sure about this. I could well understand how he must hate me, for, if our suspicions were true, I alone had prevented the complete success of his first attempt on the girl's life. And it was rather a grim joke that thus far I had been able to carry out Amos Heppelwhite's injunctions as to keeping an eye on his niece far better than he meant or wished.

It was agreed also, though by no means could we be sure of this, that Shipway wouldn't attempt to use poison; that would be a crude maneuver, suggesting inevitably his hand in the matter. We were now in mid-Atlantic, so there could be no valid excuse for a hasty burial at sea. Rather, Miss Somers must be the victim of an "accident," to which there could be reliable witnesses, or succeed in committing "suicide."

"And that," said Campbell, "suggests the possibility, after a', of the puir lass being poisoned like a dog. Aye, a risky job, but he's missed his first try, and time's going in. The lass must be watched every hour of the twenty-four and naething must pass her lips that Sheepwa' by any chance could ha'e doctored. And wha's to do that?"

"It can be managed," I said. "I'll have her move her deck chair so that when I'm on duty she'll always be under my eye. And when you and I are off duty we can take turns. She's on her guard now, too, and is no fool. It

would be no use speaking to Captain Baxter?"

"Na use at a'," said Campbell emphatically. "Sheepwa' could twist him roond his wee finger. There's nane else aboard I'd say onything to, for it would only mean gi'en our hond awa'. They've no past acquaintance with Sheepwa' like you and mysel'. Aye, I'm a mon o' ane idea, too, that idea bein' that yon doctor body is a bluidy-minded villain. The easiest way to solve this maitter would be for an 'accident' to happen to *him*—ane that would keep him tied to his bunk for the rest o' the trip. And if I was pairfectly sure o' his guilt—that is, wi' a tittle o' legal proof——"

"But we haven't, and we can do nothing until we have. I think we can rely on Miss Laskey to help us guard Miss Somers."

"Aye? Yon strikes me as a queer lass, Mr. Holt, but you should ken her better than I."

"If anything, I know her less than you do. What's queer about her, other than she's in mourning and wants to keep to herself?"

"Weel, for ane thing I think that tale o' hers a bit fushy. And for anither, there may be mair between her and this José body than ye ken. She has a muckle interest in the mon. Ye ken the sick bay isna far awa'—juist a door and a passage—and I hear she's jukin' around there half the time when she's supposed to be in her room."

I may add here that José was soon to be transferred to the fo'c's'le; but, though the wound in his head was healing nicely, his reason seemed to have gone. Shipway said there was a piece of bone pressing on the brain, the removal of which would necessitate a delicate operation, which he could not attempt under such conditions. Nor, privately, did I think him capable of performing it under any conditions. So José was to be operated on at a Rotterdam hospital. It was a curious situation, that of society hoping to cure a man in order to kill him. For if his reason was restored he could be hanged

for murder and mutiny on the high seas, while otherwise he would spend his days in an asylum.

Naturally I thought the fellow was shamming, and Shipway had resented the suggestion as an imputation on his professional knowledge. But, having no great faith in that knowledge, I had set myself, whenever possible, to watch José. Morgan, the steward, could only look after him off and on, nor was there any need for constant attendance. So on several nights when Morgan had gone off duty, and at other moments during the day, I had slipped into the sick bay—reached from a door and passage connection with our sleeping quarters—and I had watched José when he thought himself unobserved.

I had come to the conclusion that in this instance Doctor Shipway was right. José wasn't a maniac, but a harmless imbecile. His mind had gone. He seemed to have relapsed into a state of second childhood, and I watched him, sitting up in his bunk, amusing himself with the juvenile pastime of cutting out pictures from old magazines. There was something infinitely pathetic in the sight of this handsome fellow, in the flood tide of his youth and physical strength, being reduced to a state little above the level of the beasts. And it seemed impossible, on seeing his pleasant, vacant smile and utter helplessness, that this man had led a successful mutiny, such as perhaps the sea hadn't known for years. More than once I had attempted to extract a glimmer of reason from his poor, addled head, but it was impossible. And any reference to *The Mystery* or the "island" only brought a strange, wild look to his otherwise peaceful eyes—peaceful with the peace of all dead things.

"I've occasionally surprised Miss Laskey peeping in the door of the sick bay when José was asleep," I now said in answer to Campbell, "but there's nothing so queer about that. She has no thoughts of vengeance, of course, and I'm sure doesn't go there to gloat over him, for she's careful that he doesn't see her. Perhaps it's a morbid

interest which she can't resist, or, more likely, pity."

"Aye, peety," sniffed Campbell. "I tell ye if I had her brither's life on my honds—aye, and more—and I was lyin' there helpless like yon mon, I wouldna be trustin' owermuch to her peety, Mr. Holt. Na, na. All weemen are no respecters o' the law, but them wi' flashin' ees, black as a corbie's, are the verra dé'il. Aye, if they're doon on ye, they'll bide their time and speak ye fair, but they'll ha'e a knife into ye in the lang run. Laugh awa', but I could gi'e you chapter and verse, for mony's the case I've known. And, mark ye, Mr. Holt; I'm no satisfied wi' yon tale o' *The Mystery*. Na, na, there's something behind it a' which every mon aboard us feels, but canna put a name to."

"Call it superstition and you'll have it," I laughed.

When at length I bade Campbell good night, and went to my room, it was to think over all that had happened since fate led me over that garden wall. That had been a turning point in my life, for, almost unconsciously, I had been treading the path that can have but one ending. I had been at outs with the world, thinking all women faithless like the one who had thrown me over, all men perjurers like Paul Shipway. In fine, following my knock-down, I had started licking my sores and pitying myself instead of getting up like a man at the sound of the bell and trying another round with the world. And it was the swift, blind faith of a young girl that had pulled me up with a jerk and shown me how near I was to losing that which made such faith and liking possible.

Then my thoughts turned to Katya Laskey, the imbecile sailor José, Paul Shipway, and Mrs. Bryson. The old *Latonia* was rated a freighter, to be sure, but certainly she carried as strange a set of passengers as ever set foot on a liner. The girl Katya was a mystery in herself, and though I had laughed at Campbell I was conscious of this atmosphere or aura surrounding her which he said every man aboard

could feel. I would like to have known her real reason for "jookin' roond" the sick bay and if there was more between José and her than conveyed by the tale she had given out. Was there another story of *The Mystery*, and, if so, would we ever learn it? But I had enough worrying to do over events on my own ship, and, unknown to me, we hadn't yet sampled the worst by any means.

CHAPTER X.

Early the next morning I watched for an opportunity of having a few minutes' private talk with Phyllis Somers, relating how I had confided in Campbell and of the measures we were prepared to take for her safety.

"One of us will manage to be always at hand whether you're above or below deck," I said. "Or, rather, you see that you stay near wherever we are. Keep your door bolted, and don't admit Doctor Shipway under any circumstances. Let him attribute it to a whim, bad temper, anything he likes. Don't eat any more in the saloon, and I'll see that what you get isn't tampered with—"

"But how can you do that?"

"Why, we'll revive the old job of queen's taster."

"You mean you are going to run the risk of sampling everything before I eat it? Mr. Holt, I can't allow—"

But I turned her off with a laugh. "There isn't one chance in a million of his running the risk of trying poison. And, anyway, I'd know it was doped before it passed my throat. So, you see, there's absolutely no risk."

"Oh, yes, I see, Mr. Holt. I see what it means to have a real friend. Some day I hope to tell you—" And then she broke off, staring at her crutch. "I'll be fifteen next month," she added suddenly, "so you'll have to stop regarding me as a child, Mr. Holt. And I intend living till my next birthday—yes, and ever so much longer."

"I should hope so," said I, glad to see she wasn't knocked out any. Indeed I had never seen her in better spirits or prettier looking. Her eyes

were sparkling, and there was a splash of vivid color in her cheeks.

"I'd live now just to spite them if for no other reason," she went on. "But I have other reasons, and very good ones, too. It's funny, but I'm just beginning to enjoy life—perhaps because I'm in some danger of losing it. Anyway, I don't feel morbid or frightened any more. And I feel, I hope, that Doctor Vanzandt can cure me. You don't know what the mere thought of that means. It means, for one thing, that people won't just pity me when they condescend to notice me at all. It means I will be something more than a mere helpless, crippled child, Mr. Holt."

"I'm wishing you all the luck in life," said I, "but I hope you're not thinking it's just pity with me?"

"T-then what is it?"

"What do you think it is?" I laughed. "If I had a little girl of my own, I couldn't be thinking more of her—"

"You talk as if you were an old man of seventy and I just out of baby clothes," she said, quite put out for some reason or other. "I'm *not* young enough to be your daughter, nor are you old enough to be my father."

"Well, then, say a kid sister—if you don't mind being related to such a scamp."

"Not a bit. For you're a very nice sort of scamp, Mr. Holt."

It was a question whether Shipway had any confederates aboard. I dare say there were some hard enough hands in the fo'c's'le who wouldn't be above earning a handsome bit of blood money, if it could be done with little risk, but Shipway wasn't the kind to trust such material. If he had any help at all, it would be from some one whom Heppelwhite and he knew of old and whose silence and fidelity they could rely upon absolutely. And so my thoughts turned naturally to Bill McDevitt simply because he had been near at the time of the girl's "accident," and because I learned he had been in Heppelwhite's pay since the other took control of the Blue Band line. But I liked McDevitt, and had no real sus-

picion. However, I decided to have a word with him, for I couldn't be sure of anything.

"About this accident to Miss Somers the other night," I started off without warning, "just where were you standing?"

He dodged my eyes, and fumbled for words. "Where was I? Why, about here, sir—I mean over there——"

"Where?"

"A few paces for'ard of the companionway, coming from the aft wheelhouse, sir."

"And you saw nothing?"

"I only heard a muffled sort of cry and then a splash, sir, and I run and cut loose the buoy instinctivewise. I didn't even know you was so near, sir, until you went over. The whole German army might have been standing there a few paces off in the fog——"

"I know, McDevitt. All the same, there's something you haven't told. I think maybe you saw a bit more than you said. Come, out with it!"

His florid face colored, but his gray eyes came up from the deck and met my own fairly. And with that my faint suspicions of the man vanished completely. Bill McDevitt, whatever else he might be, would certainly make a hash of the conspiracy business, for he lacked the fundamental quality of being a good liar.

"You're quite right, sir. But a lot of harm can be done innocent folk by a big mouth. And it's getting to be something of the fashion for'ard," nodding at the fo'c's'le, "to blame every bit of bad luck on that poor young Rooshan girl that came aboard us. So I thought it better to keep a shut mouth till asked."

"It will go no farther," I said, "and you did quite right, McDevitt. Then Miss Laskey was on deck at the time?"

"Well, when I was coming from the wheelhouse some one passed me in the fog, sir, though I can't take my oath it was her. But, just after you went over, I seen her dodge into the companionway. She passed quick as wink-in', but, against the light, I saw plain that long green cloak and hood she

always wears when on deck. There's no mistaking it, sir. When I heard she was supposed to be in her room asleep at the time—well——" He looked off at the horizon, and rubbed his chin. "Of course I'm meaning nothing, sir, except that it might make talk for'ard," he added. "They're no better nor a lot of kids."

It came to me then to trust Bill McDevitt wholly, for he had shown he could keep a shut mouth and that his head was something more than a place to hang his hat on. So in a few words I put the case before him, after impressing on him the necessity of absolute secrecy. "You understand," I finished, "the evidence is entirely circumstantial and that Doctor Shipway must be considered innocent until proved guilty. I'm not telling you this to prejudice you against him, but because Mr. Campbell and I will need all the help possible if Miss Somers is to be guarded as she should. I think that between the three of us we can manage a pretty tight blockade."

"Not a doubt of it, sir," he said, having received the news with phlegm. "I had an idea, of course, that that affair the other night was no accident—nor do folks that want to make a die of it cry out like that. I guess there's somebody aboard us who deserves to be used as shark bait all right. Yes, I'll keep my eyes skinned, sir; you may be sure of that. And if there's a confederate among the hands, I'll try to get next. That fellow Ney may be worth watching for one. You're not thinking, sir," eying me, with a troubled air, "that this young Rooshan girl is mixed up in it?"

"No, I don't. For one thing I can't see the connection, and, for another, she strikes me as being far from that sort. If she doesn't want it known she was on deck that night, I'm sure it's for some perfectly good reason."

"That's right, sir," agreed McDevitt heartily. "She's a poor girl in trouble, and that's all. People with them kind of eyes couldn't do nothing wrong." Which was at wide variance with Campbell's conviction, and showed that

even the subject of eyes can promote a marked difference of opinion.

For myself, though I'd given my true opinion of Katya Laskey, McDevitt's tale affected me somewhat unpleasantly. My anxiety for little Phyllis Somers' safety was very great, while this game of hide and seek in the dark was in itself enough to breed the wildest sort of suspicions. Thus the question suddenly popped into my head: Could Paul Shipway and Katya Laskey have known each other before, and was this complaint of hers against him all a piece of a very elaborate game—so very elaborate, indeed, that I could make neither head nor tail of it? For it was simply nonsense to suppose for a moment that *The Mystery* had crossed our course by design.

Our blockade, so to speak, went into effect that morning with my moving the girl's deck chair to the place appointed, and throughout the day either Campbell, McDevitt, or I were somewhere at hand, she going below and taking a sudden interest in the engine room when McDevitt and I were at meals. Being who she was, she could go virtually where she pleased, and even Captain Baxter couldn't veto her wish, say, to watch McDevitt bossing a scraping down or painting job. In fact she stuck to one or the other of us like a bur.

Shipway tried to discourage these new activities of hers, but she waved him off, having developed overnight a spirit of independence that he was plainly at loss how to handle. "No, I'm not hurting myself; I won't fall, and I don't need any help, thank you—"

"But you are under my orders. Your uncle—"

"Isn't here," she smiled sweetly, "and so I'm going to do just as I please for the rest of the trip. I'm a little tired of being looked after so carefully, and I relieve you of all responsibility." And again: "Yes, I know lunch is ready, but I'm not. I'll eat where, when, and what I like, or perhaps I won't eat at all." Or: "No, I wasn't asleep when you knocked. I heard you

perfectly. I didn't want to be bothered, that's all. It's *my* room, you know. Oh, no, you won't make me, Doctor Shipway. You can't *make* me do anything. Yes, I'm perverse and horrid, but I *am* going to do just as I please. I'm so glad you insisted on this trip, for it has given me my first taste of liberty."

I don't know what Shipway thought of all this, but he couldn't have failed to see that something was in the wind. He said nothing further, however, and left the girl to her own devices, treating her new attitude with a shrug and pitying smile, as if it were the inevitable outcome of her mental infirmity.

I was congratulating myself on the efficacy of our measures when, as is generally the case, the worst happened and without warning. Phyllis had been on deck all the next morning, but went to her room at noon. Some little time later I went below for a wash before lunch. Mrs. Bryson and Shipway were already in the small saloon, for they were always the first down at table and the last up.

Glancing up the starboard corridor, I saw Miss Laskey outside Phyllis' stateroom, and she beckoned to me. "I'm afraid the little girl is sick," she said. "The door's bolted, and I can't get in. Listen!"

I knocked, giving my name, but the only answer was a faint groan that turned my blood to water. Campbell, off duty, loomed in sight as I put my shoulder to the door and sent it flying in.

My worst fears were realized, for Phyllis lay in her bunk, now without sound or movement, without vestige of color or life.

"Ech! Ech!" said Campbell, his gnarled face working. "The puir bit lass! They've beaten us, lad, for she's awa'."

Katya Laskey was pale, but composed, and she made no attempt to go near the bunk or minister in any way to its occupant. Yet McDevitt would still have no fault to find with her wonderful eyes, for they were the soul of sympathy, distress, and compassion.

I can't describe what my own feelings were as I looked at that small, still form; but a mighty rage and a poignant pity overwhelmed me, mingled with fierce self-denunciation and vain regrets. Why had I shown such a conventional and scrupulous regard for the laws of evidence, instead of making it physically impossible for Paul Shipway to indulge his criminal propensity? And how many victims, in all walks of life, have been sacrificed to this same fetish of justice and equity! How often has the cry of "fair play" meant unfair play to some one else! In a flash I seemed to see the whole picture of this young girl's lonely, cheerless, friendless life, the tragedy of too much money, that heritage which, instead of proving a blessing, had been her greatest danger. How short-lived was her high courage and spirits of yesterday, and how pitiful now sounded her words concerning her coming birthday and how she was going to live for ever so long!

After that single glance I bolted out the door and down the corridor toward the saloon. There was no shadow of doubt that in spite of all our measures Phyllis Somers had been poisoned and that if the pale messenger hadn't summoned her already he at least was very near. And Shipway was the only one aboard us who knew anything of medicine. Hardly the person, under the circumstances, for this emergency, and yet there was no choice. And as I ran my subconscious mind grappled with the problem of how that poison had been administered, for I had eaten and drunk of everything which she had during the past thirty hours.

CHAPTER XI.

Shipway and Mrs. Bryson were deep in the menu when I entered the saloon, vacant at that moment but for themselves. Neither liked to be disturbed at meals, and they gave me no attention till I stalked over to their table and said to Shipway that he was wanted in Miss Somers' room at once.

"Dear me," said Mrs. Bryson, still

intent on her plate, "I hope she isn't feeling unwell, Mr. Holt?" And she went on eating. "Do you want me?"

"No, I want Doctor Shipway? Are you coming?" I added to him, as he gave no sign of having heard.

"Oh, I'll look in presently," he said, pouring a glass of wine and giving me no more attention than as if I was the steward. "As I was saying, Mrs. Bryson, the difference——"

"This is an emergency case, Doctor Shipway, and I've no time nor words to waste on you," I broke in. "For the last time, are you coming?"

"You forget your manners, Mr. Holt, and our relative positions, I think. How dare you address me like that, sir? Miss Somers has seen fit to remove herself from under my charge, and I refuse to be longer subject to her delusions and eccentricities. This trivial ailment, whatever it may be——" So I heaved him bodily out of his chair and ran him down the room at a pace he hadn't gone for years.

Mrs. Bryson was properly scandalized by this behavior; but, not knowing what else to do, I suppose, she went on eating mechanically. As for Shipway, he kicked and struggled like an overgrown child, setting his heels and throwing all his dead weight on me so that at any other time it would have looked funny. He bulked as big, or bigger, than I, but it was mostly misplaced blubber, and once I got him on the run he never stopped until I shot him into his own room.

"Get your kit, stomach pump—everything you've got in the life-saving line!" I barked at him. "Get a move on!"

"Are you crazy?" he cried breathlessly. "What's all this about? And how dare you——"

"Get your kit," I roared, "or you'll be past doctoring even yourself! I'm ready to dare more than you'll ever like."

He shrugged, but obeyed, struggling between outraged dignity and fear.

When we got to the room I ordered Miss Laskey out and closed the door. Campbell was sitting by the bunk, his

crab-apple face dour and grim. "There's a chance, lad," he said. "She's no awa', as I thocht."

"Get busy!" I said to Shipway. "You're going to work as doctor never worked before. For if that girl dies you'll follow her! Do you understand that?"

"Aye, that's the talk!" said Campbell. And he got up briskly and put his back to the door. "There's the fower o' us, and if ane dees, twa will be left. That's mathematics ye'll no' be fancyin', Doctor Sheepwa'. Ye dinna leave this room till ye've undone the black wark ye've done th' day. Your fee will be your ain life."

"You're a couple of madmen," said Shipway, pale to the lips as he looked from Campbell's dour face to mine. "You'll pay for this outrage——"

"Aye, mayhap, but the point is ye'll pay first," said Campbell. "To wark, mon, and ha'e done wi' your bleatin'! To wark, as ye value your ain life! And may the Almighty lend ye the skill I ken weel ye dinna own."

And either the Almighty did, or the case wasn't so hopeless as we feared. Or Shipway, aware of what poison had been administered, knew the right antidote without groping for it. Also he had taken our words to heart, for no doctor could have worked harder, nor, for that matter perhaps, had any doctor worked under such an inspiration. Whether Campbell or I would have fulfilled our threat is beside the question, but at the time we believed so. Shipway, as he showed that night on the *Wilmington*, lacked physical courage, and if he didn't believe we would go to the point of murder, he feared at least the manhandling that assuredly would be his. So he worked till the sweat poured off him, Campbell and I at his elbow, and more than once, when he was on the point of giving it all up as a hopeless job, we spurred him on with hand and tongue.

At the end of an hour Phyllis opened her eyes for a moment, and he pronounced her out of danger. He said it with vanity and satisfaction, and I believe that for the moment he was

taking more professional pride in the success of his labors than thought of having saved his own skin. I think he had succeeded in showing more skill than, at heart, he ever thought he owned.

"And now," he said, putting on his old manner with his coat, "perhaps you two will favor me with an explanation of your most extraordinary behavior?"

"Pairhaps ye'll favor us, Doctor Sheepwa', wi' an explanation o' juist what was wrang wi' the bit lass?" said Campbell, his eyes on the other. "Dinna be sayin' it was juist wind colic or that she ate something that didna agree wi' her. For, ye see, Maister Holt wasna took that way."

"I don't know what you mean," said Shipway. "The facts speak for themselves. The poor, unfortunate girl made another attempt on her life. She took veronal, but how she got it I'm not prepared to say."

"Aye, ye're not prepared—I can verra weel understand that. But I'm prepared, Doctor Sheepwa', and so is Maister Holt. Ye gave it to the bit lass, ye bluidy-minded Philistine!"

"What's that? Now I *know* you're crazy," said Shipway. "Most amusing thing I've heard in years. I gave it to her? When, how, where? For what reason?"

"We needn't go into that," I said, "for I know all you can say about lack of proof. If we had proof, you wouldn't be standing there now with a whole skin. If I were master of this ship, proof or no proof, you'd stay in a locked room until we made port. As it is, this is what I have to say to you, and it will pay you to lay it to heart: If any more 'accidents' happen to that girl there, if there are any more attempts at 'suicide,' you'll answer for it to me. It won't be any case for the law courts, but a settlement between man and man. I promise you you'll never live to profit by that girl's death."

"So now you think me a would-be murderer as well as perjurer, Mr. Holt? I say, we're progressing. It's strange how far spite will carry a man. You listen to some hallucination of an

unbalanced mind, some wild, impossible story, and straightway you believe it—not because there's an atom of truth or logic in it, but because you want to believe it——”

“I don't propose to argue this thing, Doctor Shipway, for you could talk black into white. I've said my say, and I stand over it. I tell you if any harm comes to Miss Somers through you or your bidding, you'll pay for it with your own hide. That's all I've got to say. Now you may complain to Captain Baxter and sue me for defamation of character—anything you like. At least we understand each other.”

“I'll see that you and that drunken Scotchman are fired when we reach Rotterdam!” he said through his teeth. “As for the rest, I give nothing but a kick to the yapping of mangy curs.”

“Kick awa’,” said Campbell. “Mon, I'm only waitin' a fair excuse to stuff ye through yon porthole. Ech, but the room stinks! Awa' wi' ye, ye bloated ghoul, before I forget the rest o' the Ten Commandments!”

Short of punching Campbell's head there was no adequate rejoinder to this sort of repartee, and for a moment I thought Shipway about to hurl his vast bulk on the fiery little Scot.

“I guess the average hanging jury is composed of just such maudlin asses as you two,” said Shipway at length, turning away with a final look of contempt and beginning to collect his tools. “It's well the law demands rather more proof than the crazy story of a half-witted child or the spiteful lies of sore-heads like you two. You'll hear more about this later, I promise you.”

It was at this moment that my eyes fell on the water bottle standing in its accustomed hole above the washstand. Now I hadn't neglected the precaution of sampling its contents when Morgan, the bedroom steward, filled it and placed it there that morning. Since that time, however, it would have been an easy enough matter for any one to slip into the room and dope it. And as I had assured Phyllis it was all right, she would have had no hesitation in using it. Now she was oblivious to

what was passing, having passed into a sort of twilight sleep, so I could not question her. But, acting on the impulse of the moment, I went over and poured out a half glass of this drinking water.

“One moment,” I said to Shipway, as he was about to leave. “Have a drink, doctor!” And I barred his way.

“Stand aside, you clown!” he said, as if he didn't understand what lay back of the invitation. “I've had more than enough of your antics.”

“Come, don't be peevish. What's the harm of a little innocent water?”

“None, except that I don't want it. And, in any case, I wouldn't drink with you.”

“I'm not asking you to. You're going to drink alone, and you won't leave this room till you do. Have a drink, I tell you!”

He stepped back as if I had leveled a gun at him, his eyes on the glass. The sweat was breaking out on him, and he trembled.

“Dinna be bashfu', mon, but step up brisk and ha'e your fill,” said Campbell, who had instantly grasped the situation. “It's only plain water, to be sure, but the best our puir hospitality affords. Dinna spurn it, for it's the wish back o' the giftie that a'ways counts. If ye'll hauld him, Maister Holt, I'll open his teeth wi' a jackknife and ye can pour it doon his throat.” And in very methodical fashion he produced a large clasp knife.

At this, Shipway, with a cry of rage and fear, sprang forward and knocked the glass from my hand so that it shivered to fragments on the floor. “You'd murder me, you fiends!” he gurgled in panic fear. “Stand aside, I say! Let me out!” And he suddenly raised his big, tuneful voice in a frenzied cry for help.

“There's no need for keeping you longer,” I said, stepping aside. “I think you'll concede, Doctor Shipway, that now even a hanging jury would have some excuse for finding you guilty. I'll be anxious to hear what an analytical chemist thinks of the contents of that bottle.”

His powers of recuperation were wonderful; for, seeing we weren't going to help him to another glassful, he came out of his pitiable funk. "And you call that evidence?" he sneered. "Under the circumstances any one but a fool would have refused to drink from that bottle. And if it should happen to be poisoned, what atom of proof have you that I did it? No, no, my One-idea Genius, the law doesn't convict on evidence like that. You've still a long, hard road to travel before your spite can work any real harm to me." And he left the room, wrapped in the shreds of his old Horatius manner.

"The worst of it is he's richt," growled Campbell. "He's as slippery as Auld Nick himsel'. In the eyes o' the law we canna prove onythin', lad, and I've sair doubts we ever wull."

"But have you any doubts of his guilt, Campbell?"

"Nane, lad. His looks when ye reached for that bottle was mair than enough. Dinna let his talk o' spite and a' that make ye let go the idea o' his guilt. Hauld fast to it, lad. That's your ane idea he doesna like."

The matter of Phyllis Somers' illness was soon known even in the fo'c's'le, where it promoted more talk about the bad luck that had pursued us since raising *The Mystery*, and Shipway, taking the bull by the horns, told the whole thing to Captain Baxter, Campbell and I coming in for a handsome keelhauling. For, of course, Baxter agreed that the girl's suspicions were piffle and that we had acted like a couple of fools, to put it mildly. Indeed, there was something of a scene, Shipway demanding an apology, which Campbell and I refused. He then repeated his promise that we would be fired on reaching Rotterdam, to which we replied that our going would be a matter of our own choosing in any case. For, said Campbell, we wouldn't work on any ship belonging to a firm where an outside voice had the whole say. Of course this was a side swipe at Baxter for his abject truckling to Shipway, and, not liking it pointed out in that

fashion, he flared up in a weak fury, calling us trouble breeders and lunk-heads who minded everybody's business but our own. Campbell, in his dry, bitter fashion, came back with a few remarks until threatened with irons and ordered below. So we left in disgrace, much to Shipway's enjoyment. Thanks to him, we had placed ourselves on a footing with the disaffected fo'c's'le hands.

Late that night, when I had turned in and lay thinking over all that had happened, I fancied hearing a sort of incoherent cry from somewhere at hand. Campbell and I had agreed that whatever we had done or failed to do, Shipway at least had been frightened so badly that he wouldn't make a third play for the girl's life. All the same, I was very wakeful, and now, waiting only to slip on some clothes, I ran out, almost colliding with some one in the aft passage connecting the two corridors. It was Miss Laskey, fully dressed and looking rather pale and agitated.

"What are you doing here at this hour?" I asked. "Was it you who gave that cry?"

"No. I heard it and came out. I thought it came from this side, and I was on my way to see." But her eyes were evasive, and I felt that she was lying.

"I had a headache, and couldn't sleep," she added, as if she knew I was wondering how she came to be fully dressed at that hour. "I hadn't retired."

Of course my first thought was for Phyllis, and I went over to the starboard corridor. Beginning at this end—aft—the four rooms ran, Somers, Bryson, Laskey, Shipway. We had repaired the door I had forced in the morning, and now it was bolted. These doors, by the way, didn't lock, and at night were generally left ajar for ventilation, fastened with a long hook which might be raised from the outside by a dexterous hand. I had noticed in passing that Mrs. Bryson's door was thus fastened, but I had impressed on Phyllis the necessity of bolting hers.

Having a lively recollection of what I had found behind her bolted door only that morning, I didn't feel any relief until, knocking gently, her sleepy voice inquired who was there, and then assured me gratefully that she was all right.

I whispered to Miss Laskey, standing in the doorway of her room, that very likely Mr. Green, whose leg wasn't mending any too well, had called out in his sleep. And then my eyes were suddenly arrested. The corridors were poorly illuminated, but Katya Laskey now stood in the added light from her room, and I saw on the right sleeve of her white blouse something which had hitherto escaped me or which I had taken for a shadow. But it was a large bloodstain.

At sight of it I pushed her into her room and closed the door, not thinking for a moment, nor caring, about the proprieties, but simply that Shipway shouldn't hear us. "You're hurt," I said, pointing to the fresh stain. "It was you who cried out. Tell me, has he been pestering you again?" And I nodded to the next room.

"No, no," she said, greatly agitated. "Go away, please. Leave me."

"Not till you tell me the truth. You're hurt——"

"I'm not!" she cried, stamping her foot, her dark eyes flashing. "I had a headache and my nose bled, if you must know. Go away at once——"

"Oh, very well," I said. "Excuse me. I only meant to be of service." And as I backed through the door, feeling very small and foolish, Shipway came out of his room.

"Ah, the virtuous Mr. Holt!" he said, with an evil smile. "Just what I expected." Then, in his best Horatius manner and with a great show of righteous indignation: "Go to your quarters at once, you blackguard! Miss Laskey, I'm at your service, and you've nothing further to fear from this fellow."

The girl stared, then flushed crimson and slammed her door, while I, losing all command of myself, made a swipe at Shipway. Afterward I was

glad it didn't get home, for otherwise I might have had to answer a charge of manslaughter. All my weight and anger was back of the blow, and, as my fist whistled past his jaw, he jumped back and scuttled into his room, where, after securely hooking the door, he addressed me through the opening.

"You monument of hypocrisy!" he said. "I'll have a nice tale to tell the ship to-morrow."

"Let me hear one foul word and I'll save the hangman his job on you!" Thus we snarled at each other like a couple of dogs on opposite sides of a grating.

"If you ever attempt to strike me, as you did just now, I'll shoot you!" he came back. "I warn you, you big brute! I'm not a gutter fighter——"

"No, you're a gutter coward!" And, having cooled down enough to realize I was only making a fool of myself to no purpose, I walked off, leaving him still paying compliments but afraid to show his nose through the door.

I was sore at myself for losing my temper, and sorer still at Miss Laskey for raising her voice like that and ordering me out of the room, thus giving Shipway his chance. Her behavior was a mystery, for though she had always given me a wide berth, flocking as she did by herself, she had no cause to think me a dock-walloping ruffian. Perhaps I had offended her by pointing out the bloodstain—and at memory of that, the strange cry, her agitation, and meeting her where I had, a queer thought popped into my head. For some reason or other I suddenly recalled what Campbell had said about women with her eyes being fond of the knife and biding their time, and how, if he were guilty of her brother's death, he would hate to be lying helpless like the poor imbecile sailorman.

As I have explained, the connecting passage where I'd come upon her joined the one leading to the sick bay, and now, prompted by this queer thought, I went down, opened the door, and switched on the light.

From the first I had always the kindest thoughts of Katya Laskey, for all

her strange ways, and now my relief was great when the light disclosed José lying on his back and evidently sound asleep as a child. It wasn't until that moment that I dared admit to myself what I had feared to find.

José stirred, but never opened his eyes, and I switched off the light and returned to my bunk, where I lay awake, listening for I knew not what, while I tried to think of some logical explanation of Miss Laskey's conduct. I believe she had lied to me.

The next I knew a voice merged with my troubled dreams, a voice booming the advice to get up and dress. At first I thought it was Morgan calling me on duty; but, in the gray light of early morning struggling through the port, I soon made out the burly form of Bill McDevitt, whose usually florid face looked strangely drawn and colorless.

"Get up, sir!" he said. "There's been a murder!"

I was still fogged with sleep, my subconscious mind busy with the fantastic dream world, and so I said, as if murders were as common as prunes: "I know, McDevitt. You needn't tell me. It's José. He was dead all the time and I never knew. But I was right about that bloodstain."

"José? Not him, sir," said McDevitt. "It's Mrs. Bryson."

CHAPTER XII.

It seemed strange, a grim jest of fate, that the person of all others whose life, I would have said, was in the least danger should be the first one to lose it. But so it often happens, and such was the case here.

She had been killed in her bunk as she slept, by a single knife thrust through the heart, the murderer unfastening her door and rehooking it in the most dexterous manner possible. Shipway affirmed she had been dead for at least six hours, which, if one could rely on the statement, would make the hour of the crime near the time I had met Miss Laskey. It was possible that the single cry I had heard was Mrs.

Bryson's, and that while Shipway and I were cursing each other the poor woman was lying dead. On the other hand, it was equally possible that the thing hadn't happened until after I returned to my room.

No weapon was found, nor was there the smallest clew pointing to the murderer, while, most baffling of all, there seemed to be absolutely no motive for the crime. In spite of all the circumstantial evidence pointing to Miss Laskey, I could see no reason for her doing away with poor, harmless Mrs. Bryson. Nor could I understand how Shipway would profit by it. "Except," said Campbell, "that she might ha'e known too much, and he decided to shut her mouth. But here's another point—he might ha'e got into the wrang room by mistake."

"You mean thinking it was Miss Somers'?" I asked.

"Aye, it's possible, lad."

Yes, it was possible, but I didn't think it probable, for, though the rooms were next each other, Shipway knew only too well that the one occupied by Phyllis was the last of the four, and, moreover, that she always kept her door bolted. Unless he had forgotten this fact, unless the corridor light, which usually burned all night, had gone out and he had groped his way in the dark, I could see no reason for his making such an egregious mistake.

On the other hand, we couldn't tell what might have lain between the dead woman and him, for she had been engaged for this trip by Shipway, and Phyllis knew nothing of her past. And if he was capable of plotting murder in one case, why not in another? But as far as opportunity went, pretty nearly all of us were open to suspicion, even down to the harmless imbecile, José who was transferred to the fo'c's'le that morning. I must say, however, that Shipway, if he wasn't acting, seemed dazed and even frightened by the tragedy, and more than once I caught him looking at me in a queer sort of way.

I said nothing, even to Campbell, about the bloodstain on Miss Laskey's

blouse or of the thought which prompted me to visit the sick bay, but I was doing a lot of hard thinking.

The inquiry was held in the chart room, and after Morgan, the steward, had told of discovering the crime, Captain Baxter called upon me for my story. I was still in disgrace over the affair of the previous day, and I could see that Shipway had been having another palaver with him.

"And so at, or about, midnight you heard a cry?" said Baxter, very fussy and full of his new importance. "It was this that brought you from your room and nothing else?"

"What else was there to bring me, sir?" I demanded, resenting his manner.

"That's for you to answer, not me," he said, with asperity. "You're here to answer questions, not to ask them. In any case, you met Miss Laskey in the aft passage? And you, madam," turning to her, "were brought there by the same cry?"

The girl bowed without replying.

Baxter, who had his own ideas of how an inquiry should be conducted, now jumped to Shipway. "Were you awake at, or about, midnight"—this phrase, having a legal sound, seemed to please him—"and did you hear this cry?"

"I was awake and reading in my room," replied Shipway, "and, most emphatically, I heard no cry."

"Ah!" said Baxter, with great respect. "Miss Somers and Mr. Green have deposed to being asleep—and they weren't awakened by this alleged cry."

"Still the evidence is twa against one," remarked Campbell judiciously from a seat back in the courtroom.

"Silence!" commanded Baxter. "You're not a witness, Mr. Campbell, and if you can't conform to the legal formalities, you'll have to get out. This is a very serious case, sir, that of murder on the high seas, and the legal formalities must be strictly observed."

I don't know if the unusual events of the past few days had prompted Campbell to forget his strict rule about the bottle or whether, believing his days on the *Latonia* to be numbered, he no

longer cared how he addressed his superior officer. In any case, he said: "That's quite richt, your honor. Order in the court, gentlemen!" And he rapped on his chair with the inevitable spanner, an instrument which he seemed to carry, or bear about his person, on all occasions. "Doctor Sheepwa', ye'll no be smokin' in face o' the Bench. It's no respectfu'."

"Stow that!" said Baxter, forgetting for the moment his new legal rôle and glaring at the other. "Mind, any remarks like those of yesterday and I'll have you under arrest!"

"Na, na, your honor," said Campbell, shaking his head. "Ye ken weel ye canna afford to do that, for there isna another mon aboard who could get an honest day's wark out o' them poverty-stricken engines. And as for dischargin' me, ye've as good as done that a'ready." And he folded his arms and sat back in his chair as if prepared to hold it against the whole ship. "I've a richt to be here," he added. "It's my hour off, and I've earned the richt to enjoy mysel'. Proceed wi' the business o' the court."

Baxter grew purple, but, an ardent follower of the line of least resistance, contented himself with repeating his warning. Then he turned to me:

"I understand, Mr. Holt, that last night you quarreled with Doctor Shipway after you met Miss Laskey. For what reason?"

"I prefer not to say, sir. It was a private matter."

"But you quarreled violently? You attempted to strike him and you threatened his life?"

"Dinna answer, lad!" cried Campbell, instantly on his feet. "You're no' on trial for your life."

"Throw that fellow out! He's drunk!" exclaimed Shipway.

"Come and try it yersel'!" said Campbell, waving the spanner.

"Go below, Mr. Campbell!" shouted Baxter. "You're under arrest for drunkenness and insubordination."

"I'm no' drunk," cried Campbell, "and I know mair law than baith o' ye—aye, than ten o' ye! I ken weel

what you're after," shaking his fist at Shipway. "Ye'd like to make out that Maister Holt killed the ledly in mistake for yersel'——"

"I let facts speak for themselves," said Shipway. "Mr. Holt, for very good reasons of his own, has refused to state the cause of our quarrel. But I will do so——"

"If you repeat that lie here," said I, turning on him, "I'll knock you down!"

"Silence, Mr. Holt! Sit down, sir!" cried Baxter. "How dare you use such language and attempt to intimidate a witness! Speak up, Doctor Shipway."

"If he does, I'll do as I've said!" I exclaimed.

"And I'll help ye, lad," cried Campbell. "I dinna richtly ken what it's a' about, but it doesna maitter."

I don't suppose there was ever such an impromptu court or that a similar scene was ever enacted anywhere, hanging as it did between broad farce and grim tragedy. We were all angry and excited, while there was no doubt that Campbell, though by no means drunk, had taken enough to arouse him from his customary philosophical calm. It must be remembered that there was little real authority, that Baxter wasn't much better than a figurehead, and that Campbell and I, in our several departments, represented the supreme command so far as the actual working of the ship went. Neither of us could well be done without, but I wasn't thinking of this nor of presuming on my position. I knew simply that if Shipway repeated his foul slander before Miss Laskey and that company I would knock him flat, no matter what the consequences. He realized this, and so, though craving revenge on me, though urged by Baxter, he stood there, afraid to say a word more.

"What's this?" cried Baxter, glaring at Campbell and me. "It's mutiny, is it?"

And, as if the words were a signal, a great uproar suddenly became audible from the lower deck, the sound of trampling feet and hoarse cries. Then McDevitt came through the door with the blood running down his face.

"There's mutiny for'ard!" he cried. "They're out of hand, and they're sending a deputation aft."

Shipway lost color, and got behind the table, while Baxter sat pulling at his goat's beard, and with mouth agape, looking from Campbell to me, as if he thought us the mainspring of the plot and didn't know what to do next. I had never seen him look so old, so helpless and inefficient.

At McDevitt's words, Campbell bounced out of his seat with a look of righteous indignation, just as if he himself had never thought of such a thing as questioning supreme authority. "Mutiny, ye say? What do the swabs mean? How dare they! Come on, Maister Holt; you and McDevitt and I will soon gi'e them their bellyful o' mutiny!"

But here Baxter spoke up in a small and by no means steady voice: "Of course I rely on you, Mr. Holt, as first officer, to handle this matter. Do as you think best, of course, but if the men have a grievance and are sending a deputation——"

"To the de'il wi' their deputation!" struck in Campbell. "Ha'e they not smashed their superior officer? It's no' a time for words, but belayin' pins——"

"That's enough," I said. "I'm in command, subject to Captain Baxter's authority. There are ladies on board to consider."

"Verra guid, Maister Holt," he said meekly. "Aye, I was forgettin' the weemen. They're a'ways a drawback."

"We must temporize, arbitrate, promise them anything," said Shipway. "Otherwise, they may murder us all."

"What's their grievance?" I demanded of McDevitt. "What's it all about?"

"José, sir, and—and Miss Laskey." He refused to look at the girl, who, at the words, went white to the lips and glanced about her helplessly, as if seeking a loophole for escape. "It was him, sir, who did for Mrs. Bryson," added McDevitt.

"What?" we all cried, while I added:

"Bosh! He was asleep at the time, and, anyway, he hadn't sense enough."

At this point, before anything further could be said, the deputation arrived, led by Ney, alias the Horse. There were three of them, three of the toughest among the foremost hands, and all seemed driven by panic fear. "The woman! The woman!" we heard their fellows cry from outside like a stage mob scene.

As Ney and his companions surged into the room I stepped forward and barred their way. "Stand back!" I said. "Not another foot! Here's Captain Baxter, so out with your grievance. What's this blithering nonsense about Miss Laskey? Out with it!"

"She's got the plague!" cried Ney, pointing a finger at the terrified girl. "She's a leper from Penikese Island! Let 'er deny it if she can."

A leper! At the awful word all eyes were turned on Katya Laskey. Then there was a great scattering until she stood alone, more utterly alone, in a sense, than if she were on a desert island.

"W-what's this?" stuttered Baxter, looking fearfully at the girl. "Is—is it so?"

She made a despairing gesture. "It is so."

Shipway rose out of his chair, a green horror overspreading his face. "You Jezebel!" he said hoarsely. "You foul fiend, you've murdered me!"

At that she raised her head and looked at him. "I let all the others alone. I kept to myself—but *you* refused to let *me* alone. I asked, pleaded, but you only laughed. And now——" The pause was more significant than any words could have been.

"You've murdered me!" repeated Shipway in a dull voice. "You've murdered me! Leprosy!" He stared wildly about him, and then fell back in his chair in a dead faint.

Ney's whining voice broke the momentary hush that had fallen upon the room. "We demand that that plague woman be put orf the ship at once. Send 'er adrift and let 'er look after 'erself. We wasn't 'ired to work no

plague ship, and we ain't goin' to die a 'orrible death 'cause of her. We was right abaht 'er being a Jonah from the first. If you won't put 'er orf at once, we'll——"

"You'll what?" I asked, stepping nearer to him.

"We'll feed 'er to the shark," said Ney, "and you'll bloomin' well follow 'er. That's what."

The time had come when the fo'c's'le was either to rule the bridge or obey it, for there could be no temporizing or half measures. I saw clearly that if words were to have weight and a general mutiny averted, Ney, the ruling spirit, must be dealt with. There could be no appeal to reason or humanity while he held his empire over the rest of the hands.

And so, without another word, I fetched Ney a blow that sent him sprawling through the door, then followed and gave him the mauling that had been coming to him. Of course his two companions jumped into me, without waiting for an invitation, and for a time there was a lively enough fight until Campbell and McDevitt got into action. All this took place in full view of the hands, grouped on the lower deck, but not one of them made a move to join in the fracas. The summary happenings to the three leaders seemed to leave the rest dazed and helpless.

"Are there any more deputations?" I demanded, leaning over the rail. "If so, send them up. But, mind, they'll get more than these three. It will mean irons and jail ashore."

As they made no move, looking to one another for leadership, and muttering something about the "plague," I went down and spoke to them further.

"This talk of sending a woman adrift in an open boat, five hundred miles from land, isn't worthy of you, men," I said. "You've been worked on by a professional sea lawyer and have lost your heads. It seems quite true enough that there's a case of leprosy aboard us, but that's no reason for running amuck. In the first place, you don't come anywhere near her, and you've

really the safest quarters of us all. In the second place, leprosy doesn't spread like the plague; you can't get it unless you actually touch one that has it, and maybe not even then. Take my word for it, for this isn't the first case I've run against, and I couldn't be taking it so cool myself if it was a thing that spread like the measles.

"Of course the woman will be quarantined from this on, and another twenty-four hours will see you all safe ashore. In any case, there's nothing else to do, for there'll be no turning a helpless woman adrift or anything like that. You can either grin and bear it or bear it and whine—but bear it you must and shall, every man jack of you! Now, if there's to be any more of this mutiny talk, let us have it at once. I'm here to answer it. If there's not, get back to your work."

I had always been popular enough with the hands, excepting Ney, but I don't know if this and my talk carried the day or whether it was because they now lacked a leader, while the chronic disturbing element among them was no longer present. It may have been simply the triumph of brute force instead of reason, but, in any case, they turned and filed away, and not sullenly or with mutterings. The incipient mutiny was crushed in its shell, and a very ugly situation had panned out far better than I had dared hope or expect. The bridge had achieved what the war correspondents call a "moral ascendancy," and I felt that there would be no further trouble.

CHAPTER XIII.

When I got back to the bridge it was to find that Shipway had gone below and shut himself up in his room. Miss Laskey hadn't budged from her corner, and Baxter, as far off as he could get, sat looking at her much as a man might look at a neighborly snake he was afraid to go near and didn't know what to do with.

Now there was a whole lot I didn't know about leprosy, that incurable, most dreaded, and most loathsome of diseases, and a good part of my talk

with the hands had been rank bluff, for I wasn't caring much what I said so long as it got results. I had never seen a leper before, but I knew now what José meant with his rambling talk of the "island;" I knew now what that small, peculiar, pale spot on Katya Laskey's cheek meant, the spot I had first noticed aboard the schooner and which subsequently, as it didn't go away, I thought must be a birthmark.

But if I wasn't an authority on leprosy, I knew at least that it was contagious, and not infectious, as I had told the hands, and that the girl was in the first stage of it. Anyway, I believe a man can scare himself into having most anything, and I determined that such wasn't going to be the case with me. I don't know if Campbell and McDevitt really believed I was posted on the disease, but, in any case, they were men of sound nerve and sense, and they followed me into the chart room as if nothing out of the ordinary had happened.

Baxter hailed our appearance with obvious relief, and, hearing that all was serene again for'ard, he started in to show his relief by taking it out of the girl who sat in her corner like a monument of misery.

"All this is your fault, and I hope you're satisfied with your work!" he exclaimed. "You lied to us from the start and concealed your disease, which, in itself, lays you open to a very severe penalty from the law. You thought of no one but yourself, you didn't care

"Perhaps, sir," said I, "we'd better hear all the facts, how she came to be on that schooner."

"Very well," said Baxter. "But, mind you, my girl, no more of your lies!"

So, between sobs, the girl told her story—the true story of *The Mystery*—and here is the gist of it:

To begin with, she had no brother and her right name was Olga Semionoff, while that of the schooner was *Manoel*, owned and captained by a Portuguese called Lope.

Three years before she had come

over from Libau, not Riga, and had found employment as nursery governess with a Salem family, she having no idea at the time that she was doomed with leprosy; for the spot on her cheek didn't become noticeable until about a year later. Even when that occurred she had no idea of the terrible truth, nor had her employers.

A few months before the attention of the Massachusetts board of health was drawn to her, and she was quarantined in the hospital during a term of observation, there being great diversity of opinion about her case. Then she was transferred to the leper colony at Penikese Island on the shores of Buzzard's Bay, and, the specialists having at length decided that she was afflicted with leprosy, she was ordered to be deported by the steamship company that had brought her over.

This line sailed from New York, and the problem now arose how the girl was to be brought from the island, for all the railroad and steamship companies refused to transport her. Vessel after vessel was looked for in vain, and the immigration authorities were at their wits' ends. They had almost made up their minds to buy one and burn it afterward, when Captain Lopez, of the *Manoel*, trading between the Cape de Verde Islands and Providence, offered to undertake the job.

The girl was accordingly embarked, in charge of a surgeon from the United States Marine Hospital Service, and Captain Lopez, knowing his native crew, never said a word about their solitary passenger being a leper. But it leaked out after the *Manoel* left the island, and there happened what very nearly had happened to us. The crew were even more ignorant and superstitious than our own, and when Lopez refused to turn back and disembark his passenger, when the storm overtook the ship and drove her far out of her course, they mutinied to a man.

The girl saw nothing of the actual fight, being shut in her room, but it is clear that Lopez and the surgeon were killed and that she only escaped a sim-

ilar fate because the mutineers were evidently afraid to go near her. José, the leader, had been so badly wounded that he was left for dead, and, as I had suggested to Baxter, the name *Manoel* was painted out and *The Mystery* substituted—the artist who did it must have had a grim sense of humor—so that if her hulk was ever found she wouldn't be identified as the *Manoel*. They had scuttled her before leaving, a poor job owing to their haste, and their intention was that the "plague girl," as they called her, should go down with the ship. The *Latonia's* appearance on the scene alone prevented this amiable design from being fulfilled.

Finding she had been thus abandoned, and seeing no hope of rescue, the girl had then attempted to commit suicide, preferring the comparatively quick and painless method selected to that of drowning. But morphine, not laudanum, was the drug used, and Doctor Shipway's mistaken diagnosis first gave her the hint that he didn't know so much about his profession as he pretended. For she had been in great fear that he would discover that she was a leper.

This desire to hide her disease had prompted her to concoct the yarn she had told us, and the fact of the *Manoel's* name being changed and our having no wireless aided the deception. She considered it likely that the fate of the schooner would become one of the many mysteries of the sea, for the mutineers, if they reached a place of safety, wouldn't assist in placing a rope round their necks by relating what had happened. And José, having lost his reason, would be unable to do so. She had a horror of returning to Russia branded as a leper, of having it known among her old friends, and, under her assumed name, she calculated on living somewhere on the Continent. She had no aunt living in Holland.

"And now about Mrs. Bryson's death," said Baxter, when she had finished. "Have you been keeping back anything?"

"Nothing—except that I can explain

the cry that brought Mr. Holt from his room. I was afraid that José might be shamming or that at any time he might regain his reason and tell what he knew about me——”

“Then that was your reason for watching him?” I put in. “Yes, you were seen more than once.”

“I couldn’t help watching him whenever I had the chance,” she replied. “I was always careful he didn’t catch sight of me, for I didn’t know what effect it might have on him. But when I went there last night I forgot that I might be seen from the light behind me in the corridor. And that’s what happened, for he wasn’t asleep. He saw me looking in the door at him, and he gave that cry and started up in his bunk as if he’d seen a ghost. Then you met me, Mr. Holt. And—and you know now why I ordered you out of my room; why I’ve been careful not to come too near you or Miss Somers and the rest. And I really had a headache last night and my nose did bleed.”

“But have you any idea why José should kill Mrs. Bryson?” asked Baxter.

“I think he may have killed her in mistake for me,” she answered. “It’s only an idea, of course.”

“But it’s quite true, sir,” spoke up McDevitt, “for it’s according to the man’s own words. You remember, sir, he was shipped for’ard this morning. Well, he heard the hands talking about the murder of Mrs. Bryson, and he suddenly breaks out, all excited like, and says it’s not Mrs. Bryson that’s dead, but the ‘plague girl,’ Olga Seminoff, for he killed her himself with them old scissors he used to cut out pictures with. Then he told of seeing her last night, how she was a she-devil from hell—begging your pardon, ma’am—and that he had saved them from the evil she’d worked on his ship. And though the hands knew he was nutty, they couldn’t help but believe him.”

I may say here that afterward José himself substantiated this story of McDevitt’s, for he talked freely enough of the crime, his only regret being, ap-

parently, that he had got the wrong woman. There was no doubt of his insanity and that he was far more dangerous and cunning than we ever supposed—or had become so since catching sight of Olga Seminoff. I have reason to believe he crept from the sick bay that night for the purpose of locating the girl’s room, and he even witnessed my encounter with Shipway; then, with the cunning of the mad, he returned to his bunk, waiting till we were all abed, and feigned sleep when I looked in on him. Mrs. Bryson’s room being next that of Olga Seminoff, he had confused the two, a mistake that might have been made easily enough by one possessing unimpaired faculties and more familiar with his surroundings than was José.

Thus the short-lived mystery of Mrs. Bryson’s murder was cleared up, and we saw to it that José was rendered physically unable to make another effort at ridding us of the “plague girl,” who was placed under a strict quarantine. Her story had affected me profoundly, as indeed it would any one who listened to it and considered the fact that this young girl, through no fault of her own, had become a pariah, condemned to a living death, shunned, and regarded with aversion by all, a public menace not wanted even among the dregs of society. One could understand how she had seized the opportunity of acting as she had, and, in the face of her life tragedy, there was room for nothing else but pity.

“This is a great lesson to me,” said Phyllis Somers, when she learned the truth. “I’ll never grumble again about being a cripple.”

CHAPTER XIV.

It is strange how we all influence one another’s lives to a greater or less extent and how apparently trifling events may become a big factor even in the destiny of those unconscious of them. For if Olga Seminoff hadn’t come aboard us it’s beyond question that I never would have got a confession out of Paul Shipway, and justice never

would have been done the late Captain Taylor.

I hadn't seen him since he left the bridge, following his faint, but I heard he was locked in his room, refusing food and all comers. Toward evening, however, Morgan informed me that Shipway would like to see me the moment I was off duty.

So I went, and I never saw such a change in any one in so short a time, nor would I have believed it possible. Never a brave man at the best, he had given himself up to the fear of having contracted leprosy, abandoned himself to a perfect orgy of terror. He was disheveled, unkempt; all his old cocksureness and bullying pomposity had gone, and he looked a nervous wreck. A hand mirror lay near him, and I guessed he had spent most of the day searching for the first signs of the dread disease.

"Sit down, Mr. Holt," he said, with an effort at composure. "That is," with a forced laugh, "if you're not afraid. For I suppose you know I'm as good as doomed, eh?" eying me with feverish sharpness.

"Well, I'm not a doctor."

"No, but I understand you know a great deal about leprosy, and I'll admit that I don't."

Certainly this was a new Shipway.

"I've heard about what you said to the crew," he went on. "I know you've traveled a great deal abroad and seen many a case before this. I never had that opportunity, and—and I've forgotten my classroom work. Come, what do you think my chances are?"

Now I didn't know any more than he, but I felt quite sure that whatever they were he wasn't improving them by getting into such a panic. It was true he was the only one among us who had associated at all closely with Olga Seminoff, for which he had only himself to blame, but that didn't mean necessarily he was doomed. But he was the kind who could think himself into the grave or the madhouse and to whom "faith cures" make the greatest appeal.

"Whatever your chances may be," I

replied, "it's possible I can improve them. I may even be able to promise complete immunity."

"What!" he exclaimed. "You mean you know a sure preventive?" Then the momentary hope and relief died from his face and voice, and he cried angrily and in despair: "You're playing with me! You know very well the disease is incurable."

"So it is. If I knew a cure, I wouldn't be first mate of the *Latonia*."

"Then what do you mean? You're playing with me," he repeated tragically. "You've come here to gloat over me!"

"Not a bit of it. I'm ready and willing to help you, but it all depends on yourself. But I'm no philanthropist, understand. If my advice is worth asking, it's worth paying for."

"Oh, if it's money you want, make yourself easy about that. I'm not a rich man, but I can promise you anything within reason."

"I'm not wanting money, but the truth about Captain Taylor and Miss Somers."

"So you still think me guilty?" he cried, with an oath. "You're still clinging to your cursed one idea? And now you're trying to blackmail me!" He walked about the room, waving his arms and talking like one demented. "You're a fiend, Mr. Holt; a devil in human form! You've picked up the secret of destroying the germs of leprosy before they can incubate, a secret I know must exist, for how do these doctors and nurses in the leper colonies escape contagion? You know this secret, I say, and you won't tell me unless I perjure myself, confess to something I never did. For the sake of this cursed obsession of yours you'll sit by and watch a man die a loathsome death when by stretching out a hand you could save him. Is that humanity, I ask you? Is it Christian, is it decent?"

He had his old gift of gab, and if I'd sat there and listened to all he was ready to say I might have ended up by patting him on the back and crying over him while thinking myself a stony-

hearted villain. For he had a great knack of arousing sympathy for himself, of making you wonder if, after all, you were a devil and he a misunderstood saint.

So though, of course, I felt sorry for him in a way, I got up and made for the door, remembering Campbell's words about holding fast to my original one idea. "I'm no philanthropist," I repeated, speaking colder and harder than I really felt. "You've heard my terms, and when you're ready to talk business, let me know. I needn't remind you that the longer you delay the worse it will be. And, remember, I'm asking nothing more than a simple act of justice which you should be glad to get out of your system in any case. Think it over."

At that he let out on me in a great fury, calling me all the bad names he could think of. "You're trying to make my extremity your opportunity," he wound up, "but I refuse to bite, you scoundrel! You don't know anything about leprosy, and you never did."

"That's quite true," I replied. But I knew that, no matter how much I might deny it, he would still believe my firsthand knowledge profound. Such was his state of mind.

About two hours later he sent for me again. He was sprawled out in his bunk, for his terror had passed the frenzied stage and had become a sort of hopeless stupor. Physically he was strong enough, but he had convinced himself that he could hardly lift a hand, and he spoke in a small, sepulchral voice, as if on the brink of the grave.

He beckoned me feebly, and in tragic silence pointed to a small, reddish spot on his left cheek. "The mark of the leper!" he whispered, rolling up his eyes. "It's too late. I'm done for!"

Of course I didn't know how long it took, after contagion, for the disease to appear or what it first looked like, but I was ready to swear that this mark was simply an ordinary, everyday, embryonic pimple.

"Doomed!" he added in a hollow voice, striking his chest. "What a price

to pay for a stolen kiss—a moment's jest! For I swear I meant the girl no harm."

He lay back and looked at me as if I were responsible for all his troubles. "You've won, Mr. Holt. There isn't a chance for me, and what I'm going to say now is merely to ease my mind. I admit that I lied about Captain Taylor and that I conspired with Heppelwhite to—er—hasten matters with Miss Somers. For, you know, she'll never live to maturity in any case. Now I hope you're satisfied and I can die in peace." And he lay back, groaned heavily, and closed his eyes.

"Hold on!" I said. "You're not dead yet by a long shot. We'll just have this in writing, and you can put your name to it."

At that he opened one eye and looked at me quite angrily for a dying man. "What does it matter? I've done with earthly affairs. I won't be here for you to prosecute. I'll have passed beyond the law's vengeance, passed to the supreme court of all, where mercy, not justice—"

"That's all right, but Heppelwhite's still interested in American courts, and so is Mrs. Taylor and her kid."

"You're a heartless man, Holt," he said. "Perhaps when your own time comes to die you won't treat the matter with such levity. However, if you insist, bring ink and paper and take down what I'm prepared to say, for I'm too weak to hold the pen. And hurry, if you wish to profit by my little time on earth." And with his old love for striking attitudes, he folded his hands on his breast and composed himself like a king lying in state.

He was in dead earnest, but there was something so suggestive of farce in the scene, so much of the mountebank about the man, that though the story he told me was nothing if not sordid and criminal, it didn't arouse in me the anger it should have, perhaps because I had discounted it long ago or because the mountebank idea which he conveyed overshadowed all else. He wasn't one of these whole-souled villains against whom you can get up a

good, healthy hatred, being too much the poseur and coward.

It seemed he had been born, you might say, into the medical quack game, for his father had been one of these long-haired "Indian" doctors that used to go about the country selling cure-alls from the tailboard of a wagon, and his first experience in the healing art was, as a child, beating the big drum and helping to concoct a nostrum known as "Shipway's Supreme Salve." The profits from this trade and the gullibility of the general public convinced him of the easy money to be made out of quackery, and, in one form or another, he had pursued it ever since.

He had a medical certificate, more or less worthless, and had picked up something of drugs and chemistry, and, I dare say, did no harm, if little good, with his various bread pills and colored water. He said he made and lost several fortunes, but I don't know if this is true. Anyway, he was hard up at the time of the *Wilmington* affair and had no scruples against pocketing a certain sum for his false evidence about Captain Taylor. He said the company was innocent of all complicity and had acted in good faith.

Then he had fallen in with Heppelwhite, and they hadn't been long in discovering each other's fundamental rascality, money greed being their common bond. He confirmed what Phyllis had said about the Blue Band line, all she had told me that night, and he wound up by saying he was to receive one hundred thousand dollars if the girl never reached Rotterdam.

"Was there a written agreement to that effect?" I asked.

"No. Amos Heppelwhite isn't the sort to compromise himself in that fashion, nor was I."

"And you trusted his word?"

"Only because I had to. But he would have kept the bargain all right."

I put all this, to the best of my ability, in the form of an affidavit, and then ordered him to sign it, which, after some demur, he did with the manner of a monarch abdicating his throne.

"I've been a great sinner," he said, sighing windily, "and if I had only the opportunity of living my life over again, or of living long enough—is it too late now to try that cure of yours?"

I suppose it would have been no more than poetic justice to have left him alone with his fears, convinced of his approaching end, but somehow I couldn't. I've no excuse for the lie I told except that I honestly believed the man would think himself into the grave or asylum.

"No, it's not too late," I said. "You see, the fact is Olga Seminoff—that's her right name—isn't a leper at all."

"What!" He forgot about dying, sat up with a jerk, and stared at me.

"Yes, it's so. You weren't present when she told her story. Well, leprosy, as any doctor will tell you, is one of the hardest diseases to diagnose, for there are several simple skin diseases like it. As Miss Seminoff will tell you, there was great controversy over her case, and it wasn't until after long observation that the majority of foreign specialists called in finally decided she was a leper. Now in my humble opinion they were wrong and the minority right. I didn't say this to the crew, for they would have thought I was trying to fool them, nor even to the girl, for, after all, it's only my opinion, which, I hope, will be verified later. But the point is that you can't contract what doesn't exist. As for that spot on your cheek, you'll find by to-morrow that it's nothing but a pimple."

At these words was I hailed as his savior and deliverer? I was not. The man who, a few moments before, had been too weak to hold the pen, bounced out of bed and made a frantic grab for the confession he had signed, an onslaught which I easily repulsed.

"You scoundrel!" he cried. "You've tricked me! You never said she wasn't a leper, and you let me think I was doomed. You've tricked me!"

"That may well be," I agreed, stowing the paper safely in my pocket. "There are more ways than one of skinning a cat."

CHAPTER XV.

The faith cure worked like a charm, for the next morning Shipway turned up at breakfast, quite his all-sufficient self, my prediction regarding the mark on his face having been verified. I should like to record how, having learned his lesson, he turned over a new leaf and became a useful member of society. But nothing of the sort happened.

I was standing that evening in the stern, idly watching our log line and wondering if the balked sea scavenger had given over trailing us, now that we were so near port, when Shipway joined me. He had an ulster over his arm, and looked hale, hearty, and in the best of spirits.

After all, though I knew him so well, I had misjudged him or I had forgotten the old truth about being cautious with a cornered rat. But the man had shown himself such a coward that never for a moment did I think he would make a play for my life and in such a bald, desperate fashion. Yet so it happened.

"What's that off there—the periscope of a submarine?" he asked suddenly, and, like a fool, I turned my head. The next moment I got a blow behind the ear that stunned me, and, as I fell against the rail, he stooped and caught me under the knees.

A heave and I would have been over, his written confession with me, and the only evidence against him gone forever. For night was almost upon us, there wasn't another soul within at least twenty yards, and the aft wheelhouse shut off this little space from the rest of the ship so that none could see what was happening. He must have watched and waited his chance and come prepared, for the blow dealt me was from a two-pound dumb-bell, one of a pair I'd seen in his room, and which he had carried hidden in the folds of the greatcoat over his arm.

He was a big man and desperate, and he had me half over the rail before my head began to clear and I quite knew what it was all about. He had

me at such a disadvantage and his sheer bulk was so great that I had all I could do to hold on without carrying the fight to him.

I had never really known my own strength, never had it tried out to the limit, but now, realizing it was his life or mine, I suddenly put forth all that was in me. I broke his grip as if it were a child's, slid out from under him, and he went plunging over the rail to be smothered in our wake.

I don't know to this day how it all happened, for it came as quick as a thunderclap and left me fogged and shaking. Night was swooping down on the dull gray sea, but, as one in a dream, I saw a hand shoot up amid the yeasty foam churned by our screw—and then something that turned me sick. It was the fast-approaching, three-cornered sail of the death craft that had trailed us halfway across the Atlantic. The "Submarine" had not waited in vain.

As I turned away to shut out the sight I confronted Willie Campbell, who, grim and dour, was holding the bloodstained dumb-bell and Shipway's greatcoat.

"You saw?" I cried. "You know it wasn't my fault——"

"I ken that weel, lad. Dinna fash yersel'. It was no' in your hands, but in those o' the A'michty." Then, with a characteristic touch: "I'm thinkin' it was weel ye got yon paper before he went."

The following morning we were held up by a British cruiser in search of contraband, and that night we raised the Hook of Holland. I left Campbell, gloriously drunk, in Rotterdam, and accompanied Phyllis Somers to Amsterdam, where I saw her safely installed in Doctor Vanzandt's sanitarium. Then I took passage on a Holland-America liner bound for New York.

I attended first to my old captain's affairs, and I must say here that the *Wilmington* people, of whom in those black days I had thought the worst things, acted like white men and did

most handsomely by Mrs. Taylor and her child.

I next paid a visit to Amos Heppelwhite at the old house in Gramercy Square. If his conscience had troubled him during his niece's absence, it did not interfere with his health, for he looked exactly as I had seen him last. Of course he did not know of Shipway's confession, else he might not have received me so easily.

"Well, Mr. Holt, I wasn't expecting you," he greeted, "seeing that the *Latonia* isn't due till the end of the week. Transferred to a faster ship, eh?"

"Yes, there was business that brought me home unexpectedly."

"Indeed! Your affairs must be looking up. I had a cable from Baxter telling of Mrs. Bryson's murder and Shipway's death, and I've seen a short newspaper account." This did not mention Shipway's attack on me. "And I understand you picked up a leper—that girl from the *Manoel*, whose survivors were rescued and who are to be tried next week. You must have had an eventful trip, to say the least."

"Yes, it was fairly interesting."

"And what about my niece?" he went on, with a great show of anxiety. "I cabled Vanzandt, and found she had arrived safely, but not one word has she replied to my wires. She was always such a strange, unnatural child. I know she's all right under his charge, but I'm afraid I'll have to drop everything and run over."

"I wouldn't, if I were you, for I don't think she's very anxious to see you. That's a little matter I thought I'd better discuss with you in private, Mr. Heppelwhite. You see, owing to the unfortunate fact of you being her uncle, she doesn't want to jail you for conspiracy and attempted murder——" Well, of course he went through all the stage motions of innocence, from sublime ignorance to acute indignation, till I choked him off by laying Shipway's confession on the table.

"That's only a copy," I said, "so you needn't worry about destroying it. The original's in a place where, if anything

sudden should happen to me, the district attorney's office will know where to get it."

He was looking very seasick, but managed to squeeze out a laugh. "If every man's reputation depended on the unsupported word of another, this world would be a fine place for blackmailers, Mr. Holt. Poor Shipway evidently went out of his head—if that signature isn't forged—for that confession, or whatever you choose to call it, is rank rubbish which couldn't convict a cat in the worst court in the world."

"Only for Miss Somers you'd have the chance of proving that argument," I came back. "And only for your age and size I'd give you the almightiest hiding a gentleman of your peculiar parts ever got. I tell you it goes against the grain to see such a weevil as you escape. But my hands are tied, and all I can do is to see that you resign the guardianship you've so foully betrayed. Your era of graft is over——"

"And yours begins?" he sneered.

"Call it what you like. Anyway, there'll be a new firm of lawyers to handle Miss Somers' affairs, and if you feel tempted again to anticipate your inheritance, just think of me—for I'll be on the job. You told me once to keep a pretty sharp eye on the girl, and you bet I'm going to do it. I've found it was mighty necessary advice."

"You're advancing in your profession, Mr. Holt—from robbing houses to robbing young girls. But I'm not so easily got out of the road as all that. The courts——"

"Yes, you can take it to the law, and I'm only hoping you will."

But he knew when he was well off, and, when the Blue Band line went up with a bang, he slid out and disappeared. I hear that, thanks to his niece, he's doing quite well again on the coast, she supplying the capital for him to tackle his old dry-goods business. It's wonderful what some folks do for their worthless relatives.

But then Phyllis Somers, especially since her complete cure by that Dutch marvel, seems as if she couldn't do enough for everybody. I know she has done a lot to make Olga Seminoff's life more bearable. It's a sore point with her that I've never let her finance me

by so much as a cent—not that I'm any monument of virtue, you understand, but simply because those words of Hoppelwhite's about grafting sort of stuck in my craw. The sea is doing quite well by me, and some day Phyllis, a woman grown, will understand.

THE RESOURCEFULNESS OF A FINANCIER

ONE-EYE CONNOLLY was one of the most ornate gentlemen who ever adorned the "confidence game." He had practiced the gentle wiles of his art all over the world. One day he found himself in Galveston, Texas, without the price of a drink. He was "broke," "broke" thoroughly, completely, and flat. In this condition he met an acquaintance with whom he had several times trod the thin and fantastic ice of getting money for a lot of nothing. The acquaintance, Sullivan by name, was as broke as Connolly.

"Since we have neither credit nor coin in this abandoned town," remarked Connolly, "it's up to us to get out—and to get out in a Pullman car."

"But how?" questioned Sullivan.

"Stay here on this corner. I shall return anon," remarked Connolly.

After walking three blocks, he entered the biggest fruit store in Galveston, where he poked about among the fruit and examined everything. Suddenly he clapped his hands to his eye and cried out:

"Gracious heavens! I've lost my eye—my glass eye!"

So great was his distress that immediately the manager and several of the clerks in the store began a frantic search for the lost eye.

"Now," he said, indicating that he suffered greatly, "I'm going to this hotel, and I'll give a reward of five hundred dollars to the man who returns the eye to me."

The afflicted person left the store and walked slowly three blocks to the corner, where he was awaited by Sullivan.

"Sullivan," said Connolly, "go down to the big fruit store three blocks from here on this street, go in, admire the fruit, and find in the first barrel of malaga grapes my glass eye. The rest will work itself out. Get all you can."

Sullivan, somewhat in a daze, went to the store, found the eye, and cried out: "I've found a glass eye!"

Immediately the manager and the clerks made tremendous efforts to take the eye away from him. After interminable argument, the manager said:

"I want that eye so much that I'll give you fifty dollars for it."

"One hundred, and it's yours," Connolly agreed.

The manager, figuring that a profit of four hundred dollars was pretty soft, passed over the one hundred bucks.

Sullivan went back to Connolly, and handed him the one hundred dollars.

Connolly, with an expression of disgust, asked acidly:

"Is this all you got, you big boob?"

Sullivan pleaded guilty.

"Anyhow," commented Connolly, as he tucked the bills into his vest pocket, "it will get us out of here in a Pullman car, but it will necessitate your valuing your breakfast as cheaply as you did my eye."

Shylock

By H. C. Witwer

Author of "Ye Gods," "Back East," Etc.

Introducing Abe Mendelowitz; grabbed from the bushes; a new hitter; built like a hatpin; as thin as a cigarette paper, and as long as a letter from home. So thin indeed that even Mother Machree's Tiger Marrow only succeeded in making a Shylock of him, instead of a Sandow.

I AIN'T an agent for no grape-juice brewery, but me and the bartenders is through. I used to be John Barleycorn's right-hand man, and I bet in my time I have drank enough of the cup that queers to float Cincinnati into the world's series, which is probably the only way the Reds will ever get in one. But all I was able to float was my kidneys, and pretty soon I hope to have them in dry dock again, because I'm lashed so tightly to the water wagon that if it ever turned over I'd be crushed to death.

This ain't no temperance tract, and I don't figure on winnin' any votes to prohibition by givin' out the inside dope on what made me go dry by a large majority. I know what a thirst is, and if a man wants to drink that's the bartender's business. My tip is, though, that it won't be long before the whole country will be as dry as a real-estate contract, and it's the ale hounds themselves that'll cause it. They'll all get stewed on some Election Day and vote for prohibition by mistake.

A guy who is full of the brew is liable to do anything, and I offer my case as, Exhibit A.

Before we went South on the spring trainin' trip two years ago, I promised the best-lookin' girl in New York that I'd keep off the stuff while I was away. The thing was caused by me goin' to sleep at the dinner table when we went

to call on her parents. Her dear old father taps me on the shoulder because my snorin' in third speed was annoyin' grandpa, who was blessin' the meal. I opened my eyes kinda sleepy and says: "I'll have the same with a little more gin!"

The result of this fox pass, as we remark at the hotel, was that my girl gets up and ducks into another room, and them relatives of hers looked at me the same way the French would regard the kaiser if he ever come to Paris. I waited till the old man wound up again to deliver some more prayer, and then I did somethin' I couldn't of done if his name had been Alexander or Rudolph. I stole home!

What my girl told me when she come out would never of give me no swelled head, so, in order to have peace and quiet, I voted myself dry.

There was a lot of bushes on hand when we got to Marlin, shipped in by scouts which had seen 'em hit straight balls for four hundred in the mulberry leagues and claimed they was future Ty Cobbs. About the second week it turned out as usual that the only resemblance between them and Ty was that they both had two legs. One by one they was given the ras'berry until there was only about half a dozen that Mac decided to keep.

One day the boss comes to me and says he has a guy he wants me to give

a thorough try-out before we start up North. This bird's name is Abe Mendelowitz, and he had grabbed him from some Class X League out West, where, when he come to bat, the outfielders went over to the nearest big town and waited for the ball to come down for the first bounce. He was a catcher, so I give him a mitt and enticed him back of the grand stand. We had got this bird for nothin', and I wanted to see how bad we had been stung.

While we're walkin' over I got a couple of good close-ups at this guy, and I figured him the world's greatest salesman for sellin' himself to us. He was built like a hatpin—as thin as a cigarette paper and as long as a letter from home. I laid myself seven to ten that he hadn't had a good meal since Grant took Richmond.

"Listen!" I says, callin' him over, "I think you better throw a couple of malted milks into you before I start burnin' 'em across that plate. You look as weak as water to me, and I don't want nothin' to happen."

He looks at me for a minute, and then he twists his lips. I didn't know whether he was smilin' or had stepped on a nail.

"You don't want nothin' should happen?" he asks me. "What am I gonna ketch here—baseballs or pneumonia?"

"Well," I says, "when you been knocked down by my inshoot a couple of times, you'll wish it was bullets!"

"Let's both take a chance!" he comes back, puttin' on a mask. "I seen you pitch last season against them, now, Cubs. I'm sittin' right back from the home plate, and the only thing there was on them balls you tried to put over was the cover. I don't want I should knock, but if you would take a wind-up with the, now, Twentieth Century Limited in your hand and let it go with everything you got on it—I'll stop it!"

"Are you tryin' to start somethin'?" I asks him, droppin' the ball and swingin' around on him.

"I should start somethin'!" he says. "No, I don't want to start nothin', I come out here to stop somethin'. I'm a ketcher!"

"Show me!" I tells him, and picked up the ball.

I wound up, and let go an inshoot that would make a corkscrew look like a straight line. It socked into Abe's glove with a thud that disturbed people in the next county, and that bird has the other hand behind his back!

"Them kind I could ketch with one hand," he yells, "while I'm shootin' crap with the other. Put somethin' on it or I'll throw it away the glove!"

I put somethin' on the next one, believe me! It was a drop that twisted like a snake before it reaches the plate, but Abe reaches out with his bare hand, snaps it up, and grins. He shakes his head from side to side, and makes a cluckin' noise in his throat, like I'm about the worst he ever seen. I shot over a fast, straight ball that could have beat a telegram to Denver, and he sticks his mitt on it while wavin' to me with the other hand. Then I got sore and let him have everything I had. I put them over so far he had to jump around in back of the plate like a clog dancer, and he jumped and got 'em all!

"Well," I pants finally, walkin' over, "what d'ye think of my pitchin' now?"

He takes off the glove and grins.

"I'll tell you this much," he says; "I don't think Alexander should got to cut his throat on account from you bein' in the same league."

"Is that so?" I comes back. "Well, I wish I could get a chance to work in a world's series some time, that's all. I'd like to have us cop the flag and Detroit finish first in the American, so's I could get a crack at Ty Cobb. All I want is one whirl at that bird!"

"I betcha you could hit him the first time he come up," he says.

I just snarled at him, and then I went over and got Big Mason, after tellin' Abe to get a bat and come back.

"Come on over," I says to Mason, "and get some laughs. Mac has gimme a busher to try out, and this bird is one of them small-town wise guys. I'm gonna feed him that gimlet outshoot of mine, and he'll think he's battin' at a bee with a lead pencil!"

Mason grabs up a mitt and trots

along, and we meet Abe comin' over, swingin' a bat. When he sees us he stops and drops it.

"*Gevahlt!*" he pipes, rollin' his head and speakin' to the sky. "I'll betcha I'm dreamin'! Look here comes it Dan Mason, which five years ago I seen fan with the bases full in the world's series. A feller which he's old enough to be Hans Wagner's grandfather and should ought to be home with a pinochle deck instead of playin' baseball." He turns around to me with that nasty grin of his. "Oi, such a battery!" he says. "Harmon and Mason, a couple fellers which was old-timers when the *Maine* was blowed up. Who have you got on first base—Columbus?"

Now Mason wasn't so old; that is, he hadn't fought at Gettysburg or nothin' like that, but he was as touchy about his age as Hughes is about California, and his face gets as red as a three-alarm fire.

"D'ye want a wallop on the nose?" he snarls, shovin' his chin into Abe's face.

"No," grins Abe, backin' away, "I'll take a cigar."

"C'mon!" growls Mason to me. "Bean this guy with the first one, and we'll ship him back to dear old Russia, or wherever he blowed in from."

Abe steps up to the plate, and I fooled him with a drop. He missed it from here to London, and Mason gives him the merry ha, ha!

"This big-league pitchin' is a little different than what you been gettin' down on the farm, hey?" he roars.

Abe sneers, and takes a fresh grip on the bat.

"If that feller's a pitcher," he says, "I can make an automobile."

"Well," I says, "give this the once over, Stupid."

I wound up quick, and let him have an inshoot.

He give it the once over all right. He whaled it once, and it went over the flagpole.

Well, to cut it short, for the next twenty minutes this human string bean made me look like a sucker. I throwed

him fifteen balls, and only four of 'em got as far as Mason's mitt. He put my outshoot on the clubhouse roof, and he buried my speed ball in the left-field bleachers. I tried 'em over his head, and, instead of waitin' for one in the groove, he jumps up in the air and slams wild pitches down over the second-base line. I had sneaked a piece of sandpaper out with me, and I rubbed it on the ball till it was as rough as a buzz saw. Then I wound up and let it go. It curved through the air like a drunken snake, but Abe steps into it and chops it over in deep right.

Then I quit.

Mac comes along as we was walkin' in, and stops me.

"Well, is he any good?" he asks.

I looked over where the last thing Abe hit was bouncin' off the grand stand.

"Don't kid me!" I says, and went on in to the showers.

I seen Mason talkin' to him when I come out, and Mac's mouth was open as wide as the East River.

Well, Abe comes along up North with us as a second-string catcher and pinch hitter. He keeps gettin' thinner and thinner all the time until we had a pool on how long it would be before he'd fade away altogether. Any time that bird wanted to he could have got a job as a nail file, in case he got canned off the team. He claimed it was the food we was gettin' at the hotels along the line, and after the first town he refused to eat in the dinin' room with the rest of the bunch. He collected the money for his meals from Mac, and spent the time he wasn't playin' ball lookin' up boardin' houses run by people whose names ended in Berg or Owitz.

We were always ridin' him about his weight, and, although it went over his head at first, it wasn't long before we had his goat runnin' around wild. Every time he seen a scale he'd hop on and weigh himself, and then he'd get off, shakin' his head and mutterin' like all was lost. In El Paso he weighed one hundred and forty, and when we

got to Dallas, Mason got him to try a scale we had doped up. Abe gets on, and the needle stops at one hundred and twenty, and when he got off he was as white as cream and shakin' like a steam hammer.

"You ought to go out to Arizona," pipes Eddie Hart, "and git some of that mountain air. Still and all, I guess it don't make no difference—now," he winds up, shakin' his head.

"If he could only hold out till we git to San Antone," says Weil, "everything would be peaches. They got the swellest cemetery there I ever seen in my life; people is dyin' to get in it!"

"Don't kid a man facin' death," whispers Mason. "It's bad luck."

"Well," I butts in, "I got a dress suit, and I guess I'll get it pressed up a bit. I'm never goin' to no more funerals without one. When poor Joe Hanlon was laid away, him and me was the only ones dolled up and——"

Abe kicks a tomato can into the middle of the street.

"Leff!" he hollers. "Go on, leff at me! From a bunch of lowlifes that's all a feller which he's dyin' on his feet could expect. If you seen a feller drownin', you'd throw him a pair of handcuffs, I'll betcha, he should save himself!"

"Nope, I'd hit him with a hammer," says Mason.

"*You'd* hit him?" sneers Abe. "You couldn't hit the side of a house with a handful of BB shot! If they was usin' an iron ball in this league and let you bat with a magnet, I'll betcha you couldn't foul one off a woman pitcher! As for the rest of you crooks, you'll all die with old age before we get to New York. Look—a ball team! The youngest man on it voted for Lincoln!"

"All right, Abe," laughs Winters, slappin' him on the back. "Try and keep from coughin', and you may last over the week."

"I'll give him one good sneeze," says Mason, lookin' him over carefully.

"It's not the cough that carries you off, it's the coffin they carry you off in!" sings Weil.

"I only hope Mac don't make us wear

them trick black bands on our coats when this bird kicks off," I says. "I made a bum out of an overcoat that way once and——"

"Crooks! Lowlifes! *Schlemiels!*" screams Abe, and beats it around a corner.

By the time we got to New York he was livin' on eggs and milk, and he claimed he had gained a quarter of a pound in two weeks. Mason said he was cheatin', because he kept his hat on when he got on the scale, and we dared Abe to get his hair cut and try it over again.

As a matter of fact, there wasn't a thing the matter with the big stiff except that he wouldn't eat hotel grub. He wanted the same kind of stuff he'd been getting home, and the names of it sounded like callin' the roll at Ellis Island.

Now Abe was as popular with us as an electric fan would be at the north pole. He was always knockin' everybody, he wouldn't mix, and he wouldn't of spent a dime to see the Charge of the Light Brigade with the original cast. He hated us all like a ferret hates a rat, but from the day he had slammed my pitchin' all over the lot his feelin' for me was love alongside of my affection for him. This guy was poison to me, and, to make things worse, Mac shakes the club up before the chase for the flag begins, and he gimme Abe as a battery mate.

The openin' struggle is with the Cubs, and Mac sends in me and Abe to the firin' line. I held 'em to three scattered hits to the eighth innin', and the only time they touched the home dish was when they come up to bat. The first guy up in that frame had a four-leaf clover in his pocket, and he singles. He starts down to second, and Abe throws the pill out to center field tryin' to nail him. This put me up in the air about ten miles, and when I come down the outfielders has been run ragged, and everybody on the Chicago team got a hit but the first baseman. He got two.

Mac takes me and Abe out, sendin' in Wills and McGowan, and as we're

goin' into the clubhouse I swings around on Abe.

"If it wasn't for you, you big stfff," I says, "I'd have beat them birds to-day!"

"You mean if it wasn't for your parents," he comes back. "If you can get it money for pitchin', I'm goin' down and try my luck at the Metropolitan Opera House."

"Why did you call for a drop on Zimmerman when he had me in a hole with the bases full?" I asks him.

"Because," he tells me, "I'll give you my word you're the wildest thing I ever seen outside from a zoo. If you had throwed any more of them outshoots thirty feet over my head, they would have all stole home."

"Stop that noise!" I snarls. "I pitched rings around the guy the Cubs got in the box and——"

"They had two guys in the box," he butts in. "No wonder we couldn't beat them fellers. Here they got it this new recruit Gale, which you could believe it he's got more curves than a scenic railway and that ain't yet enough. No! They got to have you pitchin' for them, too!"

"What d'ye mean, I'm pitchin' for 'em?" I asks him.

"Well," he says, "I'll leave it to you. When you go in there and the first man singles, the next man doubles, and the third feller gets it a home run, are you pitchin' for us or the Cubs?"

I throwed a bat at him, but, with my usual bum luck, it missed him.

That night I sat up in my room at the hotel, dopin' out a scheme to fix this bird for once and all. It took me four hours to figure it out, but when I finally get it, it was a lulu. First I went down and tipped off the gang, and then I went up to Abe's room and knocked on the door.

"Vell?" he says, very cold, when I go in.

"Listen, Abe," I tells him, walkin' over. "I been thinkin' it out, and I figure we're a couple of suckers to be fightin' all the time. Here we are, the best battery in the league and goin' at

it like we was somewheres in France. Let's shake hands and call it off, eh?"

He gets up and looks at me like I was for sale and they wanted too much.

"'Sno use!" he pipes finally. "I wouldn't loan you a dime if you should gimme, now, the Statue from Liberty for security."

"Who said anything about borreyin' money?" I asks him.

"I'm goin' by the looks," he says.

"Well, you're a punk guesser," I tells him. "I come here to do you a favor. What d'ye think of me now, eh?"

"If I should tell you," he comes back, "you'd only get sore."

"Look here, Stupid!" I says. "I'm on the level with this, and at least you can grab an earful. There's one thing about it—it's free. I know I been ridin' you a lot since you come with the club, but a guy's got to expect a little kiddin' now and then, ain't he? The thing is this, I got hold of somethin' that will put weight on you, and I figured you ought to be tipped off about it. If you don't want to take it, it's up to you, but if this stuff don't fatten you out, I'll eat your hat."

"I'll betcha you wouldn't eat my hat," he says. "Eat your own hat; I don't ask *you* for nothin', do I?" He looks at me for a minute, and then he says: "What is this stuff, not sayin' I would take it?"

"Well," I tells him, "they call it Mother Machree's Tiger Marrow, and it's only five bucks a bottle. You take ——"

"Five dollars a bottle!" he yells. "What is it—champagne?"

"No," I tells him, "tiger marrow—and you know how expensive tigers is. This stuff is guaranteed to put a pound of flesh on you a week. When you get heavy enough, you stop takin' it. Simple, eh?"

"Simple?" he snorts. "Crazy, you mean! That's what I'd be to get a habit for stuff which it costs five dollars a bottle. Who's this, now, Mother Machree?"

"D'ye mean to tell me you never heard tell of Mother Machree?" I asks him.

"Yes, and I can prove it," he snaps.

"Didn't you ever hear John McCormack sing?" I says.

"No," pipes Abe, "and unless that feller would join the, now, Salvation Army *oder* navy, I never would hear him! Five dollars a seat them crooks want to hear that Irisher try he should make a bum out of Caruso."

"You can hear him for nothin' on the victrola," I says. "Can't you?"

"All right," he grins. "Get it that lion's marrow on a record and I'll take 'em both."

"Tiger marrow, not lion," I corrects him. "There's a big difference."

"I suppose the lion sells at seven dollars a bottle, hey?" he sneers. "What's the matter with, now, squirrel's marrow, which I betcha I could get it for nothin'."

"Look here, Stupid!" I says, actin' like I was disgusted—which I was. "You can suit yourself about this, it's no buttons off my vest one way or the other. If you want to try this stuff out, I can sell you a bottle. Mason's got one in his trunk now. He bought three of 'em last year, took two, and gained forty pounds. Of course, he quit then."

"Sure he quit," pipes Abe. "I'll betcha he had to. All the weight that feller put on settled between his hat and collar. No wonder he's such a fathead; he's full of that, now, panther marrow, hey? Well——"

"Tiger marrow, you boob!" I butts in. "If you want this bottle, I'll get it for you without lettin' Mason know who wants it. He knows you're filthy with money, and he might wanna raise the price. Y'can't get that stuff no more on account of the war, y'know."

"What d'ye mean on account from the war?" he says. "Is Germany usin' tigers now, too?"

"No," I says, "but the Allies is got all this marrow, and they're feedin' it to the soldiers. It's awful scarce. I hear they barely got enough to go round."

"Well," pipes Abe, "you could tell Mason to send over what he's got;

that'll be one more bottle for them, anyways."

"All right," I says. "If you croak, it won't be my fault. My conscience is clean."

"You should ought to wear it then instead of that shirt," he tells me. "When you go out don't bang the door, and you could take my word for it, it's no use to send in no more salesmen for that, now, leopard marrow. Five dollars a bottle—oi! I suppose marrows from elephants is five dollars a drop, hey?"

I didn't answer him. Instead, I let good enough alone and went down to the lobby. I knowed I had started the ball rollin', because that bird was gettin' so thin he was desperate and ready to try anything. Why, the minute I used the word "fat" his eyes glittered like phony diamonds. I figured he'd keep lookin' at Mason, who was as fat as a pig and thinkin' of that tiger marrow, and pretty soon he'd fall.

I hit a thousand on the scheme.

The very next mornin' Abe calls me aside and says if I can get a bottle of tiger marrow from Mason for three dollars and seventy-five cents, he'll take it. I liked to broke my neck tearin' upstairs to get the thing which I had all ready for delivery. It was a little blue bottle holdin' about three ounces of lemon sirup, which I got at a soda fountain. We throwed in a couple of more things which will never kill you, but after you have took them you hold that fact against 'em. I told Abe the directions was four drops mixed in the food at mealtimes.

He finished the thing up that day, and after supper he tears out to a scale to get weighed, while we waited for the verdict. In a minute Abe rushes in and yells that not only he ain't gained anything, but he's lost half a pound. Oh, lady! How that bird moaned for the three dollars and seventy-five cents. You'd think somebody had stole his right arm. I dragged him out of the lobby, and told him if he let Mason hear him he'd queer the whole thing and we'd never be able to buy another bottle.

For a minute I thought he'd pass away.

"Oi!" he hollers. "Another bottle? Go 'way from me, you crook, before I'll commit mayhem! All day I couldn't eat a bite after pourin' that antelope's marrow on my food. Natural the landlady gets sore at me, because she says if I wouldn't take it a chance on her soup mit *luckshen* without I should got to disinfect it with stuff from a bottle, I should go somewheres else. Right away I lose a boarding house where for seven dollars a week every night it's a banquet."

"Well," I tells him, "you can't expect too much from one bottle. Give it a chance. I told you Mason took two, didn't I? It's probably just takin' hold of you, and another bottle will do the trick."

"Tricks I got enough of," he moans. "Gimme it the three seventy-five and I'm satisfied."

I stood there and argued with him for half an hour, and finally I sold that bird two more bottles of tiger marrow at a flat rate of two bucks per each, and I says I'd bet he'd only need one and would be throwin' the other out the window in a week. He says he hopes I'm passin' the hotel when he does throw it, and goes upstairs to his room.

Everything would have been all O. K., and I could have sold that hick a case of the stuff, if the gang had only laid off. But they couldn't keep quiet when they found out Abe was pourin' that goo into him, and the next day, when he goes back of the plate against the Cubs again, they cut loose. The Chicago players gets tipped off, and when Abe comes to bat in the second innin' the bunch starts singin' "Mother Machree" till the umpire stopped the concert. When they was at bat, everybody that toed the plate had somethin' to tell Abe about the tiger marrow, and by the seventh innin' he was ripe for the insane asylum. He gets a double in the eighth, and when he pulled up at second the Cubs' second baseman asks him if he ever tried a mixture of dried snake's ears and crushed eel

bones. Abe lets out a yell, knocks this guy as flat as a pool table, and gets chased to the showers.

When we come in he was waitin' for me. He hadn't even got his uniform off.

"Here he comes, the lowlife!" he screams. "I'll betcha at night he robs blind beggars and like that!" He holds up the empty tiger-marrow bottle. "I took it the whole business at dinner time," he howls, "and only the drug clerk at the corner knows his trade I'd be dead four hours. You could believe it, that feller saved my life!"

"I'm never goin' in that drug store again," growls Mason. "The big stiff!"

"Who's askin' from you?" shrieks Abe. He swings around on me again. "Gimme back my seven dollars and seventy-five cents or gimme that pound of flesh this, now, camel's marrow was gonna put on me!" he hollers.

"You must have took it the wrong way," I says. "Now if——"

"The money or the flesh!" he howls, hittin' himself on the chest.

"Aw, shut up, you fathead!" bawls Weil. "Who's got your flesh?"

"Somebody must of bit him!" says Mason. "Where d'ye get that gimme my flesh stuff? What d'ye think this is—a slaughterhouse?"

Abe grabs up a bat, and dances around me and Mason.

"The money or the flesh!" he yells. "I got to get one or the other. You told me I should pick it up a pound a week, and I'm a pound less now than when I started to take it. Gimme back that pound or gimme the money."

Chris Laycock, the southpaw we stole from Yale, is sittin' over in a corner, and I thought he was gonna bust his laughter, he "ha-ha-ha'd" so long and loud. When he gets where he can talk he says:

"So Shylock is in our midst, eh?"

"What d'ye mean Shylock?" growls Abe, whirlin' on him.

"Don't you know the 'Merchant of Venice?'" asks Chris.

"No," snorts Abe. "I never been west of Denver in my life! What does

he sell? Panther marrow, I'll betcha, hey, loafer?"

"Wait a minute!" says Chris. "You ought to know all about Shylock. He was an ancestor of yours and——"

"Leave my family out of it," butts in Abe. "The Merchant of Venus, hey? Tiger marrow, five dollars a bottle! Oi! Gimme the——"

"Shylock was a character in Shakespeare's great play," goes on Chris. "When Antonio couldn't pay him three thousand ducats he demanded a pound of flesh cut off——"

"*Gevahlt!*" hollers Abe. "So you roped it in another feller with this, now, marrow business, hey? Well——"

"Listen a minute, will you?" yells Chris.

"I wouldn't keep quiet!" screams Abe. "He's tellin' me from a feller which he lost three thousand ducks! Well, I didn't lose no ducks; I lost money. If I want I should hear about that other case, I'll go down to the station house and ask can I see it the blotter."

"Why, you poor boob!" sneers Chris, "didn't you ever hear about Shakespeare?"

"Say, don't ask me riddles, will you?" says Abe. "I don't wanna hear nothin' about any more of them guys which they think they can lick Willard." He swings around on me again. "I want my pound of flesh!" he yells. "And if I wouldn't get it, I'll do like this feller's friend Shylocks did and cut it off——"

"Oh, lady!" hollers Chris, fallin' back in hysterics. "This bird is a riot! If I heard this at a theater, I'd——"

"Shylock didn't do no cuttin'," butts in Al Ferns. "He just *wanted* to and——"

"I ain't Shylock!" shouts Abe. "I'm Abe Mendelowitz, and if I don't get my money back, I'll make this Shylock look like a four-flusher! From both them crooks, Mason and Harmon, I'll cut at least an arm and——"

Mac come along then, and shoved him outside.

Well, Abe didn't say no more about

the thing for a couple of days, and I didn't see him around the hotel at night because I was busier than a powder maker in Europe. I was tryin' to make the best-lookin' girl in New York throw up her job as head salesman in her father's delicatessen and sign with me for life. I had a lot of aces, havin' stayed on the water wagon like she told me, and saved up enough to throw quarters in the gas meter and keep the dumb-waiter busy for a while. She seemed to be willin', only there was a difference of religion between me and her parents which was delayin' the game. I had practically queered myself with them by bein' born in a different belief than theirs, and when they heard I was an ex-bar fly they didn't want any part of me. In fact, about the last thing they wanted to call me was son-in-law.

But at that I was makin' headway, and when I met her aged father in the store one night he listened to reason and finally said to come up to dinner on the followin' Sunday and he'd talk it over, provided I kept on stickin' to water as a drink.

The next night I'm comin' along Sixth Avenue, on my way to the store, when I all but fall over Abe. He's standin' on a corner under an L station, and he looked so disgusted with life in a big city that I felt sorry for him, and, after passin' him once, I come back. I have often wished to Heaven since then that I'd been ridin' on a six-inch shell when I went by so I'd of been too far away to turn back by the time I made up my mind to do it. That was the biggest mistake I've made in twenty-nine years.

But, as I say, I went back and slapped Abe on the shoulder.

"Hello, Shylock!" I sings out. "What's the matter? Ain't you cut that chop off Mason yet?"

"Oi!" he groans. "Don't kid me. I'm a sick feller. You could believe it, I ain't had a decent meal in three months. I think I'll go home to-morrow and leave baseball be. I got enough."

"What's to keep you from eatin'?"

I asks him. "If you'd come in the dinin' room at mealtimes, instead of duckin' around lookin' for a boardin' house, you'd be better off. Take to-night, for instance. We had porter-house steak, French-fried potatoes, roaming salad, slice tomatoes——"

"Stop it! Stop it!" he moans, throwin' up his hands. "Do you want I should faint? Who cares for that trash? I wouldn't eat it if you paid me—that is, unless you gimme, now, five dollars or somethin' like that." He grabs hold of my coat, and his eyes commences to glitter. "But if I could get it, now, a nice dish of homemade *brust mit kartoffel*, or even a bowl of *boorst*—oi!" he sighs. "Anything I would give for it, anything!" He looks around kinda quick. "Anything in reason, y'understand," he finishes.

I gazed on him for a minute, and, on the level, he had my sympathy. He was pale around the gills, and that tiger marrow had give him an awful battle. If he was thin before, you should have seen him now. All of a sudden an idea hit me, and I slaps him on the back.

"It's lucky for you I come along here," I tells him. "I think I can fix you up at that. I know a place where they probably got them combinations you'd like to play, and if it ain't too late maybe we can get some."

He jerks away from me, and hisses in his throat.

"Lowlife!" he says. "I suppose you have, now, found a tiger-marrow mine or somethin' like that, hey?"

"Now, Abe," I soothes him, "that stuff's all over. I'll show you this place and if you don't like it you can stay out. Forget about the past, and come on down here with me."

"I suppose," he sneers, "I suppose you want I should forget them seven dollars mit seventy-five cents, hey?"

"Don't be a piker all your life," I tells him. "Hurry up; I'm late now. Here I am tryin' to do you a favor, and you'd think I was askin' for your left leg."

"Only I got it a strong stomach," he

says; "the last favor you did it for me would have killed me."

I argued with that simp for half an hour, and finally he shrugs his shoulders and says he might as well be dead as the way he is now, so he comes along.

I took him up to the delicatessen store which was run by my girl, and, callin' her in the back, I explained about Abe, and asked her could she fix him up with a little nourishment. She grins and nods, givin' Abe the once over while I lead him to a table in the rear. In fifteen minutes he was sittin' before a layout of some of the strangest-lookin' dope I ever seen in my life, and the way he went after it was a riot. I never seen nobody that was either as hearty or as showy an eater as he was, and he give three of them dishes an encore before he called it a day. The coffee took seven bows, and my girl had to send next door for more bread.

I'm kiddin' along with what looked to be a cinch for my future wife when Abe comes over to pay his bill. I broke away, and went over to gaze on the herrin' display, because I know that delicatessen stuff comes high, no matter how bad it looks to the naked eye. When I looked around again they had evidently reached an agreement, because the girl is smilin' and so is Abe. He bought a package of bludwurst and some crackers, nodded his head, and blowed. He never even said much obliged to me for tippin' him off to the joint.

I stayed till—well, that's neither here nor there, but I'll bet I knowed all the milkmen in New York and got first crack at the mornin' papers while I was goin' with this dame. The next engagement I had with her was Friday, and after that I was to call Sunday and interview the old man.

I go up Friday night all dressed up like a horse and with tickets for "Awful Annabelle's Aggravating Adventntres," a thirteen-reel movie with gun play every three foot of film. When I pushed in the door of the store I nearly fell into the pickle barrel, be-

cause there's Abe leanin' over the counter, eatin' a sandwich and kiddin' my girl. I walked up, tapped him on the shoulder, and lured him back with the dried fish.

"Listen!" I says, glarin' at him. "I brung you up here that night to save you from starvin' to death; get me? I didn't figure you was gonna play a series here. When I ask waivers on this dame I'll let you know. In the meanwhile, on your way! If I come up here again and find you at bat, I'm gonna give you the worst trimmin' you ever got in your life."

"You gimme it already," he says, "when you sold me that, now, tiger marrow. Anyways, so long as you ain't married to the girl or even engaged to the food, I don't see no harm in me comin' here to eat. You could take my word for it I wouldn't steal her. But I'll say this much: From good-lookin' girls I'm always suspicious—but oi! how she could cook!"

I left him, and went over to declare myself to the girl. She told me if I come to bawl her out, I could go back to the hotel, because there wasn't no strings on me. Besides, she remarks, I act like I been kiddin' with the bartenders again. Can you tie that? I ain't had a drink for so long that for all I know rock and rye is a half a dollar a glass. I let her get away with it, though, because—well, if you ever saw this dame, you'd know the reason. She was the kind that could get away with murder, and does.

The next day Abe is another guy altogether than the gloomy bird we used to know. He's as full of pep as a grasshopper on a hot plate, and a couple of times I caught him whistlin'. When the bunch kids him about the tiger marrow, and asks him has he got the pound of flesh yet, instead of gettin' sore, he laughs. He didn't even mind bein' called "Shylock," and when he fans with two on, and walks back to the bench *hummin'*, I got suspicious, but I didn't know what of.

He asks me will I go to a movie with him on Sunday to show there's no hard feelin's. I says I can't, I got a date.

5A P

"With, now, Molly, I suppose, hey?" he grins.

"Where d'ye get that stuff?" I snarls, grabbin' him by the arm. "What d'ye mean by callin' my girl by her first name?"

Instead of answerin' me, he rolls his eyes and makes a cluckin' noise with his nose.

"*Gevahl!*" he says. "What she could do with a piece of *brust* and a pot!"

"If I ever catch you up there again," I tells him, "I'll run you ragged!"

"If you ever catch me, you could do it!" he says.

They sent me in against the Pirates that afternoon, with this guy on the receivin' end. The day before a wine company had put a big sign up in left field, and painted on it was the news that the first guy to hit it with a batted ball would get a case of champagne. Of course everybody broke their necks tryin' to win the free grape, and the result was a sloppy game, with guys takin' heavy swings at everything from a wild pitch to the umpire.

In the eighth innin' I got my first hit. It was a double that missed the sign by a stitch of the cover, and Abe is up next. He fouls about ten, and then, catchin' one right in the groove, he whales it a mile over the pitcher's head, and it comes down bang!—right against that sign. There was loud applause, and we grabbed two runs on it. I then went in and shut the Pirates out.

Some guy comes runnin' down from the grand stand and hands Abe a slip of paper, sayin' it was an order for the case of champagne. He sticks it in his pocket without sayin' a word, although the bunch crowded around him, askin' if he figured on bein' a tightwad all his life, and when did the party come off? After the game he grabs a taxi and beats it downtown for the wine.

Well, the gang hung around Abe that night like ants around sugar, but there was nothin' doin'. He gives the thing to the chef to put on the ice, and as far as we was concerned that champagne could have been in Peru. He wouldn't even loosen up with a bottle,

and the boys called him some things that would have meant manslaughter if they called 'em to me. I didn't care, because I was on the wagon, but I hated to see a guy so close. There he was with twelve quarts of wine, and he wouldn't give nobody as much as one bubble!

I got up early Sunday mornin' and went all over the plea I was gonna make to my girl's parents. I had my dress suit all pressed, a new shirt, and so forth, and when I got the outfit on, if I say it myself, I was a knock-out! I was due there at eleven, and at ten there's a knock on my door.

"Come in!" I says.

I like to fell out on the fire escape when two bell hops march in, draggin' along that case of champagne!

Oh, lady! Twelve quarts!

I slipped the boys each a quarter in a trance—I must have been to of done that!—and put the thing on the bed. There was a note on the top that said this:

To the feller which he saved me from starving to death. Yours truly,

SHYLOCK (ABE MENDELWITZ).

I guess I must of sat on the bed and looked at that case for twenty minutes. The first thing I figured was that he had emptied the wine and put somethin' else in—probably tiger marrow. In order to satisfy myself about that I had to open a bottle, and it made so much noise I'll bet them bell hops thought I had committed suicide from the shock. I tasted it, and it was the real thing. I *know*, because I was once at a banquet. Now, champagne ain't my regular drink. When I'm givin' the breweries a chance I generally fall for the Scotch, because I'm tryin' to help out the Allies as much as I can, but I had brains enough to know that once a bottle of wine was opened it had to be used or it'll spoil.

There was no use wastin' it, so I took a few sips out of the bottle, and the first thing I knew it was empty. I might add that was the last thing I knew, except that I begin to think Abe was really a prince of a guy at that,

and it was no more than right to drink another bottle to his health, the same bein' very poor like I told you.

I heard a clock strikin' somewheres, and counted fourteen, but of course that probably was wrong. Anyhow, I remembered I had a date with my girl's parents, so I started for the house. I had some trouble gettin' to the door, because the darn thing had got loose and kept slidin' around the room every time I grabbed for it. If I had of fell for that case of wine, and got away with some more bottles, like many a guy would have done, I'd never of left that room, but finally I did. There was more hurdles in the hall than there is in the Grand National steeplechase, but I took 'em all like a major. I'll admit goin' down on one, but that was probably a water jump or somethin', because my feet got in a hot argument about takin' it and wound up by throwin' me.

I guess there must of been a hundred banana peels on the landin', and I stepped on ninety-four of them at once, goin' into the elevator on my ear. I went out of it the same way on the ground floor, and them guests in the lobby must have figured I was Charlie Chaplin from what I heard later about the way I went out to the doors. I climbed in a taxi and give the robber at the wheel the number of my girl's house, and he must of started to take me there by way of Syracuse, because we rode three hours without a stop. We're turnin' another corner, and I climbed out the window and up on the seat with him so's I could show him the house.

"Git inside, Stupid!" he says to me. "You got a beautiful bun on to-day, ain't you?"

That's bein' insulted, ain't it? That's what I thought, so I let him have it on the chin.

It wasn't much of a fight; that is, the one in Europe is much bigger, but if I had only looked the neighborhood over before declarin' war, I never would of picked the front of my girl's house for a battlefield. The first thing

I seen when I looked up through the crowd was my girl—and Abe!

"So that's how you keep your word, eh?" she says, tryin' to kill me with a look. "Come, Abe, let's get away from this brute!"

I made a last struggle to get up, but what can you do with a chauffeur on top of you? Abe grins in my face.

"Listen!" he says. "I got this, now,

Shylock lookin' like a piker. A pound of flesh that feller wanted, hey? Well, I got it a hundred and sixty pounds—lowlife!"

I didn't get him till I looked up and seen him put his arm around my girl and start away with her.

I forgot to tell you her name was Levy, but I never knew she was that heavy!



THE TERMS OF PEACE

THE only hero whose name can be mentioned in this case does not show up in a favorable light. He is John Gladwine Ignatius Smith, by birth Irish, by inclination a wanderer over the earth. On one of his trips he struck Portland with a loud laugh, a dazzling suit of clothes, and a large thirst for intoxicating drinks. Moreover, he fell in with a gentleman engaged in the dramatic business, who on rare occasions became intoxicated and, during that nebulous state, was lost to the sight and memory of his wife and home.

One morning the worker in the dramatic field awoke and exclaimed to Smith: "Johnnie Gladwine Ignatius, you've ruined me. Do you know I haven't even telephoned my wife for a week? And do you know that she has a lot of money? And do you realize that I've got a hot hunch that she's hired a taxicab and is on thê lookout for me?"

Johnnie Gladwine, who was sleepy, paid no attention to this loud lament, but turned over in bed and went calmly to sleep.

Still animated by his hot hunch, the dramatic gentleman hurried nervously to his office.

Exactly at noon John Gladwine Ignatius Smith's telephone rang.

"Well, what is it?" he inquired sleepily.

"I just wanted to say good-by," the theatrical man explained sadly. "I've got a hot hunch that my wife is in the outside office. And, as there is no back way out, I'm lost. Farewell!"

That evening at about ten o'clock the theater magnate blew into one of the swellest dining and dancing places in the West. Moreover, he was accompanied by his wife, who smiled upon him and all his acquaintances in a manner that would have made a diamond sunburst look like an imitation opal. Finally he introduced her to Smith.

When the opportunity came, John Gladwine Ignatius Smith queried in an awed manner:

"How did you bring about the reformation?"

"Oh," replied the other languidly, "I took her out and gave her a lunch which, including the wine, cost me nineteen dollars and eighty cents; and then I bought her a new hat, chose it myself, for thirty-one dollars; and finally I loaded her down with eleven dollars worth of violets. Now—now, Gladwine Ignatius, there isn't a kick left in her."

The Soldier's Way

By Dane Coolidge

Author of "Rimrock Jones," "Alias Bowles and the Far West," Etc.

With the Foreign Legion in Mexico—a group of adventurous Americans, led by a Frenchman, but whose leading spirit and recruiting agent is Beanie Bogan. Coolidge has created many memorable characters; none more compelling than Bogan. To see Beanie in action is to see a very devil of destruction. In contrast with him is a recruit with hands white and soft and slender—a young American, the light of whose world had been put out suddenly and who enlists for the purpose of being killed. It is a story of fast and furious fighting; a breathless tale of action piled on action in the service of Montaña, the Liberator.

CHAPTER I.

THE DERELICT.

THE tidings of war were in the air when into the plaza at Del Norte, where adventurers from all over the world had gathered, there drifted yet another derelict. He was young and straight and dressed in decent black, but the wild look was there in his eyes. Many glanced at him curiously as he sat by the old cannon, his emotional face drawn with pain, his tapering hands clutched before him, and one man turned and looked again at his hands. It was Sergeant Bogan, recruiting agent for Montaña and his Army of Liberation, but he passed on and bided his time. The hands were soft and slender, yet full of supple strength—the signs of a high-grade mechanic; but the man himself was too fine. There were other derelicts, already starved and broken, who would enlist for the price of a meal; the white-handed stranger could wait.

The sun had sunk low behind the Mexican Sierras, where the Army of Liberation lay hid, when Bruce Whittle roused up from his thoughts. The

light of his world had been put out suddenly, and night was closing in upon him; there was a great pain in his breast and the memory of a kiss that was driving him to black despair. He rose up suddenly, and that evening in Fronteras, across the river in Mexico, Beanie Bogan saw him playing the games, and marked him for his own. The games were crooked, and when a man lost he was generally ready to enlist. Bogan drew in closer, glancing out from beneath bushy eyebrows like a watchful, rat-catching terrier, and at last the final card was turned. Whittle rose up slowly, his eyes on the cheating dealer, a fighting snarl on his lips, and then he clutched at the stakes.

"You can't rob me!" he cried, and as the dealer reached for his pistol Whittle slapped him across the face. There was a loud report, a crashing of tables, and a rush of feet for the entrance; and then, as the house was plunged into darkness, strong arms seized Whittle from behind and dragged him out a side door.

"Nix! Nix on that stuff!" panted a hoarse voice in his ear. "The rurales will get you sure. Stand up—you ain't

hurt—and now beat it for the river or you'll rot in a Mexican jail."

Whittle's knees were trembling, his strength had fled, but at the word "jail" he shook himself free.

"No, no!" he gasped. "I'd die! I couldn't stand it!" And, led by the resolute Bogan, he ran until they crossed to Del Norte.

"Now," said Bogan, as he led him to a cardroom and poured out a glass of liquor, "drink that, and tell me what's the idee!"

"I don't drink," answered Whittle, and, sinking down in a chair, he buried his face in his hands. Death had been so near, and yet it had passed; and now he was weak and faint.

"Oh, I see," observed Bogan, and pulled down his lip.

"You see what?" demanded Whittle, but Bogan evaded the question by raising his glass in the air.

"Here's to 'em!" he said enigmatically.

"To whom?"

"To the women, God bless 'em! If it wasn't for them, I'd lose many a likely recruit."

A flush of anger came over Whittle's pale face and mounted to the roots of his hair.

"You take too much for granted," he answered shortly, but Bogan shook his head.

"Nope," he said, "when it isn't booze it's always a woman that drives a man to—that." He jerked his head in the direction of Fronteras, and Whittle reached for his glass.

"You are mistaken," he said, and drank down the whisky. "Now who are you and what do you want?"

"That's the stuff!" applauded Bogan. "Put it down and have another, and I'll let you in on something good. You're a mechanic, ain't you? I knew it by the look of you—and perhaps you're a pretty good shot? Well, how would you like, now, to join Montaña's army and come out and help fix our guns?"

"What? Enlist as a soldier? In the Mexican army!"

"Ah, nah, nah!" burst out Bogan im-

patiently. "You don't get the idee at all. I'm Montaña's agent, and I'm raking the town for recruits for the Foreign Legion. He's got lots of Mex, but it's Americans he's after, and he pays 'em two hundred a month. Two hundred dollars gold, and everything found, and a cracking good horse to ride; and when we take Fronteras, as we will in jig time, you'll come in for your share of the loot. And when the war is over, if you stand by the chief, you get a nice little Mexican girl and a grant of good land to boot. Nah; listen now! Didn't I follow you over to that gambling house and keep you from getting killed? Well, then, where's your gratitude?"

He sat back and thrust out his jaw belligerently, but Whittle did not reply. He was living in a daze, in which some things were clear and others far away and confused, but he felt no obligation of gratitude. Left alone, his troubles would have been over. Not only that, but *she* would be free, with only his memory to haunt her. But now—he regarded his rescuer malevolently.

"Why should I thank you for that," he asked, "when I did it on purpose to get killed?"

"What? A fine-looking young feller like you! Ah-h, forget it and take a drink! Nah, drink your whisky and listen to me now; don't go and get killed for no woman! They ain't worth it; none of 'em. And here's another thing, pardner; things always look different the next day. You may be cast down now, but to-morrow you'll feel different, and there's nothing to kill grief like a good fight. When you're up in the saddle, and the boys are all yelling, and you ride down on 'em like a bat out of hell, what's a woman then, or anything else? And if you go out, you die like a man!"

He nodded grimly, and as Whittle's eyes gleamed he laid back his old army shirt.

"Look at that!" he said, and showed three lines plowed like furrows through the shaggy hair of his breast. "Machine-gun fire," he boasted, "over at

Villa Nueva; but do you think I laid down and quit? I did not," he affirmed, "and when I cash in I'll take a few Mexicans with me."

He swelled out his chest, and his little green eyes snapped and sparkled with a dare-devil smile.

"Tell me about it," said Whittle hoarsely. "Did many of your men get killed? And how did you happen to escape?"

"Now you're talking like a man," observed Bogan cheerfully. "Take another drink, and we'll make a soldier out of you yet. It was badly handled, because Montaña's no general, but here's the way of it: We was making a night attack. Buck O'Donnell was in the lead, with his belt full of bombs, and all the fighting Irish at his back. Then came Montaña and the rest of the Mexicans, and the street was as dark as a pocket. Up the calle we slipped, never making a sound, until we see the cuartel just ahead; and then *hrrr-rup*, she broke loose from up on the roof and they mowed us down like grass. We went down in a bunch, with me underneath, and three bullets just cut my breast. Sure, we'd planned a surprise, but the Federals was waiting for us; some yallerbelly had tipped us off. I laid there a minute till they'd run through their first clips, and then I rose up and run. There was a barbed-wire entanglement between me and the brush, but I sifted through it, leaving most of my clothes, and never stopped till I got to the river."

"And the others?" asked Whittle.

"Some got to a house and made a stand, but it was battered down with artillery. There was seven got away out of thirty-odd Americans, and Montaña himself got hit twice."

"Then why do you go on? Are you interested in the revolution or——"

"No, here's the point," expounded Bogan. "I'm a soldier, see? And a soldier does his duty. He never quits, and he never weakens, and he takes a proper pride. Three months ago I was over at the fort—top sergeant in B Company of the Seventh—when this ruction broke out down below. Mon-

taño sent an agent to take on some experienced men, and O'Donnell and the bunch of us bought out. We'd seen service before, in Cuba and the Philippines, and we were crazy to mix in on the game; but the Federals proved too much for us. We were badly led, and they wiped us out, but they learned that the gringos can fight. We walked up to their guns, and even then we didn't quit, and we're going back again! What say, do you want to sign up?"

He whipped out a paper, and laid it before Whittle, while he ran on with his recruiting patter:

"You don't join no Mexicans; you join the Foreign Legion, made up exclusive of white men. Gambolier is in command, and he's a titled Frenchman that has been through their military schools. Every man that joins is a soldier and a gentleman, and I can promise you active service at once. I'm sending 'em across, ten or twelve every night, and the peons are flocking to our banners. All Mexico is in revolt, the Federals are deserting, and their commands are confined to the large towns. We've got three thousand men within twenty miles of Fronteras, and this time we're going to take the town. If you take on now, you get two hundred a month and——"

"All right," cried Whittle, carried away by some madness. "I'll go—and I'll never turn back."

"That's the boy!" cheered Bogan, thrusting the pen into his hand. "Sign your name right there on that line. And now come on; the boys are waiting to go across."

He rose up and started for the door, but Whittle drew back and hesitated.

"What? Are we going to start now?" he asked.

"That's right. I'll take you down to Rico's place—that's the dump where we keep the men—and we'll cross up the river about midnight. That is, unless you want to stop over, and you won't when you see the joint. It's full of dirty, stinking Mexicans and fighting shanty Irish, all hollering for booze at once. We have to take all kinds,

you know. But come on. What are you stopping for, now?"

"I want to write a letter," answered Whittle doggedly. "And—I'd like to be alone."

"Huh! Some skirt!" muttered Bogan, as he fidgeted outside the door. "But I'll wait; he's worth ten dollars to me when he's crossed."

He paced up and down, went out and got a drink, and came back and peered in through the door. His soldier of fortune had his head on the table, and the paper lay before him, untouched.

CHAPTER II.

ACROSS THE RIO GRANDE.

The cold night wind was whipping down, the street, whirling dust and flying papers before it, when Whittle stepped out of the saloon. They were in the low part of town where, along the edge of the river, the Mexicans had wedged in their flat adobe huts as thick as mud wasps' cells. At one side lay a canal flowing deep with muddy water, and the railroad track running beside it, and, beyond that, gleaming faintly in the light of the stars, rushed the current of the shallow Rio Grande. Across it lay Old Mexico, with its warfare and brigandage, its romance, its mystery and—death. Whittle gave himself up to melancholy forebodings, and followed along after Bogan.

They hurried up the river, looking down from the railroad track at the sleeping mud houses on both sides, until at last, before a house more pretentious than the rest, Beanie halted and struck a match. He lit his cigarette, and then, as the flame leaped up, revealing his face for the moment, another match flashed from the doorway of the house, and a short man with a gun stepped out. He was followed by another, and, as he mounted the track, a line of furtive and huddled figures came stooping through the door. Two or three were Americans, but the rest were Mexicans, muffled up to the eyes in their blankets, and as Bogan spoke in Spanish to the short Mexican called Rico he looked them over carefully be-

fore he led the way up the track. Rico followed with his gun, reeking potently of mescal, and the rest fell in behind him. A mysterious confederate waved his hand from a box car; another man, not so friendly, plunged hastily into the willows at a threatening move from Bogan; and then, from within the black shadow of a cottonwood tree, there came the ringing challenge:

"Halt!"

They halted, and as a soldier stepped out from his shelter Whittle turned and started to run.

"Here! Stop!" commanded Bogan, jerking him roughly back again. "Don't you know that sentry will shoot?" And then, at the challenge: "Who's there?" he answered evenly:

"A friend!"

He advanced then, as ordered; there were low words of greeting, and the sentry struck his gun with his hand.

"Pass, friend," he said, and stepped back into the shadow while Beanie went on his way. There was a surety about his dealings with the sentry that argued him thoroughly at home, and as the river swung north he turned into a trail that led like a tunnel through the willows. They came out suddenly upon a well-tramped path that led along the bank of the canal, and, as they rounded a point far up the stream, they came upon another sentry. Once more the old fear moved Whittle to think of flight, but, after a few low words from Bogan, the sentry resumed his post.

They stood upon the abutment of a low, concrete dam over which the river water slipped and gurgled in a long, unbroken line. It was the diversion dam for the two canals that irrigated the low land along the river, but it could serve other purposes as well.

"Here's where you cross," observed Bogan briefly, and disappeared into the brush. With their shoes in their hands the timorous recruits waded shivering across the stream, and at last in the shadow of ghostly cottonwoods they landed upon the soil of Mexico.

"Here's to liberty!" spoke up Rico, taking a drink for courage, and then,

with his gun at a ready, he led the way into the hills. Up a long, sandy wash that wound in between clay banks they toiled on in single file; the banks turned to walls and to towering cliffs that shut out the dim light of the stars, and as the cañon opened out again they saw all about them the jagged peaks of the Sierras. A pale half-moon that had risen at midnight filled the valley with a deceptive light, and at a fork in the trail the half-drunken guide studied long and turned to the left. Again the trail forked, and once more he took the left, until he was traveling more east than south. The path became brushy grown and full of rocks, and as the Mexican recruits began to dispute the way Whittle saw that their guide was lost.

He quarreled with his compatriots in guttural Spanish, making threatening motions with his gun, until at last, in a fit of drunken rage, he cocked it and thrust it in their faces.

"*Esto camino!*" he declared, pointing at the trail defiantly, and led them on through the night. All trace of the dimming path was lost; they climbed over ridges, fought their way through thorny bushes, and suffered thrusts from poisonous Spanish bayonets until at last, as the sky began to pale, they sank down and waited for the day. The guide was lost—he admitted it now—and no one knew the south from the north. The mountains were behind them, there was a great plain in front; but where was the camp of Montaña? The sky became light and dark again, and then, as the sun rose up above the rim of the plain, they heard the distant roll of a drum.

"*El campo!*" cried Rico, springing triumphantly to his feet, but as he started across the plain they were startled by the thunder of a cannon.

"What's that?" demanded Whittle, and as they stopped and listened a bugle call came to their ears. It was the reveille, sounded by a full band of trumpeters, and the cannon was the morning gun at Fronteras.

"*Santa Maria!*" exclaimed the guide, crossing himself in a panic, and, fol-

lowed by the rest of the fugitives, he started on a run for the river.

The trumpets blared on, and, as they hurried across the plain, they could see the white houses of a Mexican town, and across the river, rising high against the dawn, the American city of Del Norte. In his drunken wanderings Rico had struck a circle, and nearly delivered them to their enemies. The Army of Liberation was far to the west, beyond the jagged Sierras, and they, without even the guns with which to fight, were still within sight of Fronteras.

The Mexicans led the way, running along the base of the hills toward the clean line of treetops to the north, but their haste was their own undoing. A cloud of dust rose up on the outskirts of Fronteras, rushing straight across the plain, and soon against the white of its mantle they could see the bobbing heads of horsemen. It was a troop of rurales, the rangers of Mexico, and they were riding to cut them off. Long and anxiously they had looked to the west for the vanguard of Montaña's army, and this huddle of men, fleeing wildly for the border, could be nothing but a band of his followers.

They came on, yelling, and, at a warning volley of shots, Rico wheeled and discharged his gun defiantly. It was a single-barreled shotgun of the cheapest grade, but at the loud report the rurales pulled up for a conference.

"*Adelante!*" cried the guide heroically, and, led now by the frightened Mexicans, he ran with all his strength toward the river. But the rurales had recovered from their surprise, and, seeing them again in full flight, they came on after them at a gallop.

"*Ay! Santissima Maria!*" moaned Rico, and at last, overcome by exhaustion from his debauch, he staggered and dropped to the ground.

"Oh, help me!" he implored, as the Americans toiled past him. "Do not leave me here to die! Oh, you, sir!" he cried, holding out his hands to Whittle, and, at the fear in his eyes, Whittle stopped. He was not afraid, though he fled with the rest, and, catching up

Rico's gun, he fired at the spurring horsemen. They were close upon him, strung out along the trail, and the buckshot raked their column like hail. Horses reared and pitched, riders dropped their arms, and in the tumult all order was lost.

"Now run!" said Whittle, and, raising Rico to his feet, he crouched down behind a rock. It had come at last, that moment of exaltation of which Beanie Bogan had spoken, and, with his face to his enemies and a great joy in his heart, he waited to meet his death. The rurales had dismounted behind a low ridge, and as he stepped out into the open their carbines all spoke at once. But the shots were wild, and at a shout from Rico, Whittle turned and ran up the trail. They had missed, and it was still in his power to save his comrades from disaster. The trail, pinched in between the encroaching hills and the broad flood of the Mexican canal, turned up now and cut along the slope, and, once over the point, they would be safe. He could see them running, with Rico behind, and as he scrambled up the hill he could hear the bullets as they struck into the dirt about him.

He won over the point, and, taking shelter behind a rock, looked down to where the rest fled toward the river. It was a long way yet, across an open flat, but if he could hold back the rurales the fugitives might swim across to safety. As the rurales, by ones and twos, came spurring up the slope, Whittle rose up to meet their charge with his heart filled with a new, stern joy. Here was the death he had dreamed of—giving his life for others, dying clean and fighting like a man. He stepped out into the open, silhouetted clear against the sky, and aimed at the foremost rider.

"Come on!" he cried, and pulled the trigger; but the startled rural did not return his fire. At the first outflashing of that figure in black, with the nickel-plated shotgun, in his hand, he had wheeled his horse and swung down the slope in a mad effort to avoid the blast; but it caught him in full flight, burning his horse across the rump and

sending him plunging down the trail. As he passed down the line a swift panic seized those behind, and, riding in a disorderly rabble, they whirled around the point of the hill. Whittle stood there alone, still outlined against the sky, but death had passed him by. A great yell of cheering came from across the river, and as he turned to look behind him he saw the steep hills black with men. Across the broad flat the fugitives were running fast, with Rico still far behind, but the rurales were nowhere in sight.

Whittle loaded his gun, and, settling down behind a rock, laughed grimly to himself. It was the joy of victory, of conquest and exulting, of seeing his enemies in full flight; it was a fitting prelude to death. From his post on the point he could see his comrades swimming, and fat Rico running down toward the dam, and then in a high, insistent yell the Americans began to call.

"Run! Run!" they shouted; but why should he stir from his place? He had turned back the rurales, and he would keep them back until Rico had crossed on the dam. He stood on the point and looked across at the Americans and at the automobiles that came rushing up the road. Men were coming from everywhere to witness the fighting, but the crowds on the hills were frantic, still beckoning with their hats for him to run. But why? The answer was the ping of a bullet and the smoke rising up from his rock. The rurales had been riding to get above him, and now they were shooting down from the heights.

"Run! Run!" shrieked the Americans, and as he shot back a challenge with his futile shotgun he suddenly felt the call. He wanted to escape because they wanted him to escape, those Americans on the other side.

"All right!" he answered, and dashed down the trail, the gun still clutched in his hand. The bullets striking about him threw up little puffs of dust, they leaped and ricocheted ahead, but he gained the edge of the stream untouched. It was broad here

and deep, held back by the dam, and as he saw the muddy swirls and measured the distance he sat down to take off his shoes. But now a shriller yell rose up from the crowd, and, across the flats from where they had crept up through the brush, there came racing a band of rurales.

"Jump!" shrieked the crowd, and as Whittle plunged in he saw soldiers in khaki line the bank. They were the border patrol, placed along the river to prevent any violation of neutrality, and they stood with their guns raised to protect him. He came on bravely, using a racing stroke and fighting to pass the middle of the stream, but when a bullet cut the water beside him he dived and swam with the current. A hundred feet below he thrust up his head, gasped in air, and was gone again, and when he rose there were soldiers above him and guns pointing threateningly across the stream.

"Don't you shoot!" he heard the soldiers shouting, and as he drew himself up on the bank he saw the rurales riding furiously away. Then as soldiers and civilians hauled him out of the stream and slapped him on the back for joy, Beanie Bogan came fighting his way through the crowd and caught him by the arm.

"Hell's fire!" he snarled. "Do you want to get pinched? Well, come on, then, and get out of this mob!"

CHAPTER III.

A VOICE FROM THE PAST.

Bogan was cursing viciously as he dragged Whittle through the crowd and thrust him into a chance-found automobile.

"Drive downtown!" he said to the startled chauffeur. "Drive anywhere, till you get rid of these crazy lunatics." He slammed shut the door, and pushed Whittle back out of sight, while he shot back insulting denials at the crowd.

"Nah, of course he ain't here!" he snapped. "No, I don't know 'im; he's back with that bunch!" And then, to the driver, he added: "Speed 'er up; I'll pay your fine!"

The machine leaped forward, and as they thundered down the boulevard and twisted in and out through side streets, Beanie turned to his dripping recruit.

"Did you see that big fat feller in the O. D. suit?" he asked. "Well, he's a gumshoe man for the department of justice. Another minute and he'd've had you pinched for violating the neutrality laws. Holy cats, what a hoo-raw! The whole town turned out—a regular battle—and half of 'em thinking it was Montaña. About a thousand men, all piping us off—and me supposed to be a secret agent! Well, we'll get you a new suit and switch the deal. How'd you like to help me run a few guns?"

"What—smuggle them across?"

"Yes, and put up a fight for 'em, if we happen to get jumped by the rurales. I'll get you another shotgun, being as you take to 'em so natural, and I guess we can cut it, between us."

He was smiling now in a curious, twisted grin, and it suddenly came over Whittle that Bogan was tendering an apology.

"Why—all right," he faltered, and fell into silence, for Beanie Bogan had not always been so friendly. On the night before, after persuading him to enlist, he had sent him across the line like one of a herd of cattle.

"I got you wrong," confessed Beanie at last. "I didn't think you'd fight." He spoke to the chauffeur, who whipped down a back alley and stopped at the rear of a store. A half an hour later Whittle stepped out a new man, attired for the rough work of a gun runner from his sombrero to his tan-colored boots. "Now," said Bogan, "that's a little more like it; you don't look so much like a preacher." He slipped in the back door of a near-by restaurant, and while the Chinaman rushed in a meal he talked out of the corner of his mouth.

"Here's the idee," he explained. "Montaña has got the men, but danged if he can get 'em the guns. They've got shotguns and bean shooters, and little .22's and everything but stand-

and .30-.30's. The guns is on this side, you understand, and it's our job to get 'em across. All right, now this is what I want you to do. These secret-service sleuths and department-of-justice agents will be watching every ford to-night, but a good swimmer like you can take a wire across, and we'll pass the guns over on a pulley. We'll do that up the river, where the cañon boxes in, and, just to keep the gumshoe boys busy, I'll send some Mexicans down to get caught. Just some dollar-a-day men with a few burned-out old Springfields to make it look good on the reports, and meanwhile we'll put over about a thousand new rifles and rush 'em into the hills for Montaña."

"But how about the rurales?" asked Whittle doubtfully.

"All scared of the dark. They never come out at night, and every country Mex is our friend. Do you get the idee? If you ever run across one, just tell him you're working for Montaña. We'll pull this off to-night, so you better go down to Rico's and get all the sleep you can, and here's a little money to skate on."

Bogan passed over a wad of bills, winked wisely at the Chinaman, and slipped out again by the back door. Whittle finished his breakfast and passed out after him, but he did not go to Rico's. With his hunger satisfied, it came back upon him suddenly—that aching, voiceless grief that had driven him, half maddened, to Del Norte—and he wandered back to the Plaza. He had tried the solace of danger and adventure, but it could not make him forget. He had loved a woman, and she had married another, but that he might learn to forget. But she had kissed him at the wedding—the bride's farewell kiss—and then something had stopped in his brain. She had loved him all the while, that glorious woman—so brave, so beautiful, so good—and he had not known till too late. And she had not known! He could see her startled look, and—yes, he could remember their kiss. One kiss, no more, a greeting and farewell, and then he had turned and fled.

Once more, while the curious turned and smiled, he sat, mute with agony, in the park, and when he looked up he saw—her! She was glorious still, but her eyes were saddened, and he rose up in horror at the change.

"Bruce!" she cried, low and tender as before, but it woke only agony in his soul.

"Oh, wait!" she pleaded, as he turned to flee. "No, wait; I have followed you here. It is not an accident; I wanted to tell you something."

"Ah, no," he answered, his eyes set with anguish; "nothing matters now. What could you tell me that would change it—now?"

She did not answer, for there, close beside her, appeared the raging face of her husband. He had come up unobserved, and as he took her arm he darted a savage glance at Whittle.

"Come, Constance," he said firmly, "I cannot allow this to go on. You must return with me to the hotel."

"No!" she cried, but as he gazed at her reproachfully she submitted and turned away. A moment later, when she stopped and looked back, her lover of a day had fled.

When Whittle came to himself he was on a strange street, and a Mexican was plucking his sleeve. He was a dark, powerful man, in a faded soldier's uniform, and across one cheek, like a brand on a horse, was burned the numeral 3.

"Ven!" he said, and beckoned with his finger tips, but Whittle drew away. "No—come!" coaxed the Indian, resorting to broken English. "Me Numero Tres." He pointed grimly to his cheek. "Me friend Beanie Bo-gan. You come." He smiled reassuringly, but the scar on his face gave him a singularly sinister appearance.

"No," answered Whittle, and pushed him away, whereupon Number Three laughed indulgently.

"Mira!" he began, as Whittle regarded him fixedly. "Me no Mexican, sabe? Me Yaqui Indian de Sonora. Good friend Beanie Bo-gan. You come—Rico's house."

He waited a while, and then, very

good-naturedly, he took Whittle by the arm and led him like a child down the street. They passed through narrow alleys, lined with squat Mexican houses made of mud and stray boards and tin cans, until at last, on the very brink of the canal, they stooped and entered Rico's hotel. It was a broad, low room, saloon and restaurant in one, and as Whittle stood dazed in the doorway a dozen men turned to stare at him. Then from behind the bar fat Rico came running, and clasped him in his arms.

"Ah, my frien'!" he exclaimed, patting him lovingly upon the back and striving in vain to kiss him. "My frien', you have save my life!"

He turned and made a speech in excited Spanish to the none too friendly Mexicans, and then, taking pity upon his exhausted condition, he assisted Whittle to bed.

All that day, while Mexicans and American adventurers roistered and rioted in the barroom below, Whittle lay in his room as if dead, but as evening came on and the recruits disappeared he was awakened by Beanie Bogan.

"All right, Whit," he said, flashing a lamp in his eyes, "come out of it; it's time to get busy."

"What do you mean?" blinked Whittle, his brain in a whirl. "Oh, I can't smuggle guns over to-night."

"Yes, you can," answered Beanie cheerfully, "and you'd better cross, too, or you'll see the inside of a jail. The department of justice is looking for you, sure, and there's some mug out there watching the door."

"What? Waiting to arrest me! Well, I'll never be taken; I'd go crazy shut up in prison!"

"Nah, I'll get you out," responded Bogan confidently. "Leave it to me, and don't make no row. The people in this town are all for Montaña, and listen, he's right out in the hills. We can see his scouts, and there's nothing to it; we got to cross them guns over to-night."

Whittle rose up in bed, and as he

sat staring blankly Beanie pressed a bottle to his lips.

"Take a jolt," he said; "it'll make you brave, and I need you bad to-night. I had men out looking for you all over town. Numero Tres said he thought you were drunk."

"No, not drunk," muttered Whittle, rising sullenly from his bed, "but—well, come on, but I'll never go to jail."

"Suit yourself," answered Bogan, and lingered warily behind, for he had seen a man in the shadow.

The night was black, with a gusty wind blowing, and as Whittle stepped out of the door he was startled by the clutch of a hand. It caught his right wrist and twisted it behind him, and then a pistol was thrust against his side.

"Come on," said a voice, "and don't make any trouble. I've got some papers for you."

"What do you mean?" demanded Whittle, setting his feet for a struggle, but the man did not answer directly.

"You're wanted," he replied, giving him a quick shove forward, and then a shadow slipped out the door. An unseen hand wrenched the pistol from the man's grasp, and, as he went to the ground, Beanie Bogan leaped back and snaked him bodily through the door.

"Now, Mister Man," he said, beckoning quickly to Whittle, "we'll have a look at them papers."

"Who are you, sir?" blustered the man, struggling angrily to his feet. "I'll throw you in the stink house for this!"

"Never mind who I am," answered Beanie grimly, "but show me the papers for my friend."

"Well——" began the man, and Beanie cut him short with a blow and a savage kick.

"You danged tinhorn detec!" he burst out violently. "You can't run no blazer on me! You ain't got no papers or you'd pull 'em and serve 'em! Now come through—are you working for Reyes?"

The man, a great, hulking brute of a fellow, seemed to shrink as he met Bogan's look, and his eyes became furtive and scared.

"Oh, no, sir," he cried. "I'm a private detective; I've got nothing to do with the war. I don't want you to think, sir, just because I came down here——"

"Come here!" commanded Bogan, his green eyes glinting, and, with rude and unnecessary violence, he jerked the star from the detective's vest and threw it on the floor. "Now," he said, thrusting out his jaw and balancing his revolver to strike, "come through or I'll bust your head. Who are you working for, and what do you want of my friend?"

"Why—a Mr. Pedley. He——"

"Pedley!" cried Whittle in amazement, and Bogan drew him swiftly aside.

"Who's Pedley?" he hissed. "Has he got anything on you?"

"Why—no!" stammered Whittle. "I——"

"Then you git!" commanded Bogan, and, throwing open the door, he kicked the detective into the street.

CHAPTER IV.

THE FOREIGN LEGION.

The night of the big gun running passed like a dream for Whittle. He was conscious of being taken far up the river in a closed automobile, of guards hurriedly stationed, and a cord thrust into his hand, and then of a long swim in the river. He landed and made fast the heavy wire that followed, and then a bundle of guns, hung by a hook on a pulley, came slipping across the cable. Swart Mexicans with pack animals appeared from the darkness and received the guns as they came, and swift-moving automobiles came purring out from Del Norte with load after load of bur-lapped rifles. When the pulley stuck or the cable fouled he swam out and set it to rights, but his heart was not in the game. One part of his mind seemed to attend to the work with a wholly admirable calm, while the other thought of other things.

What did it mean, this blind and feverish flitting, this phantasy that people called life? And was it worth the

living? Was it not better, with all his dreams lost, with his days but an agony of vain regrets, to end it all swiftly in some chance Mexican battle and to pass on to whatever there was? Was it not better for her, now that she was married to Pedley, to pass decently out of her life? To remain was but to flee from the sight of her unhappiness, to writhe with unworthy jealousy. She was married to him now, and what hope could the future hold out? Only the prospect of anguish and base humiliation at the hands of her cad of a husband.

At the thought of the detective and his crude attempt to arrest him a flaming rage rose up in Whittle's breast. After he had retreated instantly, as a gentleman should, without subjecting his loved one to remarks, then to find himself pursued to some Mexican hovel and maltreated by a private detective! A cheap detective, a mere manhandler of the unwary, kicked about like a bum by Beanie Bogan, and hired by this man who had won her. In another age, when women were property, Whittle would have retaliated and taken her for his own, but the chivalry of the times in which he lived demanded that he make no reprisals. If he killed the husband, he could not take the wife; all the world would shrink from him, and the woman would deny her own love. No, it called for a sacrifice, such as men made of old to placate some austere god; but he would do it for her. It was best for Constance that he should pass out of her life, and, God willing, he would die like a man.

A rattle of scattered shots burst out down the river, and the work jumped forward in a flurry. Men came running up the road to see what they were doing, only to be pushed back by the close-mouthed guards, and, through it all, like a devil of energy, Beanie Bogan came and went with the guns. He was cursing now in a low singsong of fury, his voice rising up in a howl at the least opposition to his will; but when, above the whine of the pulley and the rushing to and fro of his men, he heard a measured tramp down the

road, he dropped his work on the instant.

"Out of here!" he yelled, scattering his helpers in all directions. "Hit the wind or you'll all get pinched! Up the road with your autos! Let the guns go! I'm through; here comes the patrol!"

There was a thunder of motors as the machines darted off, and then, as a squad of soldiers came trotting up the road, Beanie Bogan made a jump for the hook of the pulley and went flying across the cable into Mexico.

"Now get these guns away," he ordered as he landed, "before the danged rurales get wise! *Andale, hombres! El campo! Pronto!*" And with Mexican packers and American soldiers of fortune heaving at bundles and hauling at lariats he was up and away in the same furious haste that had characterized his movements for days. Up from the river bottom they rushed, on over a pass, and then down the other side into the narrow cañon that Whittle had been through before; until at last, shortly after dawn, they passed the outposts of Montaña's army.

It was camped in a valley on both sides of a river bed, where at intervals appeared shining strips of water—an army and yet not an army. No sentries challenged, no guards paced their posts; there was no order, no discipline, nothing but a horde of men. They were gathered about their fires with their blankets over their shoulders in groups of eight or ten, low-browed and black-bearded, the wild mountain outlaws of the Sierra Madres who had rallied to the standard of Montaña. Beneath their high hats, which surmounted them like toadstools, they glanced out with keen, suspicious eyes, and Beanie Bogan, glimpsing several that he knew, became suddenly distant and grim.

"Holy Mother!" he muttered. "I can see a quick finish now. These hombres are hungry; they're down to straight beef, and I shipped out a hundred from Del Norte. And them American boys! Say, they won't do a thing to me after making 'em the big

talk I did. Huh, huh; two hundred a month and the best of everything, and look what these fellows have got! They ain't even smoking, and when a man's out of tobacco he'll fight at the drop of a hat."

He heaved a heavy sigh, yet without losing any grimness, and followed on with the pack train toward a ranch house that appeared in the distance. It was a low adobe dwelling, surrounded by corrals, in one of which the Foreign Legion was camped, and at the door a lone American was standing guard beneath the Mexican flag.

"Sergeant Bogan to see the general," said Beanie to the orderly, but at the sound of his voice there was an outcry from within, and Montaña, the liberator, rushed out. He was a short, pale man, with one arm in a sling and a worried, harassed look in his eyes, but at the sight of the burlapped bundles on the mules they lit up with sudden joy.

"Ah, Bo-gan, you have brought yet more guns!" he exclaimed, and seized him by the hand. "How many in all?"

"Six hundred, sir," replied Bogan, bringing his heels together, but Montaña was no stickler for forms.

"At last!" he cried, and with a gesture of thankfulness he embraced him with his unhurt arm. "Ah, Sergeant Bo-gan," he went on feelingly, "you cannot imagine my difficulties. The Foreign Legion they clamor for everything, but my people they clamor for guns. Guns! Guns! Not money, not food; not shoe and blankets, but guns to fight for our liberty. And what of the good people in the city of Del Norte—are they still favorable to our cause? You astound me, I am delighted, and yet it is what one would expect from those who are favored with freedom. Won't you come inside, and bring your friend?—we can have a cup of coffee together."

"No, thank you, general," answered Bogan stiffly. "Shall I deliver these guns to Gambolier?"

"Oh, yes; to be sure! But come and see me later; we will be marching on Fronteras very soon."

"Very well, sir," returned Bogan, still trying to keep his distance, and as he beckoned his packers toward the camp of the Foreign Legion he grumbled under his breath to Whittle. "Well, that's him," he said. "He may be a patriot, but, by cripes, he'll never make a soldier!"

By a smoky fire the scant twenty Americans who made up Beanie's boasted Foreign Legion were arguing and bickering among themselves, while off to one side, as isolated as Napoleon, stood the military figure of their commander. He was a trim, slender man, this Colonel Gambolier, dressed immaculately in an olive-drab riding suit, and at sight of Bogan he returned his salute with the elaborate precision of a foreigner. But before Beanie could report there was a tumult around the fire, and half of the men started toward him. They were hatchet-faced cowboys and a sprinkling of ragged hobos, but the men who stood out in the motley crowd were dressed in United States uniform.

There were three of them—a giant Scandinavian, a big, aggressive Irish corporal, and a rat-faced, street gamin of a private who advanced with a sneer to meet Bogan.

"Hello there, you big bum!" he called out with false cordiality, but Bogan looked him coldly in the eye. Knowing that trouble was coming, it was not part of his policy to postpone it by honeyed words.

"Who told *you* to desert from the United States army," he inquired as he walked on past, "and bring the old uniform into disgrace?"

"Ah, listen to 'im!" chimed in the other two soldiers, and then the rat-faced private grabbed Bogan by the arm and jerked him to an abrupt about-face.

"Listen here, Beanie Bogan!" he shouted threateningly. "You can't pull any of that stuff on me. We're as good as you are, or any other man, and you got us to come down here yourself!"

"I did naht!" snarled back Bogan, striking him indignantly aside. "And you lay off of me, Jimmy Sullivan.

This is a peach of a mob for a Foreign Legion, but if you've got any remnant of military discipline you'll allow me to report to the C. O.!"

He passed on and reported, while the Legion gathered together and held a hasty council of war, and then he turned back to the fire.

"Well," he said, gazing about him sardonically, "I hear you've pulled off a mutiny. Why, hello there, Helge; how's the Terrible Swede?" He made a quick pass at the fair-haired giant who was regarding him with an accusative eye and poured out a cup of coffee from the pot. "Help yourself, Whit," he added, handing Whittle a cup, and sat down on a box to drink.

"I ain't no Swede," answered Helge deliberately, walking around to look him in the eye, "and you know I ain't, Beanie Bogan. I'm a Danish man, and if I'm a deserter, it was you dat got me drunk."

"Uh, huh!" grunted Beanie. "Well, have your own way about it, but cut off them U. S. buttons."

"What, and vare my coat open?" demanded Helge fiercely. "Vell, you sure must think I'm crazy!"

"Here, lemme talk to him!" broke in the big Irish corporal, thrusting Helge out of the way. "I bet you I can get through his rine. Now, you dog-goned liar, where's that two hundred dollars we was going to draw down every month? We ain't got the price of a drink among us."

"Oh, you ain't, hey?" returned Bogan, putting down his cup and rising with businesslike calm. "Then that proves you ain't drunk, and you'll take back that word or I'll ram it down your throat."

He laid off his hat, and advanced with stealthy swiftness, his left hand raised, his right by his hip, and the fighting fire in his eyes.

"Well, what's got you so ringy?" grumbled the corporal complainingly, backing off and looking around for support; but no man stepped beside him, and Bogan snorted contemptuously.

"That's all right, Bill McCafferty," he answered crustily. "I been top cut-

ter in B Company too long to let a corporal call me a liar. And, more'n that, I ain't scared of the whole danged gang of ye!"

He drank off his coffee, and, picking up a mess tin, dipped out some beans from a simmering pot.

"You're a prize bunch of soldiers!" he went on insultingly, running his eyes over the nondescript group. "How do you figure you're worth two hundred a month? Here I been up on the line, working day and night to cross over enough rifles to get you armed, and now, by grab, I find you sitting around the fire like a gang of slouchy hobos in the jungle. You won't drill, hey? Well, how d'ye expect to fight when we go up to take Fronteras? Are you going to drag along like them poor, ignorant Mexicans, with nothing above your ears but your hat? Ain't Montaña got nothing to do but go get your money and come and put it in your hand? By Jehu, if I was in his place, I'd can the whole biling of you, and go out and hunt up some *men!*"

He turned toward Whittle, who was sitting at one side, and indicated him by a wave of the hand.

"D'ye see that man?" he asked dramatically. "Well, he don't claim to be no soldier, but I seen him myself, with a single-barreled shotgun, stand off a whole troop of rurales. I can take him now and that Yaqui Indian over there and whip more Mexicans than all of ye!"

He grunted scornfully, and went on with his eating, while the recruits regarded him resentfully.

"Huh, huh!" he burst out again, ignoring their mutterings. "I wish Buck O'Donnell was here now. Buck was a fighting man, and no mistake! But you fellers! You're a bunch of kids!"

"Well," burst out Sullivan, "we might show some form, at that, if we only had some leadership. But here we sit, getting dirtier every day, while Gambolier and General Montaña dope out this high military strategy. If we're going to take Fronteras, let's go up and take it; but Gambolier won't

make a move unless it's according to the theory."

"That is not quite fair," interposed Gambolier hastily, striding over from where he had been listening. "Sergeant Bogan, you know well, for you have seen actual warfare, that it is useless to expect any decisive results until we can maintain the offensive. But, in order to be effective, the attacking body must always be of superior force. Now, in an attack upon Fronteras we might have advantage at first, but in the city of Chulita, not two hundred miles to the south, is a garrison of several thousand men, and, unless something is done to destroy the railroad and effectually prevent their approach, reënforcements will be rushed up, we will be attacked from the rear, and our forces will be compelled to retreat. So my recommendation to General Montaña, in my capacity as military adviser, is that we first send a force to destroy the railroad, and then, having effectively isolated the city, return to attack Fronteras."

"Well, why don't you go ahead then and destroy the railroad?" rallied Sullivan and McCafferty both at once. "You march up to Fronteras, and then back to Chulita, and then you march somewhere else. We enlisted for fighting, but if it's just marching you want, any ordinary Mexican will do."

"You shall see fighting," returned Gambolier gravely; "but first we must perfect our plans. The battle of Villa Nueva was lost most disastrously through a lack of coördinated effort. The enemy, by a forced march, attacked from the rear—our brave general was surprised from the cuartel—and between those two attacks the valiant Foreign Legion was destroyed in a single night. We must plan better now, every movement must be perfected, and when once more we go into battle I trust we shall come off victorious."

"Why don't you *burn* them bridges?" challenged Beanie Bogan suddenly. "It don't take a whole army to scrap a railroad. Didn't Buck O'Donnell, with two men to help, burn twenty-seven bridges in one night? Well, gimme five thou-

sand dollars and a pardner to go with me and I'll burn them Central bridges myself!"

"Ah, but Sergeant Bogan," replied Gambolier patiently, "you are not fully informed of the facts. It is true, indeed, that brave Buck O'Donnell did destroy, by surprise, many trestles, but that, you must remember, was on the branch line that connects Fronteras with Villa Nueva—and it could not be accomplished again. The line to Chulita is now heavily guarded, with military trains all made up, and at the first sign of burnings the alarm would be sent out and cavalry rushed to the scene. Moreover, the important bridges on the Chulita line are built on concrete piers, which can only be destroyed by dynamite. And, the country being flat and the high bridges few, each bridge will be carefully guarded. I thank you, but it could not be done."

"Ahr, you don't know Bogan!" sneered Sullivan venomously. "He don't care how many they are!"

"No," retorted Beanie. "I was just waiting for you, Sully, to say you'd go along with me."

"Oh, but look who you are!" parried Sullivan dexterously. "A regular fighting fool, while I'm nothing but a lousy deserter. I don't claim to be no dynamite devil."

"You don't need to," returned Bogan. "We can tell by looking at you that you haven't got the nerve of a rabbit. I'll tell you what I'll do, Sully; you come along with me and I'll give you the whole five thousand. Or any one of you! Now, come on, you fellers that are so crazy for a fight; we'll split the jack pot among us. We'll shoot our way in and shoot our way out again, and the last man that's left takes the pot. Buck O'Donnell got ten thousand for burning the Northwestern—who'll take a chance on the Central?"

There was a pause, in which the Foreign Legion looked sheepish, and then a voice spoke up from behind.

"I'll go," it said, and as Bogan whirled about he met the somber eyes of Whittle.

"Say, get onto yourself!" whispered

6A P

Bogan hoarsely, as he drew Whittle off to one side. "Are you off your nut, or what?"

"No, I'm not," answered Whittle, "but you don't have to go. I'd rather go alone."

"Go where?" raged Beanie, as the Foreign Legion smirked. "Say, what do you know about bridge burning?"

"Nothing much, but it will give me quick action, and—I'll be glad to have it over."

"You're crazy as a bedbug," declared Bogan shortly, and pushed him out of the way, but at the end of an hour he came back.

"Say," he said, "you talk too much; you've got me in a whale of a fix. Montaña heard the news that I'd made my brag and that you'd sort of took me up, and now it's up to us, cold. I won't make a move till there's ten thousand dollars put up in a Del Norte bank, but he's offered that much for the job. It's taking a chance, but for five thousand cash—well, I'm game, if you want to go along."

"Very well," said Whittle, and, his mind suddenly at rest, he lay down and slept like the dead.

CHAPTER V.

A CONFESSION.

If Beanie Bogan was a victim of circumstances in his agreement to dynamite bridges, he concealed his chagrin behind a purposeful frown, and overlooked none of the profits. In fact, from his cold-blooded insistence upon the money being put in escrow, it became evident to Gambolier and Montaña that he intended to come back to collect. Yet, even so, brave Buck O'Donnell had gone to his death with a money belt of gold twenties around his waist and his pockets full of bombs. Montaña had been present on that fateful night, and knew what a hazard it was, so he gave Beanie a note to his fiscal agent and sent him on his way to Del Norte.

For three endless days Whittle watched for his return, the dull fever still burning in his brain, while about

him the disgruntled soldiers of fortune kept up their wrangling debates. All up and down the valley, in scattered bands and companies, the Mexican patriots sat inert. At intervals they rose up at the yell of "*Carne!*" and rushed to claim their rations of fresh-killed beef, or rode to and fro on their stunted ponies, roping cattle, catching horses, and raiding ranches; but of military discipline there was none. They were simply a horde of outlaws and adventurers, with nothing to hold them together but Montaña.

Every day the patriot leader went down among his men with his wounded arm in its sling, making promises, healing difficulties, and welding them together by appealing to their hatred of the dictator. He distributed the new guns, with strict admonitions not to fire a single useless shot; he discussed with the leaders the proper disposition of their troops when they should join in the assault upon Fronteras; but all the time he was waiting upon Bogan, for their blows must be struck together. On a certain date the bridges would be destroyed, the troops in Chulita be cut off from the border, and then Fronteras would be stormed. So it had been planned by Colonel Gambolier, who had studied military strategy at St. Cyr. Fronteras must be isolated and then attacked in force, and then, presto, Montaña would have him a capital. Yes, more than a capital, a port of entry through which to import ammunition and arms. And then the United States, of course, would recognize him as a belligerent.

Such was the dream of the visionary Montaña, but the whole fair structure, for the time, at least, was based upon the promise of one man—the red-headed Beanie Bogan, that devil of fighting energy who had promised to destroy the railroad, burn the trestles, and dynamite the high bridges, and cut off all trains for two weeks. If for fourteen days no troops came by train, that was to be proof that Beanie Bogan had performed his contract, and he was to receive his ten thousand dollars. That was the American of it, of course, that

harsh insistence upon payment, that cold materialism in the face of death. But the service was worth the price.

Bogan came on the third evening, leading a pack animal behind him loaded down with mysterious stores, and, while he conferred with Montaña and Gambolier, Whittle guarded the shrouded packs. There was dynamite in those kyacks, enough to tear down mountains and snuff out the lives of many men; and nitroglycerin, packed in cans and bedded in sawdust; and, besides the pick of the insurrecto horses, two rifles and automatic pistols. A powerful field glass was slung on Bogan's saddle, and he had provisions and huge canteens; everything was provided for that forethought could devise, yet to Whittle the journey meant only death. Bogan planned to escape, and Whittle hoped that he might, but for himself oblivion was enough. Life held nothing for him now but a great world weariness, a surging and hopeless despair, and he welcomed the thought of the end.

To avoid curious eyes, they set out at night and rode southeast by the stars, Bogan leading the way with the pack horse behind him, and Whittle bringing up the rear. They rode on slowly, stopping often to rest while Beanie studied out the landmarks ahead, and at dawn they watered their horses at a hidden spring, and turned up a rocky cañon. The trail was not unknown to Beanie Bogan, for he had been campaigning with Montaña for months, and shortly after daylight he reached a high, sheltered nook where the grass grew rank between the rocks. All day they lay, sleeping and waking, Whittle guarding the horses, while Beanie watched the railroad through his glasses, and at night they rode on toward the south.

From bare, rocky mountains they descended to a plain swept clean by a cold, ceaseless wind, and as day dawned again they were hiding in the sand hills, almost within sound of the trains. Whittle was worn with hard riding and the buffet of the winds, but for hours Bogan lay behind a bush and studied

the bridges through his glass. His eyes were bloodshot from night watching and lack of sleep, but back in their depths the imps of destructiveness were dancing with joy at his luck. The track was lifeless, few trains came and went, and about the bridges the dawdling guards made no pretense of patrolling their posts.

Yet, for all that, the restless Bogan was not satisfied, and as night came on he saddled again and pushed on farther to the south. Fronteras and the border, with its projecting Sierras, was far behind them now, and they rode across bare, level plains. The water lay in pools and broad, shallow lakes, surrounded by snowy crystals of alkali and the bone-dry carcasses of cows; but as morning approached they came once more to sand hills and found shelter by a tank in a draw. The day was cold and raw, with a bitter wind that lashed up the dirt in clouds, but as evening came on Bogan returned from his watching with his burned lips drawn back in a grin.

"Fine and dandy!" he observed, opening up the pack and bringing out a gunny sack of giant powder. "The fireworks begin to-night. There's a big, concrete bridge across the arroyo up above here that it will take 'em a month to rebuild, and that ain't all I've got framed up for 'em, either." He laid out the sticks of sixty-per-cent dynamite and carefully bored holes in their ends, then he bit down a cap on the end of a length of fuse, and thrust it firmly into a stick. "About four of these," he said, "if I can drill a hole—or more if they ain't confined—and the whole pier is gone up, flooey! But if they jump us too quick it's up to you to make a fight while I plant a little can of this."

He held up a can of nitroglycerin, and his eyes glittered with a wild, fighting light.

"Now here's the dope," he went on confidently; "here's the way I figure to win. Montaña has agreed to surround Fronteras to-night, and that will protect us from cavalry from the north. We'll blow up this bridge, and that'll

stop the troop trains, if they send any up from the south. That leaves us safe and we can ride back along the track and see how many trestles we can burn. But if you've got any word to send to that girl—well, of course, accidents will happen."

"What girl?" demanded Whittle, as Beanie looked at him fixedly, and Bogan indulged in a smile.

"Oh, I'm hep," he said, "and I don't blame you a bit; I saw her when I went to Del Norte. She asked all about you, but before I could put her wise a big, fat slob that acted like her husband came up and shooed me off. Of course," he went on, as Whittle said nothing, "it don't make no difference to me, but if you want to write some letter, I'll take it with me, and then, if anything happens to you, I'll give it to her."

"No, never mind," answered Whittle, and as he fell into a brooding silence Bogan began to sing at his work:

"If you'll listen I'll sing you a sweet little song,

Of a flower that's now drooped and dead;
Yet dearer to me, yes, than all its mates,
Though each holds aloft its proud head."

He glanced up slyly, and crooned on again, his voice more provocative than ever:

"'Twas given to me by a girl that I know,
Since we met, faith, I've known no repose.
She's dearer to me than the world's brightest star,
And I call her my Wild Irish Rose."

He paused to tie together four sticks of dynamite and wrap them up neatly with the fuse, and then, like an Indian who chants his death song, he burst into the high refrain:

"My Wild Irish Rose,
The sweetest flower that grows;
You may search everywhere,
But none can compare
With my Wild I-Irish Rose.
My Wi-ild Irish Rose,
The dearest flower that grows,
And some day for my sake
She may let me take,
The bloom from my Wild I-Irish Rose."

He laid out a hammer and three short drills and bound them up tightly with a sack, and then went back to his song.

Whittle stirred uneasily, then moved away, and at last he broke his silence.

"Say, sing something else," he suggested impatiently, and Bogan's eyes lit up with deviltry.

"All right," he said, and pulled down his lip as he essayed a song of the bogs:

"O-oh, pigeon-toed Nora O'Grady

I kissed her and called her me darlint.

O-oh, crooked-legged, pigeon-toed Nora O'Grady,

I kissed her and called her me darlint.

O-oh, knock-kneed, crooked-legged—"

"Oh, shut up!" burst out Whittle in a rage, and Bogan looked up with a grin.

"Sure, you're hard to suit," he observed. "But the divvle gets into me just before a fight, and I can think of nothing but the girls. It's me wild Irish blood; I'm hell for the women, and they's no denying the fact. Many's the fine girl I've known in the old country and here, and they's few of 'em that told me no. I'm a fighting fool, fearing neither man, God, nor devil, and in love I've a way of my own. You're a fine-looking boy, with all that black hair and the soft, sad look in your eye, but I can tell you something about women. No matter who they are—if it's fine lady, like her, or one of the other kind—they love a bold, masterful man. Take shame to you now for wanting to die, and listen to a word of advice."

"I don't want any advice," answered Whittle sullenly, "and we'll talk about anything but her. You don't understand, that's all."

"Oh, I don't, eh?" jeered Bogan, rising up to look about, and then ducking down out of the wind. "Well, it's plain as the nose on your face. The lady—God bless her!—thinks more of your little finger than she does for the whole carcass of her man, and if you would meet her halfway, as she undoubtedly wishes, you could have her for saying the word. And as for *him*, the big slob, just give me the tip and I'll lay 'im on a slab in jig time. If it wasn't that I was caught on the streets of Del Norte with my hands

full of dynamite and worse, I'd have pasted him in the jaw with all the pleasure of life, the dirty, insulting hound! You're my pardner now, Whittle—ever since I lost Buck O'Donnell I've been looking around for a pal—and I tell you what I'll do. You forget this idee that you want to get killed and play the game out to win, and if we get back alive I'll attend to that husband and you'll be happy as a lark—eh, boy?"

He slapped Whittle on the leg, and laughed encouragingly, but Whittle drew away in horror.

"No, you don't understand," he repeated dully. "There's nothing for me to do but die."

"Well, then, tell me about it," urged Bogan. "Sure, what's the difference when you'll be dead in a few hours or less? If you don't ride like hell, they'll pick you up by dawn, and there's no mercy for prisoners like us. We're bridge burners, see? We're the kind of boys that they stand up against a mud wall; so tell me, and get it off your chest."

"No, just leave me alone," implored Whittle wearily. "I've thought it all out, and I know best."

"You may, and you may not," answered Beanie somberly, "but she's sure a fine-looking woman. A man might fall in love with a woman like that, but it never happened to me. There was one girl, though—little Molly McQuade—that I've remembered for many a year. She gave me one kiss, and the next I heard of her she was Sister Theresa in a convent. She loved me different from all the others, but I was wild and full of devilment, and she never would kiss me again. Then I went to Cuba, in the Spanish-American, and when I come back she was gone. This lady of yours, if you don't mind me saying it, has the same devout look in her eyes."

"Ah, yes, she has," broke out Whittle fervently, his eyes staring fixedly at space, "and that's what you can't understand. She's different from other women. She's like a nun, she holds her vow above everything, and that's why she married—him. And if he

should die through me—if you should kill him—she would never see me again. She has high ideals that would make it impossible. Her world is not ordered like ours; you would only be making matters worse.”

“Yes, but allowing for accidents,” persisted Bogan doggedly; “this man Pedley was trying to get you. Didn’t he send that bum sleuth down to Rico’s to catch you, and probably dump you into the river? Suppose something should happen to *him* now!”

“Ah—no!” cried Whittle. “That would be worse than ever, because then I would lose her—regard.”

“Regard nothing!” burst out Bogan. “She’s wild for love of you, and there’s something she wants you to know. But you, like a fool, are trying to get killed without even awaiting her pleasure.”

“No, I came too late,” answered Whittle desperately. “I have no rights in the case. She was pledged to him before I first met her, and that was just by accident. I’m only a jeweler, and when she entered our workshop she didn’t even notice who I was. I was just a workman in the little back shop where her wedding silver was being engraved, but, oh, I remembered her! I could think of nothing else, and at night, after work, I waited outside her house. But I came too late, and my case was hopeless; such women must marry within their class.”

He paused, and Bogan remained craftily silent for fear he might miss the rest.

“Yes, I watched,” Whittle went on at last, “and one evening I saw her come out. She carried a bag and slipped out secretly, but I followed her down to the station. When she boarded the train I stepped on, too, and when she got off I followed. It was down at the seashore, where they had their summer home, and the next morning she came down to the beach to bathe. I was there, but she did not observe me, and from the troubled look in her eyes it came over me that she was unhappy. She swam straight out through the breakers, as if she were never coming back, and my heart leaped into my

throat. I rushed up to the bathhouse and hired a bathing suit, and started out through the surf, but by that time she had started to come back. Then I felt all at once that I had no right to follow her, and I kept away, out of her sight. I was nothing to her—she did not even know me—yet something still impelled me to watch over her, and the next day she went out even farther.”

Bogan waited unblinking as Whittle fell into a reverie, and at last he went on with his story:

“Then came a day when the currents were treacherous, and the bathers all kept close to the rope, but she swam out beyond the float. I swam out behind her, and lay watching from the raft, and then, very suddenly, a powerful current set in, and all the bathers were caught. They screamed and struggled, for it swept them up the coast like a river, but I could think of nothing but her. So I left them for the lifeguards and fought my way out to sea, where I could see the blue of her cap. It was a long way to go, but I reached her, and at last I gave her my hand. We were far out to sea, but I was still fresh and strong, and she had not yielded to fright. She was tired, that was all, from being out so long and from struggling against the tide, and I supported her with one hand like a child. So I kept her afloat until she gained back her strength, and at last we swam back to a rock.

“She did not know who I was, she had not seen me watching her, and yet somehow she seemed to know me. And when we had landed and huddled down in a cave to escape the wind and cold we talked like the greatest of friends. She did not thank me for what I had done, but we spoke of what life means, and death; and as we sat there together, clinging closely for warmth, I felt that in some way she was mine. I felt somehow that I had always known her and always loved her, too, but I dared not tell her so. In my bathing suit I was just a man, and she was just a woman, and we forgot all about the world. Then suddenly a boat appeared, and there was no time, of course, to

say what I had longed to say. She gave me her hand, and asked me to call on her, but the doctors hurried her away, and I never saw her again except once."

"Why not?" demanded Beanie after a brief, startled silence. "Didn't she tell you where to go?"

"Yes, but when I called, her mother sent me away. I called three times, and then her father—they thought I wanted her money."

"Oh, cripes!" burst out Beanie in an anguish of exasperation. "Did you let 'em get rid of you like that? Oh, gee, boy! You'll never get by. And you let that big slob step in and cop her! My God, you deserve to die!"

"Yes, I deserve to die!" repeated Whittle bitterly, and buried his face in his hands.

"Ahr, crying!" taunted Bogan. "When did that ever buy you anything? Here, wake up! Do you know what you are? You're a plain, danged fool; but listen to me, pardner, the cards ain't all out of the box. She's come down here to find you—what d'you want more than that? Ain't she trying to make it all up? Well, then, buckle on these guns and bring along that dynamite, and we'll shoot our way back to the line. And then—" He paused and a long, ugly line began to form at the corners of his mouth. "Well, never mind," he said, "but I'd hate to be Mister Pedley."

CHAPTER VI.

THE BRIDGE BURNERS.

As the sun went down, a red ball in the dust storm, Beanie Bogan became restless and distraught. He brought up the horses and fed them some grain that he had treasured in his pack for this night; he sorted his dynamite and wrapped it up carefully where it would be protected from any chance shock, and as the darkness came on he tied it behind his saddle and gave the rest of the burden to Whittle. Then he paced up and down before the guttering fire, twitching his lips and cursing to himself. It was the panic that

comes to the bravest of soldiers when they wait for the hour of battle, and Whittle respected his mood.

He, too, felt sick and faint of heart at thought of the work before them, but he was reconciled to his fate. His calm was that of a condemned prisoner who has confessed and been shrived of his sins, and he steeled his nerves for the ordeal. When the moment came, whether in the thick of battle or at the end of a long pursuit, he prepared his soul to meet death bravely as a lover and a gentleman should. His fear was only of his own weakness of purpose, or that he would fail his partner in the pinch, for Beanie had tried to be his friend. What he suggested was impossible, his solution was crude, but even his offer to put Pedley on a slab must be regarded from his point of view.

The wind, which at sundown had lulled to a brief calm, sprang up suddenly with redoubled force, and as the first howling blast swooped over their shelter Beanie Bogan slapped his leg and leaped up.

"Good!" he said, and, making everything fast, he led the way down the gulch. For such work as his a raging blizzard was the best weather that could be desired, and at every buffet and slash of the sand storm he chuckled and muttered to himself. They turned up a cañon full of wreckage and old timbers, where some former bridge had been washed out, and at an angle in its course he reined in suddenly and pointed up the gorge. There it stood, dimly outlined against the sky, the towering steel bridge they were to dynamite. Two spidery arches rose up from the stream bed, now dry and waterless from the drought, and gray and shadowy in the gloom of the cañon bulked the concrete piers that supported them.

"You hold the horses," directed Bogan, and, with his pistol at a ready, he glided off up the ravine. He came back, running, shaking a hand as if it hurt, and swung up onto his horse.

"I slugged the sentry," he muttered

to Whittle, and rode on up to the bridge.

In the storm and darkness it loomed black above them, and as he led their mounts into its shadow, Whittle stumbled upon the body of a man. He was only a swarthy peon soldier, sprawled grotesquely where Beanie's fist had struck him senseless, and Bogan snaked him impatiently aside. Then, while Whittle held the horses and kept watch against surprise, he went swiftly about his task. By the side of the pier he laid out his drills, and soon, above the rush of the wind, there rose the measured strokes of his hammer. His back rose and fell in a ceaseless rhythm as he struck by guess in the dark, and then, snatching hastily at his bundle of dynamite, he thrust the sticks into the hole. He laid on more powder, mixing some mud from his canteen water and plastering it over the charge, but as he drew out the fuse and split it for lighting he paused and looked about.

"Here," he said, rising abruptly from his place and laying a short length of fuse in Whittle's hand, "that's your torch; light it first, and if anything happens touch off the fuse and beat it down the gulch."

He caught up his drills, and moved away through the shadows, and soon from the other bridge base Whittle heard the clink of his hammer. It sounded loud, very loud, and it dragged on endlessly, and then, from the bridge above them, a man's voice shouted out. A silence fell, and still another voice took up the cry; the sentinels were calling the hour.

"*La-o-ocha!*" droned Bogan in the person of the missing guard. "*Sentinel, alerta!*" And as no corporal of the guard appeared he went boldly on with his work. Hours passed, or so it seemed, though no hours were called, and at last, with his tools in a sack, Beanie came sneaking back to the horses.

"All right now," he said. "I got her drilled deep and loaded to the muzzle with straight nitro. You light yours first, and when you see mine flash up

mount your horse and drift down the gulch. Are you ready?"

"Yes—no!" answered Whittle. "What about this sentinel? We can't leave him here to be killed!"

"Huh—one Mexican, more or less," grunted Bogan contemptuously, but after a moment's thought he stooped and picked the man up. "Hold that pack horse," he muttered. "but whatever happens don't forget to light your fuse." There was a scuffle as he heaved up the battered Mexican and the pack horse snorted and shied. "Let 'im go!" commanded Bogan abruptly, dropping the man as a sentinel challenged from above. "Ah, *vaye se!*" he returned in the person of the felled sentry, and added an obscene epithet to make the verisimilitude complete. Then he jugged Whittle with his elbow, and, swift as a weasel, slipped across to fire his hole. On the abutment above them the sentry stood watching, still doubtful as to what was going on, and Whittle knelt down by his fuse. In the shelter of his hat he struck a match and touched it quickly to his torch. A flame spouted out, and, at a yell from above, he applied it swiftly to the fuse. There was a flare of light, the horses flew back, and, as he turned and clutched at the lariat, the fuse, like a writhing serpent, began to sputter toward its charge.

"Come on!" hissed Bogan, almost knocking him over as he rushed up and grabbed his mount, and then the sentry opened fire. Instantly all was confusion, with horses struggling and Beanie cursing like mad, until out of the thick of it he dashed down the cañon, with the pack animal trailing behind. Whittle's horse broke to follow, he missed catching his stirrup, and then he felt his foot on the sentry. He was lying helpless where Bogan had flung him—but should they leave him there to die? Whittle stooped down swiftly and caught him in his arms, and, as his horse raced away down the gulch, he followed on foot with the Mexican across his shoulder. In that moment of decision he had chosen to save the sentinel, but as he staggered around the

point he met Beanie coming back with his mount.

"Put down that man!" he commanded hoarsely, and flung the Mexican into the brush. "He's safe," he cursed, "a danged sight safer than you are. Now git on your horse and ride!"

Whittle rode, and as they whirled on down the tortuous cañon their horses lunged at a thunderous shock. The sky flashed up yellow, and as the explosion rent the air the earth rocked with a second great blast.

"Wait! Listen!" exclaimed Bogan, reining his horse in cruelly, and at the crash of falling girders he laughed. "She's down!" he exulted. "The danged, chili-eating greasers—they won't mend that bridge in a month. Now up the track we go, halfway to Fronteras, and burn every trestle we come across."

He let out his horse, and set off at a gallop, with Whittle following close at his heels. They cleared the cañon, and swung sharply to the north, whirling out across the plains with the wind hurrying them on from behind. It seemed to Whittle as if they traveled on the storm, with the yuccas slipping by like ghosts, and then abruptly Bogan reined his horse to the east and rode up a sheltered gulch.

"Here's a trestle," he said, staring intently through the darkness, and after a moment, with a can of coal oil, he ventured up to the bridge. A half an hour later, as they looked behind them, they could see a tongue of flame against the sky. It was the sign of the bridge burner, making evident to every one their handiwork and where they were; yet, despite the danger, Beanie galloped forward recklessly and set fire to bridge after bridge. A very devil of destruction seemed to take possession of him, whirling him on through the teeth of the storm, and when at a cañon bridge the startled sentries fired at him, he charged with a yell that routed them. Straight along the track, with a great glare behind him, he spurred on till his horse hung its head, and then reluctantly he turned off into

the sand hills to seek a safe hiding place from pursuit.

They were far to the north of that low range of mountains at whose base they had blown up the bridge, yet still far south of the high, jagged Sierras that offered Montaña's army its retreat. The country was level, with rolling sand hills and broad, hard-packed alkali flats, and before the sun rose and set on their burned bridges there would be vengeful Reyistas in pursuit. With their horses dead beat Beanie plowed on at a walk, following a cow trail that led to a sunken gulch where a pool of bitter water lay cupped. They rested a while, rubbing down their spent animals, and once more Beanie mounted and spurred on. For three careful nights he had traveled by some instinct that took him to cover at dawn, but now he was at fault, and in the wind and darkness they drifted like lost cattle before a storm.

At the first flush of daylight, Beanie rode for the summit of a knoll, but the false dawn faded, and the plain was obscured again before they could look it out. Then the gray dawn followed, creeping coldly from the east, where their ravished railroad lay, and as the darkness passed suddenly Bogan ripped out an oath and jerked his wearied horses out of sight.

"Holy, jumping Jehu!" he sputtered, snatching his field glasses out of the case, and, with Whittle beside him, he crept back to the summit and looked down the other side. Not a mile away lay the railroad itself, its poles rising like sentinels against the dawn, and along the track a long train of cattle cars was giving out horses and men. It was a squadron of cavalry, and a yell from the scouts showed that already their presence was known.

"It's a troop train from Fronteras," burst out Beanie in a panic. "Where in Hades is that army of Montaña's? Here I do my part, and cut off Chulita, and they let the whole garrison come down on me! So help me, if I get out of this alive, I'll never trust a Mexican again."

A bugle sounded, but he turned his

back on them to search out the country behind.

"No use," he said. "Our horses are dead. We could never make a ride to those hills."

"Then what can we do?" asked Whittle at last, as Beanie focused his glasses on the flat plains, and Bogan glared at him with bloodshot, angry eyes.

"We can get into that sink hole," he said, pointing at a gash on the flat, "and try to stand 'em off."

He ran back to his horse, and, shaking him up with lash and spurs, rushed him off violently down the slope, and as Whittle followed he saw the *Reyista* scouts riding hard to cut them off. They were betrayed, then, by *Montaño* and the military *Gambolier*, after all their solemn assurances. The appointed day had come, and they had dynamited the bridges, but *Montaño* had not surrounded *Fronteras*. He had waited, like a Mexican, and now the Federal cavalry had been rushed down to wipe them out. Perchance he was still in camp with his dilatory leaders or gazing at *Fronteras* from afar, or perhaps *Gambolier*, for military reasons, had purposely left the railroad uncut. For, to catch two bridge burners, the commander at *Fronteras* had sent down over two hundred men, and, with them out of town, it would be so much the easier to beat down the garrison that was left. There was some reason, of course, but as Whittle fled before the scouts he felt again the injustice of life. He was a pawn in the game, a victim in every circumstance, and now, after losing his beloved to *Pedley*, he was offered as a sacrifice to *Montaño*. Yet if that was his doom, he could at least sell his life dearly as a last, futile protest against his fate.

The sink hole they rode for was a mere gash in the broad flat, where the baked earth had checked like a crack in an apple and revealed the brackish water beneath. To drink at this hole the wild range cattle had worn trails that led like winding streamers across the plain, and at the tank itself they had plowed great trenches down the bank to the muddied pool. As he

plunged down the slope, with the bullets flying about him, Whittle found *Bogan* all unsaddled and his horses thrown and tied.

"Here, fill them with dirt," he said, throwing Whittle some empty gunny sacks, and then, with his eyes on the circling scouts, he put his shoulder against Whittle's horse and threw him, with one heave, on his side. A bugle blew the charge, and on the far line of sand hills a troop of flying cavalry appeared, but at a shot from Beanie they wheeled abruptly and disappeared over the summit of the hill. Once more the bugle blew, and, deployed now as skirmishers, the well-trained troopers dashed forth. Down the slope they came in a cloud of dust, with guidons flying at left and right, and behind his sandbags Beanie eyed them grimly as he talked from the corner of his mouth.

"Well, here they come," he said. "Get your gun and come over here. They may get away with it, but I'm going to knock down them guidons the first two shots I unhook. I'm an expert rifleman, if you know what that means, the highest grade of sharpshooter there is. I can hit 'em in the head as far as I can see 'em; that's why they call me Beanie Bogan. I got that in the Islands, shooting googoes out of palm trees, but I didn't have this danged wind to fight. Now all you do is load—don't you fire a shot—just pass me your rifle and refill the magazine of mine. By grab, we may croak, but before we do it I'll make Mexican the court language of hell!"

He set his jaw, and drew a bead on the sergeant who was galloping with the guidon to the right. Twice he caught his breath, but the distance was too great; he wanted the shot to count. In a great semicircle the flying squadron came charging down on their hole, and then Beanie's gun spoke out. Horse and man went down, and the guidon with them, and Bogan jerked viciously at his lever. Then his gun barrel swung swiftly to the other guide, and he fired three shots against the wind. The first two missed, but as the third rang out the guidon bearer tum-

bled to the ground. *Bang! bang!* rattled the rifle, and as horses and men went down Bogan reached over and snatched the loaded gun. Whittle ejected the last empty, and stuffed the magazine with cartridges, and once more Bogan grabbed the gun. The tattoo of his gunfire was timed now to a rhythm, fast at first, but lagging to slow shots, and as it ceased abruptly Whittle looked over the edge, while Bogan let out a yell. Where the trim columns had been, each trooper in his place, galloping confidently down to surround them, there was now a rout

of disorganized horsemen, turned back by the fire of one man.

"Here's for luck!" Bogan exulted, and, aiming long, he knocked a last trooper from his saddle. They waited then, and as the squadron disappeared Bogan rose up and said:

"Well, that'll hold 'em till sundown, and then you'll have your wish."

"What wish?" asked Whittle, and Bogan smiled grimly as he breathed through the barrel of his rifle.

"Why," he said, "they'll sneak up and pot us—a Mex can shoot as good as I can after dark."

TO BE CONTINUED IN THE APRIL 20TH POPULAR.

THE VICE PRESIDENT MAKES HIS BOW

WHEN Thomas W. Lawson, the financier, first was testifying before the House committee on rules in regard to his charges that there had been advance information—a "leak"—sent forward to Wall Street regarding the issuance of a "peace" note by the president to warring powers, he refused to give the names of men who he said he knew had profited from the leak.

He explained that, if he told the names, he would have to go even higher than anybody had done—and already the rumor of a cabinet officer's being mixed up in the affair had been carried abroad.

"He can't mean the president himself," commented a member of the committee on rules. "That would be preposterous!"

"Perhaps," volunteered a newspaper correspondent, "he has had an inspiration and at last has invented something for our vice presidents to do—to get themselves accused of something whenever an official scandal is rumored."

HOLMAN DAY'S new novel, which will be printed complete in the April 20th POPULAR, is along the line of preparedness, and illustrates what it means to be a good citizen. There is no war in this story, but he is a stolid reader who fails to be stirred by the patriotism of this good American who drills a squad of "rough-necks" and makes them the equal of the professional soldiers.

Coals of Fire

By Albert Payson Terhune

Author of "The Hell Person," "The Devil Cart," Etc.

Kirby, the American in the Land of Moab, stumbles on a coal mine—the only one in Syria. A money-making discovery, but it took the genius of the Coney-Island-trained Najib to market it properly

FURTHERMORE, howaji," said Najib, breaking the short silence, "I shall have still two more sweet reasons for rejoicing myself when I thus become such a rich man of wealth: I will not need ever to tell another lie—except for my own glad pleasure. And I will not need ever to be polite to any one again. Those be the two chief-fold blessings of wealth."

"And I'll be able to get clear of this God-forsaken hole," mused Kirby, speaking rather to himself than to his Syrian henchman; "to turn my back on these everlasting, dreary pink-and-brown mountains, and go to God's country again. To a place where men shave every day and where they can wear linen collars and use linen napkins and linen tablecloths; and where a bath isn't considered a sign of lunacy, and where cigars have tobacco in them, and all the food isn't drenched in oil or slimy with barley sugar! Lord! I'm going to spend one solid week, standing at Broadway and Forty-second Street and just staring at the crowds. And then I'll go twice to every show in town. And after each show I'll eat a welsh rabbit. And I'll drink beer that doesn't cost eighty cents per lukewarm glass, too. And water with ice in it. Real ice. I wonder if ice cream and mince pie and waffles are still made over there. I'm going home, and I——"

"Also and likewise, howaji," chimed in Najib, "I, too, shall go me to my home. Back to Damas-es-Schem. And

I shall purchase me a house in the Medan. A house with a fountain sizzling dreamfully in its courtyard and with two orange trees on its brink. Also, I shall send much money to Beirut, and I shall buy chairs of luscious red plush, that rock themselves to and fro. And a music box and—a woolen rug of bright colors and a lovesome gray statue I once beheld there, sculptured by a Feringi person who named himself 'Group.' His first name, I remember me, called itself 'Rogers.' These and much other fair and costly things I shall buy me for my great new house. Furthermore, I shall marry me a beauteous and virtuous wife or so. And daily, for my dinner, I shall eat——"

"To see the electric signs all flaring along Broadway again!" sighed Kirby happily. "To smell the gasoline reek and hear the roar of Times Square and be jostled by white people and jammed in a rush-hour subway train and bullied by traffic cops and sleep on a bed with springs in it——"

"Perhaps, howaji," pursued Najib, "I, too, may one day come to America again, to be-visit you in your palace and to gaze in pleasure upon your hundred stalwart sons; and to go me once more to Coney's Island where I was once so mirthsome. And then——"

The fat little Syrian caught himself up with a gasp.

"Inshallah!" he said rapidly, three times over, "*Inshallah!* INSHALLAH! We be men of a folly and a rashness, howaji; to bespeak ourselves thus of

what we shall do with our tremense wealth, without saying ever—*Inshallah!* (God willing!) It is a sin—a sin of presumptiveness—as all folk know—to say what we shall do, and not also and likewise say '*Inshallah.*' It is displeasureful of the Most High to hark to such braggings. Wherefore, howaji, I say again, '*Inshallah,* we shall besport ourselves thus and so with this decent fortune of money that Allah has endowed on us.' Say '*Inshallah,*' likewise, howaji, I enseech you."

"God willing!" muttered Kirby absently, his thoughts racing.

"It is of a wisdom to say so," approved Najib, "and of a grievesome foolishness to not. Do you not remember you, howaji, the tale of the First Lion? You do. So I will relate you it: The lion was an-hungered. He killed a horse, and he said: '*Inshallah,* I will throw this delicious horse over my shoulder and carry it to my den.' And he likewise did so. Next, howaji, this pious lion smote an oxen and slew it until it died. And he said: '*Inshallah,* I will also throw this poor oxen over my shoulder and carry it to my den.' And it was so.

"On a day of greater lateness, howaji," continued Najib, with sudden impressiveness, "this lion bit off the head of a sheep, so that the sheep perished. And he said: 'I will throw this revered sheep over my shoulder.' Being in haste and likewise hurryful, you see, howaji, this blasphemous and ignoranceful lion now forgot to say '*Inshallah.*' And when he tried to be-throw the sheep over his shoulder, the Hand of Allah the Compassionate rested upon that unworthy sheep. And the lion could not lift it to his shoulder. So he had to bedrag it sadly along the ground to his cave. And since that iniquitous day, howaji, a lion carries away horses and oxes on his shoulder. But a sheep he bedrags along the ground. The tale is of a truth, howaji; of a very solemn truth. I know, because it was betold to me by my own grandsire—on whom be the joys of *es Semme!* And now, howaji, I have thought of one more-yet grand thing

which—*Inshallah!*—I shall enpurchase with my fortune. It is——"

"We're a pair of wall-eyed idiots, you and I, Najib!" laughed Kirby, coming all at once out of his reverie; and shaking himself impatiently, as if to scare the glamour mists from his brain. "We're gabbling, here, like two kindergarten kids about a fortune we haven't even got, and may never get! We——"

"But, howaji!" shrilly protested Najib, "we *have* the fortune. We possession it. It is ours by law. We have bought it."

"And we don't even know what we've bought," returned Kirby. "We can only guess. Until Brereton reports on the stuff, we don't at all know where we stand. So let's try to brace ourselves for disappointment, instead of building air castles. The tumble won't be so far."

"Air castles are as costless to build as air dungeons, howaji," philosophized Najib, "and they are greatly pleasanter to dwell in."

"If that snail-legged muleteer had come straight back from Jerusalem as soon as the Austrian-Lloyd mail boat was in," said Kirby, "we wouldn't need to dwell in either. He ought to have been back last night, at latest. I suppose he is loafing in some Jerusalem coffee shop, guzzling mastic and baklawa, and thinking up a plausible lie for me about the boat being late."

"It is the way of sinful and dull-headed muleteer folk," scornfully commented Najib—albeit with guilty memories of his own coffee-shop delays, during missions to Jerusalem. "I shall bespeak him fiercely about it when he returns back."

"That won't bring us Brereton's report any quicker," grumbled Kirby. "I asked Brereton to put through the test with a rush for old friendship's sake. And I know he'll do it. His report must have gotten to Jaffa by last week's mail boat from Constantinople. Well, there's no use of our scratching our nerves to shreds by fidgiting. Only, I wish I had sent *you* to Jerusalem for the mail instead of a lazy muleteer."

"Of an assuredly, howaji," beamed Najib, pleased with the implied compliment. "For is there not an American proverb that says itself, 'The more haste, the more speed?' Or, is it, 'Bad news travels fastest when it travels alone?'"

"Najib," said Kirby, as he turned back to his work, "if you aren't very careful, one of these days you'll quote a proverb correctly. And when you do, I'm going to discharge you. For I'll know some shock has driven you sane."

Logan Kirby was manager and Syrian representative of the Cabell Smelting Company's little antimony mine, high among the Mountains of Moab, east of the Jordan. There he worked the company's rich little property; impeded by the laziness of some thirty native laborers; further impeded by antics of the dozen Turkish soldiers assigned as guards for the mine; and impeded most of all by the meddling and the occasional visits of Naami Pasha, governor of the region, and, perhaps, the most consummate black-guard unhung.

Kirby's one comrade and loyal follower, in all Syria, was his native mine superintendent, Najib; an obese and undersized Damascene. Najib had once spent two heavenly years at Coney Island, as a member of the All Nations Show. During that blissful sojourn, he had picked up a language which he mistook for English, and of which he was so inordinately proud that he would converse with the manager in no other tongue.

A month or two earlier, Logan Kirby had gone for a stroll through the hill country, back of the mine; carrying along his shotgun, in the hope of knocking over a bird or a coney to vary the sickening monotony of camp fare. Najib had pattered along with him, lugging the American's lunch packet.

As he sat resting at midday, in a wadi, between two steep-pitched ridges, Kirby had kicked idly, with the heel of his thick tramping boot, at a

blackish outcropping of rock in front of him. The sunlight had struck athwart a bit of the rock, just as it crumbled under his kick.

Mildly interested, now, Kirby had scraped up a handful of the black stuff and looked at it more closely. For a long time he had studied it; afterward going carefully over the ground at various spots where the stratum of blackish mineral cropped out of the yellow earth.

And, momentarily, his first careless interest deepened more and more into excitement—into the queer, illogical madness that stirs a lucky treasure seeker.

For three months after his graduation from the Columbia School of Mines, twelve years earlier, Kirby had held down an unimportant "dog job" in the Pennsylvania coal fields. Since then, coal had not figured at all in his several lines of work. Yet, unless he were grossly mistaken, this blackish and smudgy substance he had now happened upon was coal—bituminous coal!

The outcroppings alone showed the coal field to be several acres in extent. The "seam" could not possibly be too shallow for profit, with so large and so varied a surface. Yes, he had stumbled on coal. In other words, on a fortune of incalculable value. The more minutely he studied the ground's formation and the longer he pored over the specimens he dug up, the more calmly certain he became.

Coal, to the best of his knowledge, had never been found in Syria, even in ancient days. Certainly, not in the Land of Moab. But, for that matter—until ten years earlier—neither had antimony. Yet now the little antimony mine was a miniature Eldorado.

How much more so would be this coal field—in an all-but-treeless country where fuel is so scarce that industries lie dormant and houses are heated by thorn-bush fires and by supercostly imported coke and by homemade expedients that turn a foreigner's stomach!

It would be a godsend for Syria, a bonanza for the discoverer. It meant

the revolution of business in the near East.

Then, forcing back the wild elation that set his steady nerves aquiver, Kirby had begun to do some careful thinking.

In Syria, it is not wholly safe to discover wealth. The government claims fifty per cent of all treasure-trove. And lucky is the finder who can keep for himself a portion of the remaining fifty per cent. There are divers ingenious ways—taxes, imposts, pashalic, baksheesh, et cetera—of luring it from his pockets.

Kirby knew that by buying the land himself—it lay fully a mile distant from the boundaries of the Cabell property—he could keep his lawful fifty per cent, through the aid of the United States minister at Constantinople and by virtue of his own position as an American citizen with influential friends.

On the other hand, should he apply, in person, for the purchase of a square mile of barren ground amid the Mountains of Moab, he would promptly find himself in the unlucky condition of a peddler who trundles a pushcart full of gold pieces through a slum crowd, with no policeman near.

The very fact of his trying to buy land in such a place would be proof positive to Naomi Pasha and to a horde of lesser Serail officials that he had found some sort of treasure there. Not only would his offer be refused; but, inside of a week, the place would be acrawl with experts hired by Naomi to locate the precious mineral.

Then Kirby had thought of Najib. The little Syrian could probably invest in a tract of mountain land—on the plea of raising vegetables, et cetera, for sale at the Cabell camp—without rousing any especial suspicion. After which, by private transfer, he could deed seventy-five per cent of the property back to Kirby, keeping a quarter interest in payment of his own services in the deal.

Kirby knew he could easily secure the plump Syrian's aid at a smaller price than a quarter share in the in-

vestment. But the man had served him long and faithfully. And, besides, he could trust no one else to carry the business through for him.

As a result, Najib had duly and thrilledly journeyed to Jerusalem; had there waded through the usual Oriental jungle of red tape; had risked his soul by a thousand lies to the right authorities; had doled out governmental baksheesh with a lavish yet prudent hand—and had at last become the titular owner of the patch of treasure land. All at a cost of one thousand two hundred and seventy-five dollars in American money, supplied from Kirby's slender stock of savings.

The next step had been to send off a package of ore samples to Willard Brereton, a mineralogist of note, who had been Kirby's roommate in earlier days, and who was conducting some geological researches near Constantinople.

On Brereton's report, as Kirby told Najib ten times a day, hung the fate of the whole enterprise. Yet, in his own heart, the American had scant doubt as to the outcome. And he had already drawn up the needful partnership papers with Najib, carrying them in person to the United States consul at Jerusalem, to be viséd.

Then had begun the period of waiting—a period made well-nigh unbearable by Najib. The little Syrian no longer could do any steady work. He could not eat. He could not sleep. All he could do was to follow Kirby from spot to spot, from dawn to dark, prattling deliriously of the wealth that was to be theirs. At times, this ceaseless flow of optimism drove Kirby wild. At other times it served as a safety valve to his own taut nerves, and led him, involuntarily, to similar wealth dreams.

A nasty diversion had also eased the tension. Cholera had broken out in the mine, two days after the specimens were shipped to Brereton for analysis. Not an epidemic, but three light cases.

Yet it had been serious enough to keep Kirby busy, day and night, policing the camp, segregating the three pa-

tients, preventing the guards and the fellahin from bolting; nursing and dosing the sick and forcing them to stick to the rigid diet he prescribed.

The diet enforcement was the hardest part of the ordeal. For, as the three men grew better, they yearned hungrily for such dainties as stale cucumbers stuffed with moldy raisins, and for baklawa that was sodden with melted lard. Nor could he persuade them that such fare does not brighten a cholera victim's chances of recovery. And he had to use physical effort to prevent their friends from smuggling these delicacies into the hospital hut to them.

The strain of cholera fighting, the greater strain of suspense, and the remnants of a late attack of mountain fever, had combined to do queer things to Kirby's usually sturdy brain. He was aware of a constant battle against dizzy lassitude, of a new loathing for camp victuals, of a headachy feverishness, and, daily, it grew harder to fight off all this.

"Yes," resumed Najib, after trying vainly to master the gist of Kirby's comment on his perversion of American proverbs, "yes, howaji, that muleteer is a slothsome person. He 'beloafs himself upon the job,' as *you* would say it. He is too stuporful to know he bears a report in the mail bag that will make us both worth over than a trillion dollars or two. Since dawn I have watched the path from the wadi. But does my watching make him hasten himself, I inquire? And I answer you with tears that it does not."

Kirby turned to the deal table just within the tent door; a table whereon were arranged a dozen specimens of coal, varying from a fist-size lump to one of three pounds' weight.

"It's ugly stuff," he said, under his breath, passing his hand lovingly over the largest bit and noting the resultant smudge on his palm, "but it means the purchase of all the beautiful things on earth to me. It means freedom. It means home. It——"

"*Ohé!*" squealed Najib, in shrill falsetto Arabic, "*Ohé, Brother of Slugs and Worms!* Where have tarried the soles of your miserable and sprawling feet, that you are so late, O offspring of ten million mangy she-camels?"

As he howled this courteous salute, the Syrian sprang from the doorway and plunged down the wadi path toward a native muleteer who had just rounded the hill shoulder to westward and who was plodding in leisurely fashion up the slope toward the manager's tent.

Meeting the returned messenger halfway up the wadi side, and never once checking his own torrent of lurid native abuse, Najib snatched from the muleteer a nearly empty leathern mail sack, and bounded back with it toward Kirby.

The American had risen quickly and had started forward to receive the bag. But he paused, uncertainly, at the first step. The sudden motion had sent a hideous pang through his aching head. A wave of fire seared his whole body. Something with red-hot pincers seemed busily at work at his vitals.

Angrily, he shook off the pain and sick dizziness, and strode forward again. Taking the mail sack from Najib, he walked back with it to the tent, Najib eagerly pattering after. Inside the tent door, Kirby turned with a scowl—to see the muleteer standing at the entrance.

Now, except for Najib, no native was permitted to set foot in the manager's tent—a rule Kirby had framed not only for the sake of discipline, but because petty theft is one of the most brilliant accomplishments of the Syrian fellah. The muleteer stopped at the doorway, and raised his hand to breast and brow in salute.

"Well?" crossly demanded Kirby, in Arabic.

"Howaji," returned the muleteer, "the kavass of his excellency, Naami Pasha—on whom be the Ages of the Ages!—came to the khan where I lay, at Jerusalem, and bore me a message from the Saadat-el-Pasha to you."

"Naami Pasha sent me a message?"

asked Kirby, annoyed at the delay in getting at the mail bag's precious contents. "What is it?"

"That he will honor you with a visit," slowly answered the native, checking off on his stubbily grimy fingers the chief points of the mission; "that he will be here upon the second day, and with him his secretary and his man of law. That he yearns to gladden his eyes with the light of your countenance. That he also desires to see the bit of land Najib has bought. *Tamám!*"

The muleteer saluted again and withdrew.

"Catch the idea?" demanded Kirby, wheeling excitedly upon Najib as soon as they were alone. "The old weasel smells treasure. He has an inkling that something is afoot. And he is coming to spy out the land and try to get a share in the profits. That's Naami's pretty way. Well, let him come! He can't bamboozle or threaten me as he could a native. He'll not get a red cent's worth. Our title is clear!"

As he talked, Kirby was fumbling shakily at the mail bag's lock. Now he dumped out on the table a newspaper or two and several letters. Choosing from the heap a long envelope from Constantinople, he nervously ripped it open.

Out fell a letter, in longhand, and a typewritten sheet. Najib picked them up and handed them to his master.

"You look smitten and very horrible, howaji," commented the Syrian. "And your eyes twist. Perhaps you would enjoy me to read these to you? I am a man of much book wisdom. It would astonish and likewise pleasure you, to know how very few hours it betakes me to read a letter in English."

Kirby did not hear him. Laying aside the typed sheet for future perusal, he was unfolding the letter. Mechanically, he began to read it aloud; his throat sore, his eyes blurring:

DEAR OLD LOGAN: What has the Syrian heat done to your thinking apparatus? Or are you trying to be funny? I've taken it for granted that you haven't degenerated

into a humorist, and therefore that you are no worse than parietic. So I have made out the report you asked for on the specimens, and I inclose it.

If you have forgotten what little you ever knew about mineralogy—as the specimens seem to indicate—you may not be able to grasp the report's technicalities. That is why I am telling you, herewith, its general trend, in "words of one syllable."

My dear mental incompetent, your "coal mine" is a slate vein. No more, no less. Not even good slate, at that. For the *laminae* have decayed, so that it's nothing now but a friable mass of worthless mineral deposit.

"If it is fryable," suggested Najib hopefully, "perchance we could use it in frying our——"

* Kirby read on:

Your specimens are of fissile, argillaceous rock—a form of Jurassic limestone of the Tertiary Period, to put it still more simply—and, as the stuff has crumbled and otherwise disintegrated into the aforesaid friable mass, I should roughly estimate its cash value at about one-twelfth of a cent per billion tons.

This form of argillaceous rock is sometimes known as "fool's coal," just as iron pyrites is called "fool's gold." You are not the first man to make the same blunder about it. Not even the first mining engineer to mistake it so. But I had a better opinion of *your* sense. Of course, as you weren't able to make the regular tests, there may be some excuse. Yet——

The written words swam foolishly before Kirby's aching eyes. A babyish, impotent rage seized the American. Crushing the letter into a ball, he threw it into his wastebasket.

Then he became all at once aware that Najib was weeping loudly and bitterly.

"*Oäh!*" wailed the Syrian, his anguish for once driving him into Arabic speech, "*Oäh!* Happy was Najib, the son of Imbarak! Happy was he and beauteous to look upon! Tall and handsome as the date palm and wise beyond the sons of men. Yea, and rich was he, with the wealth of Suleiman and the hoard of Aleppo. And behold him, *now!* Stricken is he with poverty! And the dust of failure drifts thick across his brow! He——"

"For the Lord's sake, *shut up!*" roared the frantic Kirby, taking an

angry step toward the moaningly heart-broken little dirge singer.

He lurched in his stride and struck heavily against the table. The impact sent the largest lump of "fool's coal" toppling over upon the petroleum-lamp on the table's center. The thin glass reservoir of the lamp broke in three. The petroleum flooded the table, the porous black rock specimens sucking it up like so many sponges.

For an instant, Logan Kirby blinked stupidly at the nauseous wreckage. Then something snapped in his head. Looking down, he saw his hands were grasping the table edge. The position awoke a train of thought. He cleared his throat and began huskily:

"Mr. Toastmaster and gentlemen: I did not expect to be called upon, this evening. My best 'impromptu' speeches follow several hours of close preparation. So if I disappoint—if I disappoint——"

His audience did not seem to be listening. If only he could once make them laugh, he knew he could henceforth hold their attention and sway them to his will. So he tried to think of something funny to say.

"When I was in Syria," he mumbled oratorically, "before my lucky coal strike enabled me to come back to you, I had a native superintendent who used to amuse me by his quaint attempts at English. He once said to me—to me——"

No, they were not listening. They were all talking and singing and whistling and screaming and groaning and mewling and ringing church bells and beating bass drums—these thousands of diners he was trying to harangue. And, from behind, some of them were boring into his head with fifty molten-hot needles.

It was a cruel trick to play on an after-dinner speaker. Kirby was at first inclined to be angry at it. But presently he discovered that the banquet table had very naturally changed into a bed nearly a mile long. A soft, white bed.

And he was very sleepy. So, as the bed billowed slowly upward to meet

him, he cautiously waited until it reached the level of his chest and then tumbled over, asleep, on it.

And he slept a long, long while; sometimes dreamlessly, oftener haunted by nightmares and tiresome visions. Once he seemed to be shaking hands, very reluctantly, with Naami Pasha.

In due space, Logan Kirby awoke. He lay in his camp cot, in his own tent. Through the half-open flap, he could see the sun had crossed the meridian.

He lay in drowsy content for a few minutes, vaguely wondering how he had happened to take a nap in the middle of the day. Then a fly buzzed about his face. He lifted a hand to brush it away. His displeased surprise at the effort this simple gesture caused him was lost in far greater amaze, as his fingers brushed across his chin.

He distinctly remembered he had shaved that morning. Yet a quarter inch bristle of beard covered his lower face. Yes, and the hand on which his eyes now rested was not muscular and bronzed. It was a sickly gray-yellow of hue, and so fleshless that every bone showed distinct through the skin.

"I've—I've been sick," he told himself, with grave impressiveness. "Sick!"

His glance strayed to the table beside his cot—the table that he last remembered as littered with the specimens of "fool's gold" that were fast absorbing the spilled petroleum from the lamp.

On the table, now, was a brown ghoola of water. Beside the water bottle stood two vials from his own camp medicine chest. He read the labels, and he understood.

"Cholera!" he said aloud, his voice wabbly and hoarse. "That's it. Cholera. Bowled me over. Lucky that Najib had seen me doctor those three fellahin! Good little Najib! He's yanked me through."

He raised his voice and feebly called his henchman's name. There was no reply. The querulous crossness of convalescence began to stir within the invalid. He felt a twinge of self-pity. Here he was, stricken and helpless in a

far land! And his nurse did not even take the trouble to remain within call!

His peevishness redoubled a few minutes later, as he saw a horseman mount the steep path from the wadi to westward. The rider was Najib. He was clad in holiday attire. His pony was dust covered and weary. A led horse followed. Across the front of the pillowlike native saddle flopped the camp mail bag.

These signs could mean but one thing: Najib was returning from a journey to Jerusalem.

"He left me here—dying, perhaps!" reflected Kirby pathetically, "while he went gallivanting off for nearly a week on a pleasure jaunt! The measly little cur!"

In another minute, Najib entered the tent. At sight of Kirby's sanely open, if glowering, eyes, the Syrian's swarthy face broke into one huge grin of delight.

"Praise be to Allah the Compassionate, and to His Prophet, and to Ali the Lion of Allah, and to the Seven Khalifs!" he chanted. "You live, howaji! You *live!*"

"Small thanks to you!" snarled the cranky convalescent. "You left me here to live or die, while you chased off to——"

"No, howaji," gently corrected Najib, "I did not left you to die. Not till the dry fires of Je-Henen had bespented themselves in your blood and departed from you, and your skin began again to besweat itself. Not till then did I chase. For then I knew you would not die. And I left the cook with the directions of what to do for you. And on the Triple Oath I swear I would perish him in great agony, on my return, if he did not obey them. So I bewent myself."

"Went off for a good time while I lay half dead!" insisted Kirby pettishly.

"Yes, howaji," cheerily assented Najib. "of an assuredly. And now I crave you to listen. For I have words to preach that are of an importance to hark."

Disregarding Kirby's grunt of ill

temper, Najib sat down and told his story; starting, natively, at the middle, and burrowing circuitously toward either end.

"Furthermore, howaji," he began. "it was on the second night you were sickened. You lay here, talking and speeching and singing yourself. And I sat yonder by the brazier, heating water for you. And it beseemed me you would of an assuredly die. And I teared for grief. Then I rementoed that it was the hell-accurrst coal that had sorrowed you into your sickness. And I filled myself with a wrath at that coal. The samples were on the floor where they had befallen when you upset the table after Allah deprive you of your senses. One of the samples was in my reach. In my wrathfulness, I slinged it into the brazier, and then, howaji, I inquire you what you think happened?"

Kirby did not answer. He was not interested. Moreover, he was still babyishly sulky. Najib went on:

"When that coal fell itself in the brazier fire, a blaze of flames went up from it as it was a torch. Inquire of me the reason, and I will impart you an answer. The smellful petroleum had ensoaked into it, until it burned like a hot lamp."

He paused to note the effect of his climax. Kirby said nothing. With a little sigh, as of a child whose joke has fallen flat, the Syrian continued:

"Next day, at azim, his excellency, Saadat-el-Pasha Naami, rides himself into camp. He and a man of law and others. It is toward dusk. He sorrows at your smitteness, and then he inquires me many crafty questions about the land I bought. And a little by a little, when he enthratens me, I tell him everything about our finding our rich coal mine and all. Or mostly all. I showed him to a look at our contract of business together, too. And when he saw the seal of your consul—on whom be Peace and Honors!—he beswore himself most frightsomenly. And there was much talk and more than much cursings."

Kirby listened apathetically. He

easily visualized the scene. Dully, he wondered what would be the next step in the narrative.

"It was growing to dusk and then to dark," resumed Najib, "and the camp fires were litten. I requested his excellency if he would care to see how sweetly our coal burned itself. I sent for a barrel of it that I had collected. And I had it litten with a match. It blazed up, over than a trillion feet, and it was so heatful that he——"

"It burned?" broke in Kirby. "No coal burns that way, you incorrigible liar. And *our* coal wouldn't burn at all."

"Of a pardon, howaji, it would," contradicted Najib. "I have just betold you how burned the lump of it I threw in the brazier, and——"

"But that lump had been soaked in petroleum," objected Kirby.

"So had been the lumps in the barrel, howaji," said Najib artlessly. "For twelve hours I had besoaked them thus in the petroleum tank. For I expected the Saadat-el-Pasha. They burned very gleesomely and hot. Like the skyrockets at Coney's Island. I heard the law man bewhisper himself to Naami Pasha that this must be some new kind of a coal and that it would be worth fifty times over than the kind that is now burned in factories. I had expected that talk, too, a little."

"But how—what——" stammered Kirby confusedly.

"Naami Pasha he was very excitesome, then," said Najib, smiling reminiscently, "and he asked if we would sell our coal mine for a large and fair price. He said it would need your signature and my signature to a paper his law man wrote out. I said you were too sick to sign, but I did not say it very hard. He made me a very hellful threat. And then he said his secretary and his law man would swear you were in your righteous mind. So I was afeared by his threat. And I signed my name. They took the paper in to you and you signed your mark."

"I signed——"

"The pasha held your hand and

marked with it, howaji. And they said it was legal in Turkish law, because witnesses could swear you were of a sounding mind, but only too feeble to wrote all your name. I—I trust you were *not* of a sounding mind, howaji. For you called his excellency, 'Ancient Horse!' and you then called him 'Mother' and enseeched him to pin a rose upon you. It was very tearful and disrespectful."

"I——"

"Of an assuredly you did, howaji. I had submitted with a meekness to the pasha's command. And when he bade me to name a price for our coal mines, I had not been a hero enough to ask more than ten thousand American dollars for it. But I stipuled that it must be payable to either one of us. And he right joysomely gave me a paper on his treasurer for the money. And I heard him say to his law man that I was a witless fool and that he would clear over than a million times that amount from the wonderous new coal, and that by his paying the ten thousand dollars to us he would be safe from the law."

"Ten thousand dollars!" babbled Kirby. "Why, man——"

"And he is to send for expert mine persons to come out here and see the coal, howaji, and to start to make the mine," finished Najib. "So I feared me they might get here before I could give that paper to his treasurer. Therefore, and because of that, as soon as you were out of death peril, I went to Jerusalem. I gave the paper to Naami Pasha's treasurer. And he gave me the money in gold, as the paper ordained him to. And I betook the gold to the United States consul, and I told him to place it to your order in a bank of America. Here is his receipt, howaji. I rode as fastly as I might. I rode all night and likewise all day, too. And I wept to leave you so. But I dared not to wait longer. I grieve that you are en-angered at me, for my absence."

For a long minute Kirby said nothing, but lay looking alternately at the consul's receipt and at the conciliat-

ingly smiling Syrian. Then his eyes misted with hot tears—the tears of utter weakness.

"Oh, Najib!" he blurted out, at last, "you make me so rottenly ashamed of myself, you—you *white* man!"

Najib wiggled in his chair, disconcerted by his master's unwonted show of feeling.

"You're a genius, Najib, my son," added Kirby, more lightly, as he sought to shoke back his emotion. "Lord help Morgan and Rockefeller if ever you strike Wall Street!"

"There was no other way to do," modestly explained Najib. "You were sick. You had lost much money in the sad venture. And—and I much craved for that twenty-five per cent."

"Twenty-five per cent of this ten thousand dollars?" rasped Kirby. "Well, you don't get it!"

"As the howaji wills," stonily assented Najib, trying gallantly to steady his trembling under lip.

"You get only what you deserve, and not one penny more," went on Kirby. "Our seventy-five, twenty-five agree-

ment still holds. Only, we are going to reverse it. The seventy-five per cent is *yours*. Not because I give it you, but because you've earned every nickel of it, a dozen times over. Get that? Seven thousand five hundred dollars of this cash goes to you. The other two thousand five hundred dollars is mighty big interest on my one thousand two hundred and seventy-five dollars investment. I've no kick coming. Neither has Naami Pashi. When he finds where he's bitten he'll scream. But that's all he'll do. The story of his getting a delirious man's signature wouldn't sound nice at Constantinople. Especially if our own minister there should tell it to the sultan. He——"

"Howaji!" bleated Najib, in rapture, finding his voice with an effort, and trying to kiss his master's thin hand as he spluttered forth his gratitude. "Thankfulness, howaji! *Thankfulness!* And—oh, how truly says your American Bible: 'Heap coals of fire on thine enemy's head—and—and they shall return to thee after many days!' *Bismillah!*"



HIS REAL CRAVING

JOHAN ARMSTRONG CHALONER, of Virginia, author of the famous query, "Who's loony now?" takes special pride in the hams cured and cooked by "Mose," the oldest servant in his employ. He had one served as the pièce de résistance at a dinner he gave recently to a distinguished Englishman, who was a week-end guest at his country place. He called the visitor's attention to the fact that it was a genuine Virginia ham, hickory-smoke cured, and cooked in true Virginia style.

"It is an odd fact, Mr. Chaloner," observed his guest, after paying tribute to the delicacy, "that you people in the States do not realize we have hams in England which rival your famous Virginia hams. At my country home in Hampshire we not only produce many fine hams, but cook them with quite as much care as your Virginia chefs. We parboil a ham for several hours, remove it from the liquid, apply the proper condiments, and put it back to simmer for another hour or two in a couple of quarts of champagne. I assure you that a ham so prepared is delicious."

Later in the evening, Mr. Chaloner, who had noticed the rapt attention paid by Mose to the guest's dissertation on English cooking, inquired:

"Mose, what do you think of that English method of fixing up a ham?"

"Well, Marse Chawn," was the cautious reply, "I don't know much 'bout dat ham cooked dat way, but I sutinly would lak to spen' de night wid dat pot likker!"

Something to Eat

By Bertrand W. Sinclair

Author of "Landlubber's Luck," "Dory Mates," Etc.

Men are so made that under certain circumstances the monotonous repetition of words or actions begins to rasp on the nerves. You will sympathize with these four men shut up in their cabin in the snows. One of them is obsessed with a passion for "a nice hot tamale" and risks his life to get it

JOE GONZALES came in with an armful of wood, dumped it on the floor, put two of the biggest sticks in the glowing fireplace. He took off his mittens, his coonskin cap, his short, baggy parka of fur, hung them all methodically on the wooden peg where he always hung them. Then he sat down on the edge of his bunk and looked about him.

Although it was near noon, and outdoors the sun gleamed for a brief span low to the south, striking millions of sparkling facets on the banked snow, it was more or less dim in the cabin. The light of day entered in three places, through windows both primitive and ingenious, since they were neither more nor less than twelve-inch squares of raw deerskin scraped with infinite pains to parchment thinness and set in apertures cut through the log walls. Like clouded glass, they permitted no vision, but they did permit a modicum of light to enter. With these and the glow of the fire the illumination was soft, diffused, shadowy like the dusk of evening. But it served. The eyes of the four men were accustomed to that particular quality of light. Gonzales, fresh from the dazzling white outside, blinked at first. Presently, however, he began to observe familiar objects with their accustomed clearness.

There was nothing new to be seen, nothing he had not observed every day for more days than he cared to count. He could close his eyes any time and see it all—the four log walls, a door at

one end, a great, rough fireplace of unmasoned stone at the other—flanking the fireplace stood bunks, four of them in tiers like the berths in a cabin aboard ship. In the middle of the square room stood a table, like everything else about the place, rudely fashioned with an ax.

At this table Robertson and Hart sat, playing cribbage with a deck of cards worn and grimy and rough-edged from long usage. They mumbled the count in undertones. On another block which served as a stool Sam MacMillan sat by the fire, his face to the glow, his elbow on his knees, his chin nested in his palms. He had been sitting there in that fixed attitude for two hours, silent, absent-eyed, absorbed in contemplation of something in the fire glow. He would sit like that, in dreamy-eyed quiescence, Gonzales knew, until it was his turn to bring in wood or until a meal hour caused him to shift, and he would growl a deep-throated protest if he were unnecessarily disturbed in the meantime. Robertson and Hart would play their interminable crib until it was time to eat again. He, Joe Gonzales, would sit on the edge of his bunk and think, or lie flat on his back, staring at the bottom of the bunk above, trying not to think.

There was nothing to say. They had said it all months ago, completely exhausted the possibilities of conversation as a means of passing the time. Each knew exactly what words would issue from the other's mouth, the tone he would use, the facial expression that

would accompany the words. Men are so made that under certain circumstances the monotonous repetition of words or actions begins to rasp the nerves. These four, being wise in the peculiar inflictions of solitude, of enforced isolation, had learned to avoid the irritation of purposeless chatter.

Gonzales looked at MacMillan brooding in the firelight. He surveyed his partners' crib game, while they dealt and played two hands. Then he shifted a little to bring his back against the wall, and closed his eyes. Straightway he began to see pictures. He did not want to see them. They came unbidden, but he could not banish them. A man gets nothing out of his mind except what he has put in. The visions that troubled Gonzales were just such as haunt any adventurer who tarries too long in the far places of the earth. Gonzales was a Native Son, and the pictures he saw were of the broad and fertile Santa Clara Valley, somnolent in warm sunshine, miles upon miles of peach and plum and almond groves abloom in April, filling the air with fragrant smells. Beyond that the foothills dotted with wide-armed oaks lifting above a sea of grass, and past that the evergreen Santa Cruz range lifting between the valley and the sea.

Close upon this panoramic vision, which was wholly of the pleasant region where Joe Gonzales had been bred and born, where he had worked and played before the itch of the wandering foot led him to these grim fastnesses, his mind by one of those airy tricks of fancy transplanted him to San Francisco, to its stir and glow and the roaring traffic that poured along Market and Mission, past Lotta's Fountain and the Dewey Monument, like the surge of a river when the ice goes out. The big cafés, the numberless chop-houses of the downtown district passed before his eyes as if, unwitting, he held a culinary review. Rows of dressed chickens, piles of oysters in windows clustered about a fountain and garnished with green lettuce that the spraying water kept fresh. So vivid became this that the very odors of

cooking food assailed his nostrils and Gonzales shifted uneasily on his bunk, and the tip of his tongue moved nervously back and forth across his moist lips. And by this same facile necromancy of the spirit he passed instantly from there to a Spanish restaurant far out on Haight Street, close to the panhandle of Golden Gate Park, a plain little place where a fat Spanish señora prepared wonderful enchiladas and chile con carne and tamales, and her two slim, dusky-checked daughters served them to guests.

Gonzales swore aloud, barely conscious that he did so. And in wholly involuntary reaction from this use of a man's natural safety valve for pent-up feeling of any sort whatever, he sat up with a jerk.

MacMillan had turned about to look at him. Robertson and Hart had pegged the last hole in a game. They, too, looked curiously at Gonzales. But none of the three made any comment on the oath which had broken the silence. Robertson pushed aside the cards, and Hart arranged the pack, laid it across the crib board, and put both away. Robertson stood up, stretching his long arms.

"Well," said he, "I guess it's about time to chew. What'll we eat?"

"Sour-dough bread, beans, some moose steaks. That'll be all right for a change, eh?" MacMillan answered.

The attempted irony fell flat. It was MacMillan's stock witticism. When he first delivered himself of that they could smile. Now if they gave heed, it was merely to frown. Upon those three staples they had subsisted for months without variation. For months to come that would be their bill of fare—except that every other day for a time yet they could indulge in the luxury of stewed prunes for dessert.

"We'd ought to put on a stew for a change," Hart suggested mildly. Hart's principal note was mildness. His manner conveyed that impression. His speech confirmed it. He even fought deprecatingly.

"Never mind," Robertson drawled, as he moved over to the shelves

whereon was stowed their grub, and where their few cooking utensils were arranged. "It'll be spring by and by. We got a stake, anyhow."

"I'm sick of beans and moose meat, of tea and sour-dough bread," Gonzales dangled his legs over the bunk edge and spoke wistfully. "Moose meat and tea and beans. It makes me sick. I won't be able to look a sack of beans in the face for five years."

"There's others, Joe," Robertson said. "No use beefing."

Joe Gonzales crossed his feet and stared at the earthen floor.

"You got your moccasins on, Josephus." Robertson faced about with a frying pan in his hand. "If you'll slide out and hack off some meat, I'll get dinner."

Gonzales gave no intimation that he heard. He kept his gaze fixed on the floor, hands clasped over one knee.

"You know what I'd like to have right now?" he said.

"There's lots of things we'd like to have." Robertson grinned cheerfully. "Some chunks off that hind quarter of moose would do right now. We can get that."

"I want a tamale," Gonzales said gravely. "A nice hot tamale. Ever eat one, Bobs? That's right, you're English, and you don't go in for red pepper. I'm California. Um-m-m! They come all wrapped up in nice, yellow corn husks. You get 'em steaming. You take off a layer of husk, and find a layer of stuff that's made from corn meal, one after the other, till you come to the heart of it. That's all chicken meat and chili sauce, and a big round olive. I'd give a double handful of dust right now for a tamale and a cup of coffee. Yes, sir, I sure do want a tamale."

He paused for a second, lifted his gaze almost defiantly to his partners.

"And I have a darned good mind to go get me one," he finished.

He sat for a second or two longer, running his hands through his heavy black hair. His name was Spanish, and the Castilian blood loomed large in his physical make-up. But his men-

tal processes were the mental processes of his companions. He had heard Robertson's request, even if he had seemed not to hear, and now he got up, took his outdoor clothes off the peg, donned them, and, taking a tin plate from the shelf, went outside.

MacMillan looked up at Robertson. So did Hart. Robertson, in a sense, was the dominating figure. In everything they undertook the other three were inclined to leave him the final word. Some men have that rare gift of natural leadership. Robertson had. He was a tall, ruddy-faced Englishman, who knew the fever-bitten jungles that lie back from the Gold Coast and the sun-baked bush of Australia as well as the hinterlands of B. C. Of the four he was the oldest, he had forgathered with many men under many skies and learned something from all of them. And Gonzales was the youngest, the least experienced of the quartet.

"The kid meant that," MacMillan declared briefly.

"About starting out for a tamale?" Hart said. "No. He's just got a spell. He ain't crazy."

"He meant it, all right, I should say," Robertson said reflectively. "But I expect we can talk him out of any such fool notion."

"A man shouldn't let himself get notions like that," MacMillan went on. "But when he does, sometimes you can't stop him from following that sort of notion up. And this is sure one whale of a hole to get out of now."

They knew that, and they knew Joe Gonzales knew it as well as they did.

A certain great man—now dead—once described the State of Texas as a place where you could travel a thousand miles in a straight line. Another equally great man, commenting on this statement, said it was, of course, not literally true, but was a striking way of conveying the idea of vast breadth, of tremendous size. In the Province of British Columbia you can travel a thousand miles in a straight line and still be a hundred-odd miles within the provincial boundaries. No great man

need make himself an apologist for this statement. You can lay a ruler on the map and verify its truth. But if you tried to make a physical demonstration the straight line would soon look like the carefree saunterings of a jack rabbit on new-fallen snow. Big rivers, big mountains, valleys that would engulf many a European principality, illimitable forests of the heaviest timber that grows upon this good green earth, would make this thousand miles traverse a labor to make Hercules blanch.

Yet is it done piecemeal. There is a breed of restless men to whom these obstacles are but a part of the game. The timber cruiser, with his shoulder pack, loses himself in the giant firs for months at a stretch. The surveyor, with his transit, bespeaks the trapper as he runs his line. And the king-pin adventurer of all—the prospector—penetrates to every untrodden corner of this virgin territory. If there is a place where no white man has ever been, he seeks it. From one end to the other B. C. is a storehouse of mineral wealth—gold and copper, lead and silver. The baser metals are exploited on a scale in keeping with the land wherever trails and railways and water transportation offer. But gold is the loadstone that draws men into the interior vastnesses, good yellow gold bedded along the gravelly channels of unknown streams, rich bars that may be worked by primitive means for a brief summer season. The phantom of “pay dirt” beckons always, and sometimes it points to unbelievable fortune.

Gold had drawn the four men in that cabin to that forbidding region eighteen months earlier. During that year and a half they had seen no human faces besides their own, had heard no other voices, had searched and toiled among those glacier-torn ranges concentrated upon one thing only—gold.

And, since disappointment is not always the adventurer's lot, they had found what they came seeking. When they stood on the shoulder of a mountain and looked down into the basin where their cabin now stood, MacMillan gazed at the scores of tiny streams

pouring from the notches in that ring of peaks, and he said:

“If there's gold in this country, it's here.”

It was there. They could testify to that now. The creeks were bank full of milky, glacial water when they came in, and, knowing themselves to be due for a long halt, they established a base as a good general establishes a base from which to operate against a powerful enemy. Robertson and Hart, MacMillan and Gonzales had more than one enemy. In the summer they were beset with flies, beleaguered by the great emptiness of that silent land. The swollen streams stood sentinel over the treasure they had come to take. And the seasons seemed malignantly short; a burst of sun and flowers and green grass, and then the deep snow and the frost resumed its sovereignty.

Their first summer was a barren one, so far as actual gold in hand was concerned. True, they found pay dirt. But nothing rich, nothing that would even reimburse them for the money it took to outfit them. They could only reassure themselves with prospects. The basin, with its manifold streams, hinted of treasure if they could but find it and get it out before the glacial torrents covered it up again.

So their first winter was crucial. Four men cannot rub elbows in a sixteen-foot cabin for six months without finding irritating angles to each other. When men rest secure in successful endeavor their humor is pleasanter, tempers less likely to flare. When they suffer from a sense of failure, of futile struggle against insurmountable difficulties, the atmosphere grows electric.

But this quartet had that crucial winter twelve months behind them now. They had wooed tricky Fortune into a golden smile. Each of the four held a claim on ground richer than they had hoped to find—and they had been very sanguine when they first came to this virgin territory. They had pooled their resources, their labors, and their discoveries. The net product was a fat sack of coarse gold standing carelessly against the wall.

This buckskin bag containing the concrete token of their success had far less care bestowed upon it than the dwindling sack of beans which rested on the shelf close by. No one would steal that gold, for, to their certain knowledge, no one, not even a solitary trapper, was within full two weeks' journey of the basin. They could not eat the gold—and the beans were an important item on their limited bill of fare. When they went outside that sack of gold meant many a dream fulfilled, but they were far from the outside. The buckskin bag only stood for the ultimate fulfillment of a vision, and at present they had to subsist upon what was at hand.

That is why Joe Gonzales' outbreak was scarcely soothing to the other three. It vivified for them all too clearly desires and cravings that at best were terribly difficult to satisfy, that in their present situation were almost unattainable, and therefore best forgot.

When Gonzales closed the cabin door behind him he took up a double-bitted ax and walked over to where the frozen hind quarter of a moose was strung to the limb of a spruce above reach of the dogs, which now gathered, a dozen strong, from their several lairs about the cabin and in the banked snow—keen-nosed, heavy-coated huskies, their pointed ears acock, noses quivering with anticipation. They squatted about him in a ring, waiting for the scraps that would fall when he began to chop out pieces to fry.

But Gonzales leaned on the haft of his ax and gazed about him. His eyes ranged slowly over a regal semicircle of peaks that thrust aloft till their pinnacle spires were lost in a veil of frost fog. Gonzales himself, the cabin with its rude stone chimney shooting a blue column up in the dead-still air, the patches of brush and the clumps of trees, seemed dark specks and areas done in miniature on the broad, white floor of that bowl whose sides lifted six and eight thousand feet above. Most of the basin was meadow. Only where small streams bisected it was it marked with lines of timber. Higher

up on the slopes, where the bald face of the granite did not debar a roothold, there stood dusky green areas of forest, fir and pine and spruce.

Behind Gonzales the encircling range was cleft by a pass—or what was a tolerable pass in the summer. Now the snow was piled forty foot deep in its narrow gut. A man might traverse it on snowshoes, not otherwise. Beyond it, far westward, lay southeastern Alaska, from which, by canoe and tump line and dog pack, they had come to these solitudes. That way was closed now. From this deep hollow in the hills the only possible departure lay in another direction. Out of each crevice and gulch between the mountains there debouched various small creeks which came to a juncture, like the separate blades of a fan joined at the hinge, a half mile below the cabin. There, grown to a fair-sized stream, it flowed southeasterly. The narrow valley where it made exit from the basin opened before Gonzales' eager eyes as a sharply defined notch, an open door.

He stood gazing fixedly that way. One might have thought him rapt in contemplation of that frigid beauty, the unsullied white of snowy slopes, the tremendous lift of the peaks, the lines of timber along the creeks twining like bands of dusky green ribbon across the flat, white floor of the basin. A poet might have conceived him to be listening for the voice of the wilderness. But after a time his lips moved, and what he murmured was:

"I sure would like to eat a tamale."

He turned then to the quarter of moose meat, lowered it a trifle, and set about hacking out meat for the noon meal. Small frozen splinters of red flesh fell here and there, precipitating a series of snarling rushes from the pack of husky dogs. They kept their distance from Gonzales' steaks accumulating on the tin plate only in profound respect for his ax handle. When he had cut a sufficient quantity he hoisted up the hind quarter and turned toward the cabin.

A swishing, grinding sound arrested his steps.

For shelter the cabin had been built in the mouth of a gulch. Back of it the gulch wall rose in a great, sheer cliff, so steep that nothing could find foothold or lodgment upon its bald face. The rock stood gray and brown, be-whiskered with immense icicles where water had seeped out and frozen as it dripped. Back from the rim of this the mountainside ran up and up at a slant like the roof of a house. The peculiar sound Gonzales heard came from away up there.

He tilted his head, much as a man standing beside a house must tilt his head to look at the upstairs windows. Far up the mountain an overcurling drift had broken off, slipped, gathering way and weight as it moved. As Gonzales looked up it became, with miraculous swiftness, a great mass that swept through a grove of jack pine and left a bare streak behind it, like the blade of a mower passing across a meadow. The murmur grew to a roar. He saw the slide reach the edge of the cliff and leap clear, as a diver arches from his springboard, a thousand tons in a mass striking the level drifts on the basin floor, sending up a great burst of powdery snow. The shock of its fall sent tremors through the earth under his feet. Gonzales witnessed this without emotion other than perhaps a mild interest. Nearly every still, clear day they saw or heard slides. Gonzales went on into the cabin with his plate of meat.

He said nothing more about food. But he was thinking. He knew that dwelling on such a thing was irrational. Yet he could not rid himself of that unaccountable craving for one of those steaming hot tamales served by a Spanish woman in an obscure little shop on Haight Street. He called himself a fool, and in the same breath his tongue would move nervously along his lips, and his mind would turn upon ways and means of satisfying that strange desire.

Long after the other three were sound asleep that night Gonzales lay

tensely awake, every sense alert. He could not understand this sudden obsession. It nagged at him, wore out his powers of resistance. And at last, mastered wholly by the persistent recurrence of this idea, he said to himself:

"Why not?"

He could find no convincing negative. Strangely enough, as soon as he gave himself up fully to the contemplation of a trip out, he felt contented, fell asleep in a few minutes.

After all, it was simple enough. It was now early in January. He could take three or four dogs, a toboggan, grub, bedding, his gun. There was game along the way. He would be compelled to make a long detour, but he should reach Hazelton in a month. Thence he could go down the Skeena to Port Essington, and take a coastwise steamer to Seattle. He would get back in the spring, pack in a load of supplies. Quite simple. Joe Gonzales had no misgivings about facing five or six hundred miles of deep snow alone, with the thermometer standing around forty below. He felt a little ashamed of the rather trifling motive that drove him to the trail, that was all. Two thousand miles to eat a hot tamale! It was sheer lunacy. His last sleepy thought was that he would probably be all over the crazy notion by morning.

But Gonzales was wrong. Before his eyes, when he was barely awake, the first conscious vision that passed was a slim, dark-faced girl serving him the familiar oblong of rolled and bound cork husks. He could smell it! His mouth watered.

When they had eaten breakfast, when the dishes were washed and put away, and they had smoked their pipes down to the heel, Gonzales declared himself.

"Well," he said abruptly, "I'm goin' out."

Hart and MacMillan looked at each other. Then they looked at Robertson. And all three looked at Joe Gonzales as if he had taken leave of his senses. Gonzales felt himself upon the defensive. That brought a sudden rush of

resentment, which crystallized when Hart unwisely attempted to make a jest of this thing which, to Gonzales, was so deadly earnest.

"Still hankering for that hot tamale, Joe?"

"Damn it, yes—if you want to know!" Gonzales exploded. "What difference does it make why I'm going? I'm going. That's enough, ain't it?"

Hart's face reddened, more at the tone than the words. His mouth opened upon some tart rejoinder, but Robertson cut in ahead of him.

"I guess we'd all be glad to go out for a while," he said soberly. "At the same time we've agreed to stick it out. It means a stake, and that's what we're here for. We know where we're at when we're on the ground. It's a hell of a trip, Joe. It's bad enough to be cooped up here with nothing to do but kill time till spring, but it's worse to hit the trail. We've talked that before. I don't want to. Neither does Hart nor Mac. You don't want to hit her alone? Can't you hold it down till the middle of March, and then go out with Mac, as we planned, for our summer supplies?"

"No," Gonzales replied. "I'm all cocked and primed to go, and I'm going."

"You're the doctor when it comes to a show-down like that," Robertson answered quietly. "But you're writing yourself a blamed tough prescription."

Gonzales shrugged his shoulders. Nothing they could have said would alter his determination now. The fever of action burned in him. He did not understand it any more than MacMillan did when he said in his slow drawl:

"I've seen whisky and women and cards send a man skallyhootin' from hell to breakfast, Joe, but you're the first man I ever knew that set out to buck five hundred miles of unbroke trail just to eat a spoonful of corn meal and some scraps of chicken done up in a package the size of your fist."

Gonzales did not trouble to answer that. He went swiftly and silently about his preparations. He got out

harness for three dogs. They had twelve huskies, and he took his share—no more, no less. The same with food and bedding. There was, among their equipment, a small silk tent and a folding sheet-iron stove. These the others insisted that he take, and Gonzales accepted. He would have gone forth with his blankets on his back if need be, if they had sufficiently opposed him. But that spirit of opposition had vanished. They were sorry to see him go—they thought him utterly foolish to go—but it was his privilege to go if he desired; not only his privilege, but his inalienable right. That spirit softened the atmosphere.

By noon he was ready. Last of all they set the heavy sack of gold on the table and divided it into four equal portions, and Gonzales took his fourth. When the last item of his outfit was stowed on the toboggan and the huskies squatted in the traces, Robertson said to him:

"We'll see you in the spring, eh?"

"You certainly will, unless I fall by the wayside," Gonzales answered irritably. "Great Scott, you fellows act as if I were setting out to attend my own funeral! I'll be back. I ain't through here just because I take a notion to go now. Sure, I'll be back. Well, so long!"

They shook hands. Gonzales spoke to his dogs. When he looked over his shoulder from a distance of half a mile his three partners were dark objects against the snow at the cabin end, still watching him.

"I guess they think I'm crazy," he grumbled to himself. And he added presently: "Maybe I am, but I can't help it."

That night he made his first camp in thick timber that floored the pass which led from the basin. All next day he traveled along that narrow, timbered defile, walled in on right and left by lofty heights. And so for a week, bearing always eastward, until he came to where the pass opened out upon the lower, rolling country which spread south and east from this great watershed. The ranges of the Cassiar coun-

try receded into the snowy distance. There was less strenuous climbing, not so many dangerous slopes to descend. He came at length to the level reaches of grassland that run to the Finlay River, and passed over long levels of ice with winged feet, making his thirty miles a day. He turned into a fork of the Parsnip, drove swiftly to its head, crossed another low divide where the waters separate and flow by devious routes to three oceans, and thence bore straight across country to the Nechacko Valley. By way of that long depression in the general level, and the Bulkley beyond, Gonzales came down to Hazelton with a sigh of relief. The frosts had gnawed at him unceasingly. Grievous as had seemed the monotony of the cabin, it was a paradise compared to that trail. The indefinable loneliness of the empty waste he had traversed oppressed him as it had never done before. He had never felt so puny, so infinitesimal an atom in those tremendous distances. It awed him at times, that voiceless space, spurred him to hasten from every camp. And the measure of this spur lay in the time he made. He lost track of time on the way. When he reached Hazelton and gained access to a calendar he could scarcely believe he had made the journey in twenty-three days. It seemed to him that he had spent an eternity on snowshoes.

The strangest part of it to Gonzales was that as soon as he left the cabin behind, the original motive of his journey ceased to be a motive. He no longer craved a tamale. He was reasonably content with his daily beans and sour-dough bread, washed down with tea. If he could have turned back without hurt to his pride, he would have done so before he was clear of the basin. That puzzled him. Now that he was in a fair way to gratify any or all of his desires, the one desire which had driven him to action was wholly gone.

Having reached Hazelton, where some two hundred souls centered about a post office, a land and mining registry, a bank, two or three stores, and a pass-

able hotel, Gonzales made the most of his contact with this first outpost of civilization. This frontier camp, hibernating through the winter season, looked as good to him as Broadway must look to one of its habitués who has been condemned to a year and a half of small-time towns.

That is to say, Gonzales first banked his gold, which amounted to the respectable sum of six thousand dollars, got a hair cut and shave, new clothes, and a variety of food which he had not enjoyed for a long time. That queer craving for a tamale never troubled him again. He would not have walked across the street for a hot tamale. When he thought of his original intention to go down to the coast and take a steamer south he shrugged his shoulders and said to himself:

"What's the use?"

Taking his ease, according to his standards of ease, Gonzales spent a week in Hazelton. He ate the best food the place afforded, slept in a spring bed, forgathered with other genial souls in the hotel bar for a hot toddy now and then, all of which befitted the dignity of a six-thousand-dollar bank account and a discovery claim staked on rich ground.

He should have been quite content to rest on his oars till spring. That was what he promised himself when the smoke of Hazelton's chimneys first greeted his gaze on the horizon. He had had enough of the trail, more than enough. He looked back upon it as a man looks back upon a long term in prison or an illness which confines him to his bed.

Still, Gonzales found himself a victim of peculiar emotions, a strange and vexing uneasiness, a mental discomfort that grew upon him. He began to feel as a deserter must sometimes feel. Many a good meal fell flat on his palate because he could not avoid a vision of his partners sitting down to their meager fare, staring out at the banked snow, longing futilely for spring. He felt sorry for them. He experienced a sense of guilt that he had escaped the dreary monotony, the isolation that

was still theirs. He should be sharing it with them.

From that he passed to picturing how they would welcome a few luxuries from the outside, certain varieties of food, a gallon or so of good whisky, some magazines for MacMillan to read, a new, clean deck of cards for Hart and Robertson's unending cribbage duel. He could envisage their incredulous amazement when he walked in on them with a toboggan load of stuff. Would they be glad to see him? Glad!

Gonzales was the type of man who invariably transmutes his thoughts into action. He would say he had a "hunch" to do a certain thing, and his impulse would be to do it. He reacted now speedily to his impulses.

Exactly eight days from the day he entered Hazleton, he sat in his room one afternoon laboriously setting down items of food, incidental articles which were not necessary, but highly desirable. He figured it all out in pounds until his bill of supplies was complete—all that a toboggan could carry. A little later he went out and bought three more dogs. Six huskies can make time, even with a tolerable load. Gonzales saw to it that his order was put up that night, that everything was in readiness. At dawn he was on the trail again.

All the way up the Bulkley and down the Nechacko to the point where he turned north, Gonzales light-heartedly broke his trail and made his camps at night under the frosty stars. He went to sleep many a time with the doleful howling of wolves for a lullaby. But those lonely stretches had far less of a forbidding atmosphere than when he crossed them before. He revolved in his mind with pleasurable anticipation the welcome he would get. Now, when he recalled that peculiar, almost unbearable longing for a tamale which had driven him forth, he was moved to laughter. It had never seemed so absurd. He did not trouble to explain it, any more than he troubled to analyze the high spirits that now served to make a long and hard trail seem a mere trifle. The trail and its hardships

was incidental, the journey's end and the three men enduring the interminable procession of days and nights at the other end was now the spur that hastened his steps.

This time Gonzales kept track of the days, but he gauged his progress by landmarks passed rather than by time consumed. And so he came at last to that low, rolling area where the uppermost branch of the Salmon River begins its movement to the Fraser, ultimately to the Pacific; where also certain insignificant creeks mark the beginning of watercourses that empty into the Atlantic Ocean and the Arctic Sea. It is a region of vast, open grassland in the summer. In winter the snow lies in a huge, white scroll bounded only by horizons. On a clear day, far in the distance may be seen the pinnacle crest of mountain ranges. But all that breaks the dead-white levels is the narrow fringe of timber which clings along the streams.

Gonzales followed just outside one of these timbered fringes, made his noon and night halts in the brushy shelter, where the thin, sharp wind that sighed across the frozen places could not stab him to the bone. He was, of course, warmly clad. Still, that wind-break of timber was desirable, even when his small tent was set up for the night, and the tiny stove glowing within. At noon he made a fire only, and brewed a pot of tea.

Under way in the open he could see for miles in that crystallike atmosphere. Near noon one day he was skirting one of these timber belts and calculating that it was high time for him to begin bearing westward at an angle which would bring him into the mountains abreast of the basin. His eyes, roving toward the mountain range that now began to take form and color, suddenly fell upon something afar, a dark object that seemed to move. Gonzales watched it for a time, avidly curious. It might be game—moose or caribou—but somehow he did not believe it was either. And if it were not game, then it must be men. He had been about to halt for a cup of tea. Now he kept

on. To his eye this thing away in the distance must be a man, or men—for while he watched the black speck resolved itself into separate objects for a brief time. In half an hour Gonzales had established their identity as men—men without dogs, walking in the snow, coming toward him.

He pressed on to meet them. An hour passed. The three or four miles of level, hard-crusted snow which separated them dwindled to half a mile, to a hundred yards, to feet. Gonzales came up to them at last, greeted them with an amazed cry.

For they were his partners, Robertson, MacMillan, and Hart, without dogs, guns, grub, or bedding, staggering in the last stages of exhaustion. They were not even clad for the trail, as men clothe themselves when they hit the northern trails in winter. The frost had bitten their gaunt faces with its iron teeth. But though they were far gone with hunger and exposure, the trail madness that afflicts men in so dire a strait had not yet overtaken them, for they knew Gonzales and spoke in husky tones. They fell upon him, gabbling incoherently, and their talk was all of grub. MacMillan, always the weakest of the four, sat down on his haunches in the snow, and began to sob.

Gonzales sensed some mysterious disaster in the background. But he forbore question. Their needs were instant and pressing. They were starving. He knew too well the signs and tokens of that bitter experience. It was written in their drawn faces, their burning eyes, in the utter abandon of self-control. MacMillan continued to sob. Hart stood making foolish gestures with his hands. Robertson grinned vacuously, rocking on his feet.

Gonzales undid a lashing on his toboggan, drew out a bottle of whisky, pulled the cork, and bent over MacMillan.

"Here, you!" he said grimly. "Take a good, big shot of this. It'll warm you. You next, Bobs. It looks to me like it's lucky I happened along."

When Hart had taken a drink, Gon-

zales turned his dogs aside to the woods lining the creek a few hundred yards on his right. It gave him a shock to see that his partners could not keep up, to see the labored effort with which each man put one foot before the other.

"Follow my tracks," he said to them. "I'll get a fire started."

He cracked the whip over his team, and forged ahead. His dogs were loosed, a fire sending up its first tongue of flame, and he was melting snow in a pot for coffee when they came up, Hart and Robertson supporting MacMillan between them. Robertson had a slender pack on his shoulders. The others had nothing. They huddled gratefully over the fire, and Gonzales saw their eyes linger with wolfish anticipation on the loaded toboggan.

"In a minute or two," he said cheerfully, "I'll feed you till you bust. I got eight hundred pounds of grub."

Either the revulsion of feeling or the terrific hunger that assailed them served to deprive them of speech. Only their several expressions were eloquent. And when Gonzales laid off the canvas cover of his load, and began setting out food they pawed the various articles over caressingly.

"Lord A'mighty, look!" MacMillan mumbled. "Real bread and butter an' coffee an' canned milk—an' a ham!"

"You bet!" Gonzales answered. "And fifty pounds of real honest-to-God spuds that I've slept with nights to keep from freezin'. We're goin' to live high."

His coffee was boiling now. He set it off, poured a cup for each, and cut bread for them. The butter was softening by the fire, where they could help themselves. His mind was full of anxious inquiry, but questions could wait. While they devoured bread and butter, and gulped hot coffee, he produced a carton of eggs, which, like the potatoes, he had nursed with tender care against the frost, so that they should be a treat for his partners. Two eggs and a slice of ham he fried for each. Lastly he opened a can of peaches, big yellow clings swimming in sirup.

"That'll be all for a starter," he announced cheerfully. "After your stomachs have got used to that, we'll have a meal."

From the productive region of the toboggan Gonzales unearthed a box of cigars. There was not a single item of his grub list that he had not purchased with those three in mind. But he had never expected to see or find them in such evil case. And when the four cigars were lit, Gonzales piled fresh wood on the fire to which they stretched their feet, and broke out suddenly:

"Now, tell me what in the name of God happened?"

Robertson shrugged his shoulders.

"Slide," he said tersely. "It jumped off the top of that cliff right onto the cabin."

He let his eyes dwell on the leaping blaze for a second or two.

"We happened to be all outside pretty well dressed when we saw her come," he continued. "We ran. We got buried, but not so we couldn't dig out. But the cabin was covered up and smashed and generally mixed up with about a million tons of snow and rocks and pieces of timber. We rooted around for days and dug out a little salt, a couple of blankets, and some flour. Lost everything else—guns, gold, everything. Mac happened to have the ax in his hand when we run. That's all. We had to hit the trail, and she's been tough hitting. We were making for the Omineca camps. I guess we wouldn't have made it. Our flour gave out a week ago. Rabbits are scarce—hard to catch, too."

"Last night we got one in a snare," Hart said gravely. "But that was only a leg apiece. I could have eat two like him myself."

And MacMillan looked at Joe Gonzales with glistening eyes, and asked: "How you come to start back?"

"Oh, I don't know," Gonzales answered soberly. "Just had a hunch to come back."

"Them hunches of yours," MacMillan observed reflectively, "is queer things. You had a hunch to go out, too. And that slide dropped on us two days after you left."

That night, with the stress of those terrible days behind them, with full stomachs and easy minds, the three lay down to sleep. The little, sheet-iron stove glowed redly within the small tent. Even with a limited amount of bedding they were comfortable so long as the stove burned. Gonzales volunteered to stay awake and keep the fire.

He sat with his back against the grub, which was piled inside against a raid by the prowling, ever-hungry dogs. He sucked contemplatively at his pipe, listening to the drone of a rising wind, forerunner of a blizzard. Gonzales knew what that would be like—a three-day riot of snow and wind in which a man could scarce see ten feet ahead. In a storm like that—he shivered. For a long time he sat listening, staring absently at the red sides of the stove. Then he muttered under his breath:

"Queer thing—queerest thing I ever knew. But lucky—lucky for me—lucky for them."

And as if the current of Gonzales' thought had transmitted itself subtly to his companions, MacMillan raised his head and whispered:

"Say, Joe!"

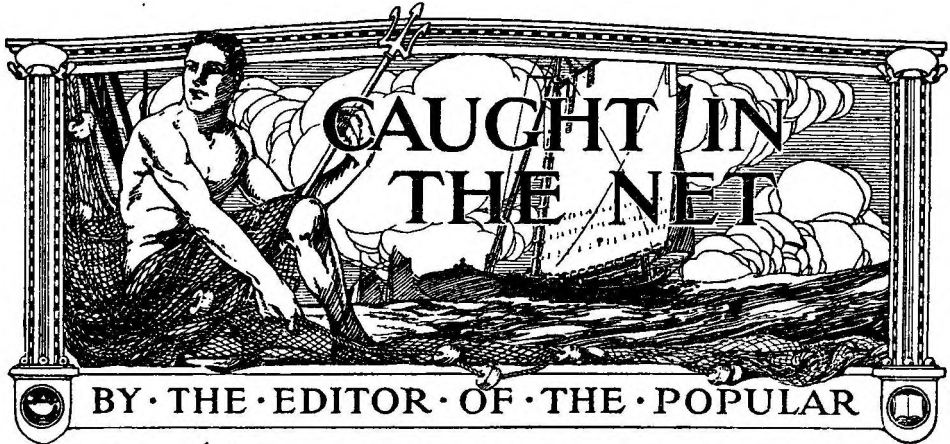
"Yes? What is it?"

"I'll bet that there tamale didn't taste half so good to you as this feed did to us this afternoon."

WHEN EATING BECAME AN INDUSTRY

REPRESENTATIVE FLOOD, chairman of the House committee on foreign affairs, was entertaining a party at a big hotel in New York when one of his guests remarked that the people at the next table were eating soup in a most emphatic manner—rapidly, voraciously, and noisily.

"Oh," said Flood, "they're not eating soup; they're bailing out a boat."



POPULAR PORTRAITS—LLOYD GEORGE

WHAT Americans and English need more than any one thing else is a smoking-room acquaintance, where they exchange their views informally, and get to know the man."

So said David Lloyd George to the writer. Mr. Lloyd George has a habit of informal breakfast at a sunny little flat about ten minutes away from Downing Street. Here two or three of his friends meet him. He comes in well rested, and decides points of policy and indulges in reminiscence, amusing and poetic. And all his talk has a lightness of touch. It is this "smoking-room" intimacy that Mr. Lloyd George gives to all whom he meets. He is not afraid of being himself. He is as daring in his comments on men and things as Mr. Roosevelt, as charming as the late William James. He is used to being loved. The lines about the eyes reveal a man who works his purpose by geniality in a flow of fun and charm and sympathy. The political battles of twenty years have left less impression on his spirit than the victories he has won as peace-maker and harmonizer. He referred to a couple of editors who have recently been attacking him. He said:

"I don't mind their criticizing me. I can take blows, and I can give them. But they are making it hard for us to get together after the war. We don't want differences when we come to the work of reconstruction."

He ends a talk by being more completely the master of your thought than you are yourself. He states it clearly and beautifully, and reduces it to a program of action.

"To understand your people or any people," he said, "it is necessary for one to pass inside the temple."

He practices what Saint-Beuve preached, that to know a religion you must be a worshiper inside the church. So, week by week, Saint-Beuve became a mystic and a pagan and an epicurean, as he served up the soul of the writer whom he was interpreting. This is the high gift which Lloyd George possesses. He can step up to the very altar of a man's most secret belief. This is the gift which has made him the one Briton who is perfectly understood in France. He spoke only a couple of sentences inside the citadel of Verdun, but they revealed to France that he knew what that symbol meant to them. For, in his best moments, he becomes something other than the grim fighter, and the adroit politician who uses all the tricks of the game. Suddenly for his hearers, and unexpectedly to

himself, he lifts by an exquisite imagination to the place of insight, and becomes the voice of obscure people, and understands men he has never met. If he talks with a slangy person, he discharges himself in vivid, staccato phrases. The nature and direction of his rebound are determined by the substance which he encounters. He was born to react. He has a mind that kindles, and a style that rises very lightly and gracefully into poetic beauty. There has been no such passage of prose produced by the war as that paragraph of his on "little nations" at the beginning of the fight.

Lloyd George faces the most difficult years of his life, and he knows it. A man of his temperament can conduct a great war. All that was needed was the inspirational quality to rouse his people, the energy to set them at work, the creative imagination to see the war in its extent, its duration, its requirements. None of these tests has overtaxed his powers, for they all lie inside the area of his competence. But when peace comes, there is no longer one straight road to a clear goal. All the forces of reaction will coalesce. All the bad councilors will make a cloud of witness about him. All the paths to immediate power will lie in "playing safe." If he remains true to himself, he will be cursed with a vehemence which will make his early years seem a sweet season of delight. There will be no easy victories. All will be turmoil and bitterness, for we are at the beginning of the greatest fight of the ages, the fight of the democracies inside themselves. We had our little Lloyd George in America. He had the same transcendent charm. But the wrong crowd got him, not by illicit means. They won him on his social side, the quality in the man that likes people and wishes to be liked. And he lost his sense of direction. He forgot the long, hard fight he was making to give the people better government.

The coming years of Lloyd George will be determined by the kind of persons who surround him, and touch that sensitive, quivering mind to action. If he holds fast to his good Welsh friends, and to men like Doctor Clifford, the sturdy old radical warrior of Nonconformity, he will go simply all his days, and continue to express the living element of his people. But if he leans toward the men of power, and listens to those voices, who will tell him of the kingdoms of this world, and who will promise him the leadership of a reactionary militaristic Tory party, he will lose his own soul. For the genius of the man is his human sympathy. He was meant to be a pathfinder for feet too tired to win their own way into the open. He was meant to think himself inside the mind of other men and other races.

The future rests with him as with no other single man among the Western peoples. He will face a world no longer sharply defined into enemies, allies, and neutrals, but a world where unguessed tendencies are forming, and new forces of emancipation are fighting for recognition. We have this to go on for hope. Lloyd George is a democrat by temperament, and he understands America.

MOTOR POWERS

SCIENCE has performed so many wonders for us that we are no longer astonished at what a former generation would consider miraculous. Mother Nature seems to lend herself to almost any purpose or whim of her favorite child, Man. Blood from a turnip and tears from a stone are not so impossible as we were once taught to think, when we hear such things as the making of milk and cheese from the soya bean, and the manufacture of fine silk from wood. Alchemy is with us!

Man has been especially ingenious in his manipulations of natural forces and products in getting them to do his great mechanical tasks and in transporting him hither and thither over the face of the globe at ever-increasing speed. Early in his history he thought it clever to employ the wind to blow him across the water in whatever direction he chose, while animals and wheels sped him to distant places on land. Running water he soon discovered could be harnessed to do important work. Later, when transformed into vapor, he found water still more powerful and versatile. Again, by means of the turbine, he harnessed flowing water to new advantage. Lightning did not escape his yoke, and when mastered it proved one of the most beneficent and potent genii he had ever evoked to labor in manifold ways.

But it is oil that now bids for our notice as a new and effective motor power. Not many years ago, petroleum was looked upon as a sluggish liquid which, when refined, was good enough as an illuminant, but which was soon outrivaled by gas and electric light. Nevertheless, petroleum products multiplied their kind and utility until gasoline leaped into recognition as one of the supreme motor powers known to humanity. And its universal demand and application have of late threatened the supply with exhaustion.

Immediately men set about seeking a substitute. Hundreds of experimenters turned to kerosene, the humble brother to gasoline. From time to time came reports of success with it as a motor power, but most of these "eurekas" petered out into explanatory excuses. We learn, however, that during the past year two earnest workers on the problem have actually discovered the secret of kerosene motor power. Their invention, called a "transformer," takes the place of the carburetor—and there you are!

According to the accounts of the inventors and their enthusiastic supporters, this device was used in an automobile for more than seven months, and, kerosene-propelled, the car covered in that period between eight and nine thousand miles without any mechanical trouble. Also, the "transformer" and its kerosene equipment was tried out on a farm tractor with satisfactory results. Finally, a record run was made of 36.7 miles on one gallon of kerosene costing seven cents, or one-fifth of a cent per mile covered. This test was made over ordinary country roads at an average speed of twenty miles an hour.

If this be true, and it is substantiated by reputable men, then will a million or more automobile owners' hearts leap for joy, their prospects of lean pockets less certain. And if it is not up to the claims made, then we bid these million or more car owners "Hope on!" for at any moment a genius may appear who will show how the best motor power can be derived from salt and water!

As we said at the beginning, we are no longer astonished at the wonders performed by science.

THE MARINE CORPS

THE trim, well-set-up marine is becoming a more familiar sight on our streets despite the demands made for his service in China, Samar, Nicaragua, Vera Cruz, and, to-day, in both Haiti and Santo Domingo, on the firing line. In appearance he distinctly is smarter than the enlisted man of the army. As to their efficiency, here is what Admiral Winslow said of them before a congressional committee last spring:

"Their *esprit de corps* is very high; they take great pride in their profession. They never let things slack off."

Henry Reuterdaahl, a civilian naval expert, declares that in no other branch of the service do the officers come in such close contact and know their men so well. Army officers are not slow to admit the smartness of their sea brothers or their worth in the field, but most experts are at sea in accounting for the factors underlying the strength of the marines. According to the initiated, there are two leading factors. Every man in the ranks is not only subjected to a searching inspection six days in the week, as compared to one as a rule in the army, but he never leaves his ship or garrison on liberty without the same scrutiny. Failure in the first instance means extra police duty. In the second it carries forfeiture of liberty. So much for the individual marine.

The factor that plays so great a part in his *esprit de corps* and in his repugnance to slackness comes from his officers. There is almost a negligible proportion of marine officers carried on the special duty that is characteristic of the army. Outside of a handful on recruiting, attached to legations and to the headquarters of the marine corps, the bulk of the officers of the marines are, year in and year out, on straight-line duty with troops. There are none on college or militia details. Where an army officer's interests lead him to special details that, when war comes, will insure him duty in command of regiments, brigades, or divisions of volunteer troops, the marine officer's ambition is to remain with his company or battalion throughout his service. To fit himself for present-day duties with the fleet, or the expeditionary battalions in Haiti or Santo Domingo, is his simple endeavor. It is the daily contact with his men, and his daily drill and inspection of them, that is the real answer to the efficiency and soldierly appearance of this little body of trained fighters that Congress has increased from ten thousand to fifteen thousand.

THE ART OF ATTRACTING BUYERS

THERE is a fascination in anything moving, in salesmanship, from the man sharpening safety-razor blades in the drug-store window to the youth demonstrating shoulder braces. What draws a crowd about a window and blocks traffic will draw the attention of a sales manager in an office.

Retail merchants are just beginning to realize the selling power of demonstration in window displays. Gone are the days when a cigar store curtained its windows with multicolored posters, buckets of tobacco, and backed the whole with a pasteboard imitation of a stack of cigar boxes. The down-to-the-minute cigar store now centers on one item; say it is cigar humidors; the window will be tapestry draped at the back, and the window proper rugged and furnished like a library or den; conspicuous on the table will be a mahogany humidor, with possibly a cigarette case and a pipe or two; a few articles will attract attention; many articles scatter the attention, so that no one item receives real consideration.

It is only one more step to the moving demonstration in the window—and the dealer who realizes that his windows are his best display cases quickly buys a five-dollar motor and the services of some jack-of-all-trades for a few hours. Magnets, mirrors, motors, and electric lights will turn the trick.

Ghost-Driven

By Francis Metcalfe

Author of "The Third Phase," "The Tower of Terror," Etc.

SYNOPSIS OF OPENING CHAPTERS

For three generations the Douane family had left their legal affairs in the hands of the famous old firm of which James Grant was now the only surviving member, but never in all its experience had such a strange situation confronted it. Lispenard Douane, the millionaire banker, married and divorced in his callow youth to a pretty girl, Jessica Brewster assures Lawyer Grant that he is in constant communication with the spirit of his dead wife, whom he feels he wronged grievously. The lawyer is troubled, for he is sure that his client is in the hands of spiritualistic sharpers who seek his wealth, and already there are mysterious operations in Wall Street that would indicate some such maneuver. Grant puts the matter in the hands of his two young assistants, Spaulding and Riordan, the former to scent out the financial end, the latter to investigate spiritualistic circles. Riordan, in his boyhood a medium's helper, has secret access to the spook game and its practitioners, and he learns that there is a new and powerful ring at work known as "The Wops," which has railroaded old Phao Trott, a séance sharp, into jail, and has put brakes on the spiritualistic business. The so-called "Wops" want the whole spook game to themselves, and go after big prey. In financial circles Spaulding hears of a clique of workers called "Wops." Meanwhile, Douane invites Grant to dinner to discuss important business matters. After the meal the two men adjourn to the library. In a little while Lawyer Grant is both astounded and terrified to witness a materialization of Douane's wife dead these twenty years. In the vision she is still the girl Grant remembers. She talks with Grant and Douane, suddenly vanishing when Grant mentions the name of Phao Trott. The lawyer is upset and confounded at the experience, and more so when Douane shows him the original packets of money given the girl-wife so many years ago upon the severing of their marriage ties. Jessica Brewster had been too proud to use the money and had returned it to Douane. What can be the answer to this?

(A Three-Part Story—Part Two)

CHAPTER VII.

PUNCTUALLY at the customary hour Mr. Grant walked into his office the following morning; but the clerks and stenographers in the outer rooms exchanged questioning glances after he had passed through, and there was solicitude and anxiety on the faces of Spaulding and Riordan as they hastened to join him in his sanctum. His eyes were reddened and heavy-lidded from a sleepless night.

"It's dangerous to put new wine in old bottles," he said; "it's disconcerting at my time of life to encounter things which violate the traditions and upset all theories." There was an unaccustomed note of weariness in his voice. "I hope that you boys have discovered

something which will clarify the situation; I confess that I am more deeply mystified—and, consequently more deeply concerned than ever." His eyes were fixed on Riordan, but it was Spaulding who answered:

"Mystification and uncertainty seem to be in the air, at least in the financial district. You have heard of the wild and feverish transactions in Phosphates yesterday afternoon?"

Mr. Grant nodded eagerly; but Riordan, who had been watching him attentively, noted the deepening of the anxiety in his eyes and gave Spaulding a warning kick under the table.

"Chief, unless I miss my guess, I can figure out pretty closely what you ran up against, and I think we'll get on a lot

faster if you tell us about it before we make our reports," he suggested. "It was spooks, wasn't it?"

"To be perfectly frank, I don't know what it was; I suppose that word describes it as well as anything else. Listen!"

Slowly and carefully, omitting none of the minutest details which he could recall, he started the narration of his curious experience in Douane's house.

The younger men listened attentively, Spaulding unconsciously nodding confirmation as he repeated, almost word for word, his conversation with Douane concerning Phosphates Concessions. Riordan listened to that impatiently; but when the old lawyer described the strange feeling of apprehension which he attributed to the memories aroused by the familiar surroundings of the old dining room, he leaned forward eagerly. And when he came to that part of the story where he told with exact detail the changes which had been wrought in the old library, Riordan hung on every word, forming from that minute description a fairly accurate mental picture of the room's appearance. Neither of them ventured a question nor made a sound until Mr. Grant paused after a dramatic description of the production of the package of money.

"There can be no question about it; it is the identical money which I handed over to that girl in this very office twenty years ago! It was as fresh and crisp as the day I received it from the bank; I doubt if it had ever been counted!" he concluded.

"How much was it, chief?" asked Riordan eagerly, and Mr. Grant hesitated before answering.

"A pitifully small amount for what it purchased, if you judge by the standards of to-day," he said, half apologetically. "But estimated by the scale of twenty years ago it was at least a substantial nest egg; for in those days twenty-five thousand dollars looked big." Riordan gave a whistle of astonishment, and an expression of bewilderment came to his face. Mr. Grant looked at him inquiringly. "It seems to

be big enough to get you excited now; what's wrong, Ned?"

"I don't know; perhaps I can make a guess when you have finished; but you've sure got me going sideways," answered Riordan. "Go on, please; maybe I'll find the answer in what happened next."

"I'll be blessed if I could; it only served to increase my mystification; but I had never had personal experience with that sort of thing," said Mr. Grant, and then continued his story. He concealed nothing; with entire frankness he acknowledged his fear, and he confessed that in the whole mysterious proceeding he had discovered not the slightest evidence of trickery or imposture.

"I was as close to that figure as I am to you," he said earnestly, fixing his eyes on Riordan. "My recollection of Jessica Brewster, as she appeared in this office twenty years ago, is absolutely distinct, and that figure was in her exact likeness; not a day older, although in that time Douane's hair had turned from brown to gray and mine from gray to white, and time had printed its indelible marks upon our faces. Had Jessica Brewster lived she would to-day be at least forty years old; that face which materialized in the darkness last night was positively the face of a girl of twenty, and time deals more harshly with a woman than with a man."

He paused, looking expectantly at Riordan; but the young man volunteered no comment, and he proceeded, giving a vivid, realistic, and accurate account of the effect of the mention of Phao Trott's name and of the disappearance of the radiant figure immediately after. Again he looked at Riordan, and for the first time saw that a suggestion of a grin was on his lips. He said nothing, however; in fact, he imposed silence by laying his forefinger across them, letting his other hand drop to his side. A moment later Mr. Grant started so violently that he nearly overturned his chair, for that silence was broken by the same sound he had heard in the darkness the night before; the

noise made by the ripping of a delicate fabric, or drawing the edge of a finger nail across a wooden surface.

"I beg your pardon, chief; I'd forgotten that associating with spooks had given you the jumps," said Riordan apologetically. "I just wanted to see if I had it right; if it was really the warning signal that you heard."

"It was that identical sound, whatever it may mean, Ned!" exclaimed Mr. Grant, looking at him suspiciously. "What is it; what does it mean?"

Riordan reproduced it with his finger nail on the bottom of his chair seat, his eyes twinkling mischievously.

"In a spiritualistic séance it means beat it, get everything under cover and scatter. There isn't a medium between Maine and California who wouldn't recognize it, and none of 'em would stop to ask any questions before acting on it. But, go on, sir; how did Douane take the scaring away of the girl with Phao Trott's name?"

Mr. Grant continued, but with evident reluctance:

"Boys, he took it hard; bitterly resented my mention of this Phao Trott, and said that I had frightened her away by doing it. He acknowledged that he had consulted him as a medium; in fact, it was to Trott that he referred when he told me that through one of them he had almost succeeded in getting a communication from his wife's spirit. Phao Trott was the only one of them who had ever inspired in him the slightest faith, and he claims that, in spite of the odious crime of which the brute stands convicted, he undoubtedly possesses occult powers, and that in his spiritualistic work he has never been detected in fraud or trickery. Do you happen to know if that statement is correct, Ned?"

"So far as I know, they never got anything on him in that line," answered Riordan. "The old boy really believed he was clairvoyant and that he had mediumistic powers, too; but, of course, he practiced trickery to make a living out of the game; there is no money in giving demonstrations for investigators from the Psychological Re-

search Society. But, if Douane believed in him, what made him sore about your mentioning his name?"

Mr. Grant's face hardened.

"I should think the answer to that was sufficiently obvious! The man's crime has made that name odious; he has never dared to mention it in the presence of that materialized spirit since he was arrested. Douane forgave me after a while, however; he distinguishes between the man as a medium and the brute as a convict; remember that Douane's faith is fanatical."

"Sure; it always is after they once get it hard enough; they are believing and that helps a lot," agreed Riordan readily. "What happened then?"

"Nothing more of interest; I was too nervous and unstrung to go on with the business which originally took me there. We postponed that engagement, and, I am glad to say, parted on the friendliest of terms. It lessened his resentment when I was forced to acknowledge that I had seen things which I could explain on no other hypothesis than the actual materialization of a disembodied spirit. I did not go so far as to express belief; but there *were* things which I could not explain. You must know a lot of the tricks of the trade, Ned; can you throw any light on it?"

"Perhaps it would be better to listen to what Harry has to say before I even try to," answered Riordan evasively. "This thing is a regular picture puzzle, chief, and it's going to take a lot of fitting together."

With evident reluctance Mr. Grant assented and turned to his other assistant.

"I trust that you have discovered nothing which can be construed to the discredit of Douane & Co.?" he said, with ill-concealed anxiety.

"No; it is hardly as bad as that; but there are a lot of people who would be glad to find something of the kind," answered Spaulding. "I ran across a couple of old college friends who are in business on the Curb at the club last night, sir, and I learned a lot about that flurry in Phosphates yesterday. It

seems that there is only a very little of the common stock on the market; it is practically cornered."

"But that is just what Douane told me himself; he said that there was no justification for that theatrical rise and fall, that it was evidently a manipulation designed to squeeze a big profit from the shorts."

"That's partly right, sir; it's undoubtedly a piece of manipulation, and, whoever is rigging it, is just as undoubtedly out for profits; but they can't be realized from the shorts, for there are none. There has been no speculation in the stuff for a long time; but some one, buying in such small lots that the transactions attracted no attention, has quietly bought most of the visible supply at around ten. Douane did buy a block of it; my friends executed the order. But on the inside they say that all that sensational advance yesterday was simply a matter of rigging the market; the few shares floating about were sold over and over again, always at an advance. Something in the nature of a wash sale, and, unless they get tired of paying the commissions to the brokers, there is nothing to prevent them from sending the quotations sky high. The Curb isn't as strictly governed as the Stock Exchange."

Mr. Grant gave a sigh of relief.

"I don't see anything in that which involves the bank," he said. "They are never in the speculative market. Anything else?"

"Yes, there is, and in a way it does involve the credit of Douane & Co.; but so far it is only vague rumor. As you probably know, sir, it is extremely difficult to keep any contemplated action secret in the Wall Street region; every small speculator is on the lookout for advance or inside information of what the big fellows are planning to do. And, in spite of every precaution, there are leaks from even the most secretive offices. Of course, a lot of the stuff that the professional tipsters whisper in confidence is manufactured from whole cloth or rumors circulated with the deliberate intention of influ-

encing the market. But occasionally something starts and goes through the whole financial district like wildfire; a rumor of something big enough to affect the whole list. There is something of that kind floating around now, sir; something in which the bank's name is freely mentioned."

"Go on!" exclaimed Mr. Grant, fairly snapping out the words.

"It's a widely circulated rumor that Douane & Co. are about to offer something else to the investing public; something big enough to make Phosphates Concessions look like the traditional thirty cents by comparison," continued Spaulding. "That was their first entrance into the Industrials, sir; they have always specialized in foreign business and financing railway reorganizations. From the way the common stock slumped it looked as if they had made a bad start, but they acted simply as underwriters, letting the public judge of the value of what they offered on the expert opinions which they submitted in the prospectus; the bank guaranteed nothing; it was only the standing of an old and conservative house which attracted the class of investors they number among their clients; investors as conservative as the bank itself. But, if there is any foundation for this rumor, they are contemplating something radically different; the offering of stock and bonds in a concern to which the bank gives an unqualified indorsement and which Douane & Co. expect to finance themselves. It has put the whole financial district on its tiptoes, and there is the wildest sort of guessing as to the exact nature of the thing."

"I can see nothing in such a rumor as that which can hurt the bank's reputation," commented Mr. Grant. "I can tell you confidentially that there is a certain amount of foundation for it. Douane has something very big under consideration; that was one of the things we were to go into last night."

Spaulding apparently did not share his senior's optimism, and he shook his head doubtfully.

"Perhaps there is nothing in that;

but, just the same, people down there are beginning to smile knowingly when Douane & Co. or Phosphates Concessions are mentioned," he persisted. "The Street is always suspicious, and it sees in that boom in Phosphates an attempt to make a lemon look like a melon, as one of my friends expressed it last night. I was not able to discover any tangible reason for the wild fluctuations in that stock; but there seems to be a well-defined suspicion that the underwriters were imposed upon. If any of the speculative houses had put it out, that suspicion would take an uglier name. In that rumor concerning this prospective issue the wise ones think they have discovered the reason for that spectacular rise of yesterday; they believe that Douane & Co. are rigging the market; that they are trying to create a fictitious value for their initial effort, so that the next thing they offer will be snapped up as eagerly. I'm not giving this as my personal opinion, sir; I'm simply reporting what I discovered; the intimate gossip of the Street."

Mr. Grant looked at him searchingly during a few moments of silence. Back on his own familiar ground, oblivious to anything savoring of the supernatural, his brain was working naturally.

"Harry, you are a level-headed young chap; what is your personal opinion?" he asked.

Spaulding shook his head.

"I never play the market," he answered evasively. "If I did, I wouldn't touch Phosphates Concessions with a ten-foot pole—until I heard what Pit-Pat had to say about your experiences of last night."

Grant turned to Riordan, who had paid but scant attention to Spaulding's report, and who was only aroused from absorption in his own thoughts by the mention of his boyhood's nickname. He shook his head when Grant asked him if he had any explanation to offer.

"Chief, it's sure got me guessing!" he acknowledged. "You're right about the difference in the value of twenty-five thousand dollars now and twenty years ago. There were real sports in

the game then; they played for high stakes and the sky was their limit; but none of the pikers who are working it to-day would loosen up on a bundle of kale like that if they had a chance to cop out a million."

Mr. Grant looked at him in perplexity. Riordan at times expressed himself in the vernacular of his youthful environment; employing a vocabulary enriched by theft of words and expressions common enough in sporting circles and that portion of the underworld which drifts through Park Row, but rarely heard in polite society.

"It's just this way, chief!" he continued hurriedly, a deep flush betraying that he realized he had made a verbal slip. "I might be able to explain a lot of things which puzzled you last night, but there isn't but one man left in the spiritualistic game who would let go of that much real money, and we can count him out."

"Why?" demanded Grant eagerly. "Why should we overlook any possibility?"

"He isn't a possibility; he's hardly human any more—in your estimation. He's dead to the world; only a number; for he's doing a twenty-year stretch at Sing Sing—and his name used to be Phao Trott!"

CHAPTER VIII.

"See here, chief; do you remember Lannigan; 'Finger-eye' Lannigan?" asked Riordan abruptly.

"I have cause to remember the name of that eminent artist in his peculiar line, but I fail to see a possible connection with our problems," answered Mr. Grant. "I believe that he was electrocuted some five years ago for the murder of a policeman, after a long and successful career as a bank burglar. I remember him because Inspector O'Brien always believed that he was guilty of that big robbery at the Tidewater Bank; we were counsel for that institution at the time."

"You've got his number, all right; that's the guy!" exclaimed Riordan, dropping back into the vernacular in

his excitement. "But O'Brien was throwin' th' bull when he told you that, chief; although he'd done his best to frame him, and he'd have pulled it off, too, if his third degree had worked as well with me as it did with his stool pigeons. It was this way, chief: you remember my stand when I used to hand you out the *Post* every evenin' when you were going home?"

Grant nodded, smiling at the renewed resemblance to the alert youngster whose shrewdness had so fortunately attracted his attention years before.

"It was right near the Tidewater Bank, you remember, and it was one of the juiciest pitches for a newsy; so good that I had to scrap to keep it," continued Riordan earnestly. "The worst one I ever had was on the afternoon of the night that safe was cracked; it was with a big Greek; he was twice my size, and he gave me the laugh when I told him he was poaching and had better beat it. Say, chief, I would fight at the drop of the hat those days, and I sailed right into him. I licked him, but I was pretty near all in. There was a slim, wiry chap who had been watching the scrap from the steps of the bank. When he saw how badly I was used up he put me in a cab and drove me away. That was Finger-eye Lannigan, chief, and I know he didn't crack the bank safe that night, for I was hurt a good deal worse than I knew, and, until after daylight the next morning, he stayed right with me in his own room where he had taken me. I'd never seen him before; but he sure acted white with me; kept putting ice on my bunged-up face, and by morning had me sort of fit for publication again. Then he took me to a shop over in Chatham Square and blew me to the swellest rig I'd ever had on my back, staked me to breakfast, and gave me a couple of bucks to buy a stock of papers. I didn't know who he was, chief, until the next time I saw him—and that was in O'Brien's office at headquarters; he was lined up with a half dozen others, and when O'Brien asks me if I'd ever seen any of 'em

before, I, of course, picked him out; but I didn't know his name, even then."

"I remember that O'Brien discovered that Lannigan visited the bank that afternoon; he believed he was getting his bearings, but I never knew that you were connected with the case, Ned!" exclaimed Mr. Grant.

"No, O'Brien never talked about the stunts he couldn't pull off," answered Riordan, a momentary triumphant grin quickly giving way to an expression of grim resentment. "O'Brien was a big man in his day, chief, but he wasn't big enough to bulldoze me into giving false evidence about Lannigan. I gave him the straight story, but he hit me a wallop on the jaw and called me a liar and threatened to knock my block off if I didn't tell him the truth. Then he told me what he wanted me to say and to swear to in court, about having seen Lannigan hanging around the bank and about his asking questions of me; trying to find out the watchman's habits and all that sort of thing."

"Ned, do you mean to say that O'Brien was deliberately attempting to coerce you into giving false evidence?" exclaimed Mr. Grant incredulously.

Riordan nodded an emphatic assent.

"Sure; but, as he's dead and can't defend himself, I'll give him the benefit of the doubt, if you like," he answered. "That was part of his system; when a crime was reported he always went over his list and picked out the specialists in that particular line, and a crook had to have a cast-iron alibi to clear himself. Now, I'll admit that he was justified in suspecting Lannigan on his record; it looked like his work. He may have honestly believed that I was lying; but the third degree has brought out more lies than truth, and he worked it on me to the limit. Chief, I'm not throwing any bouquets at myself, but I know that a good many kids, manhandled the way I was, would have sworn that black was white—and I didn't. I don't know what they'd worked on Peg-leg Benny Kaufman, the kid that stood on the opposite corner, but they had him in another cell, feeding him fine and letting him sleep nights, because he was ready

to swear to stuff to put Lannigan away. Chief, if I'd weakened under their sweating they would have put him away, too, on the evidence of two kids who would have been so perfectly coached in their stories that he wouldn't have had a show—and he told me afterward that, if I'd have thrown him down, he wouldn't even have made a fight for it. And just because O'Brien found out that he couldn't bullyrag me and break down the alibi I was ready to swear to, he had to let him go; he never did land the men who did the job, and he missed the promotion he'd counted on getting by sending Lannigan up the river."

Not for a moment did Mr. Grant doubt Riordan's veracity; but he looked at him impatiently, unable to find any connection with those incidents and the problem before them.

"You are to be complimented for your bravery, Ned; it is too bad that it was not shown in a better cause," he said dryly. "Your benefactor was a notorious criminal; he capped his career with murder, as I remember it."

"Yes, at the wind-up he went to the chair for a crime he really committed. He killed that detective, one of O'Brien's men who had been after him for years, dragging him back every time he had a chance to square himself and live honestly. He didn't make any defense, but he told me the story when I went to see him in the Tombs, and I didn't much blame him. But that's neither here nor there, sir."

"Then just what is, Ned?" demanded Mr. Grant, smiling as he realized from the change in his manner that his story had been but a preface.

"Just this, chief: If O'Brien had got his clutches on any other kind of an infant but a fighting Irish kid, he would have framed Lannigan. I could go down the Row, pick up a dozen of 'em, and drill 'em to tell a story to send a man to the chair. Phao Trott went to Sing Sing on the evidence of children—and they were all kids from the rottenest tenements in the city; the children of the lowest down lot of scum

that ever slipped past the immigration inspectors. Chief, you said that you went over the evidence against Phao Trott gathered by the society's agents; did you see the kids who gave it?"

"No; I simply went over their statements as taken down by a stenographer," answered Mr. Grant, after a moment's reflection. "I remember, however, that there was a good deal of corroborative evidence, and I was convinced of his guilt or I should not have advised prosecution."

"Sure; so was Donovan who prosecuted him in court. I'm ashamed to say that I took it for granted, too, which I shouldn't have done, remembering what I do of poor old Phao and knowing what I do of guttersnipes. He was a harmless old chap, and, while he made his living out of the trickery of spiritualism, he really believed that there was something in it and was always digging around to find proof of it. He tried it with me, chief; it was one of his theories that kids made the best subjects, and he was always experimenting. A good many times, after I'd spent the evening helping him and Slade flimflam a room full of suckers with fake materializations, he'd slip me a dollar to wait and try for real results—and no one else had many dollars to spare after Slade made the division of the profits. I haven't seen him for five years, but the last time I ran across him he told me that he was getting real results; that he'd found a young girl who was born with the gift and was doing wonders under his teaching. Douane had him sized up right, chief; he was just as much of a humbug as the rest of the bunch; but, even in pulling off his tricks, he used to run against things that scared him. And you can take this from me, chief, no one would have been able to run in anything on him; he was wise to every angle of the crooked game; he originated most of the convincing tricks used in séance materializations, and he was the only one left in the business with enough brains and ingenuity to invent new stuff. Chief, I spent most of the night going over the official record of his trial; Donovan let me have the

grand-jury minutes and the transcript of the trial evidence."

"Ned, I can see no reason for delving in that unsavory mess!" protested Mr. Grant impatiently. "The man had a fair trial; his defense was conducted by a lawyer who knows every trick employed in cheating justice, and who is notoriously not above employing any of them. The presiding judge, who is above suspicion and heard all of the evidence, had not the slightest doubt of the justice of the verdict—and I cannot see that it is any of our concern."

"Chief, if O'Brien had been able to bulldoze me into giving the evidence he wanted—and which, perhaps, he believed to be true—Lannigan would have been sent to Sing Sing for the Tide-water Bank robbery of which he was innocent," answered Riordan doggedly. "He was as wise as they make 'em; but, if I had turned on him, he wouldn't even have put up a fight, and the judge would have given him the limit on his record. You are right about Jake Haselburg, chief; there isn't a crooked move in the game that he don't know and use; he was taught to manufacture evidence in Hodge & Strumel's office, and he's a terror at ripping a witness to pieces on cross-examination. In two minutes he could have tangled up any one of those educated little liars who testified against old Phao; but he treated them as if they were his own witnesses and nice little Sunday-school scholars, instead of guttersnipes who learned all that there is to know about life in the slums before they lost their milk teeth. Human testimony is a queer thing when it is honest; you are an intelligent, educated man, worldly-wise beyond the ordinary, and a few minutes since you told a story of things and events within your own knowledge and observation, a story which would convince an average jury that you had seen, heard, and touched a ghost!"

"You'll do me an inestimable service if you can demonstrate to me that I did not!" exclaimed Mr. Grant, giving an involuntary shudder as Riordan's words recalled a part of his experiences.

"I can never forget the clasp of that icy hand, that sickening aroma of death which penetrated through the perfume of sweet lavender."

Riordan grinned. "Chief, when you were a kid, didn't any one ever come in from outdoors and bring a yell out of you by sticking fingers, that felt like icicles, inside your collar? I'm pretty much alive and my circulation's good; but, if I went into the other office and held my hand in the water cooler for five minutes, I could come back and give you the jumps when I took yours. And Douane, of course in evening clothes, surely felt cold when he pressed that figure against his shirt front; for that, and the thinnest possible net drapery, was all there was between his manly chest and a thin rubber bag filled with cracked ice and salt. That's old stuff, chief; it was evidently well done, but it isn't new. It's one of those simple little tricks that gets across nine times out of ten, because it's just what the victim expects. And there's another point about it—which your own admission proves; it's a safeguard. You were growing skeptical; you were primed to do just the thing which has made so many séances end in a riot, grab the alleged materialized spirit, and yell for lights. You might have gotten away with it, too, if you had gotten a grip on warm flesh and blood; but when you struck that half-frozen mitt you couldn't break your grip fast enough to suit you. That and the odor of chemicals, which the mask of sweet-lavender essence wasn't strong enough to conceal at close quarters, clinched it; you had felt death, and by strong mental association you believed that you smelled it."

"But I did, Ned!" protested Mr. Grant; a little feebly, perhaps, for Riordan's confidence in his explanation of the other phenomena was infectious.

"Excuse me, chief, but you didn't! That sweet-lavender perfume was a good stunt; it isn't common these days, and it did just what it was meant to do—there is nothing which arouses more vividly long, dormant memory than a perfume, and I'll bet that for twenty

years you have associated sweet lavender and Jessica Brewster in your subconscious mind. They must have used a strong essence of it, for you got it first when she must have been twenty feet away, at least, and it prepared you to recognize the materialization as Jessica Brewster, even if the make-up wasn't exact, and—although you were not conscious of it—it probably bewildered you to account for the persistence of that subtle perfume during twenty years; eighteen of them in spiritual existence. That in itself would have been reason enough for employing the perfume; but there was another; it was necessary to mask the smell of chemicals; it would probably have done it completely if she had not come so close to you. As it turned out, the thing which they were so afraid of that they did their best to conceal it worked entirely to their advantage. Your imagination, keyed up to the top notch, made you identify that odor of chemicals with that of the embalming fluids and disinfectants employed by undertakers; and that identification did as much to banish your skepticism as the cold, clammy hand."

"But I did smell those chemicals; it almost nauseates me to think of it even now; I couldn't have summoned enough courage to grasp that figure if my life had depended upon it," persisted Mr. Grant. "I should have feared that I was grasping a mass of corruption, or that the apparently solid flesh would dissolve in dust and leave only a grinning skeleton in my arms."

"Sure, chief; you did smell chemicals—especially turpentine, if you will stop and think a minute," continued Riordan hastily, for the tremor in the old lawyer's voice and the ghastly color of his skin warned him that his beloved senior was laboring under a dangerous emotional strain. "That's one thing the cleverest of 'em haven't been able to get away from; they can't hide the smell of the stuff they have to use to make the drapery luminous. There were yards and yards of that drapery; it is so fine and filmy that even after it is treated with the luminous paint a

whole costume can be rolled up and carried in the pocket; it's no thicker than a lady's veil, and the stuff they use on it is pretty much like the preparation they use on the dials of luminous watches, so that you can tell the time in the dark. That's what they worked on you, chief; in the dark that woman slipped into the room, dressed all in dead black, probably with black stockings drawn over her hands and arms and a black veil over her face. That drapery, tightly rolled up, was covered with a black cloth until she wanted it to become visible. The management of it was only a matter of sleight-of-hand and trickery; that stuff produces just the sort of light which your imagination always associated with ghostly appearances; it is bluish and cold; it glows itself without giving illumination to surrounding things. And when it comes right down to brass tacks, chief, you didn't really see a lot of things which you thought you saw; they had your imagination working overtime, but everything which you did see was a demonstration of straight human trickery, and the spirit of Douane's wife didn't have any more to do with it than I did."

Familiar with the thousand and one tricks employed by alleged mediums to impose upon their dupes, the whole proceeding, which had seemed to Mr. Grant a spiritual manifestation, was like an open book to Riordan. But while Grant's belief was shaken it was not banished, and he shook his head.

"My boy, I suppose that you are speaking from exact knowledge of the timeworn tricks of spiritualism, and, if what I saw last night had appeared on the stage of a theater, or in the séance room of a professional medium, I should accept your explanation of the illusion without question," he said. "But you have forgotten one thing; all of that trickery to which you ascribe the phenomena would have implied a very considerable preparation and the presence of other people. Your explanation would imply that strangers—necessarily suspicious characters at that—had the free run of the house and could do what

they wished within it. That would be impossible without the collusion of the servants; and Jackson, who controls them, has proved his fidelity by thirty years of devotion. I'm sorry, my boy; God knows that I want to be convinced, and your explanation to a certain point is entirely plausible; but, save for the servants, Lispenard Douane and I were the only human occupants of that house last night."

Silence fell over the office as he stopped speaking, and Riordan stared at him in blank amazement. Then the old lawyer started violently, for that silence was broken by a repetition of the warning signal which had so closely preceded the dematerialization the previous evening, duplicated for the second time by Riordan's finger nail. A grim smile came to the younger man's face as he noted the effect.

"Chief, I was trying to let you down easy, but I see that they've got you so firmly hooked that I've got to be brutal!" he said determinedly. "I tell you flat that every trick used last night was either invented or elaborated by Phao Trott, and the mention of his name was what called for that warning signal. Who scratched it out if you were alone in that room? There's only one answer to that—and when there's only one possible answer you haven't much choice. You weren't alone; the darkness concealed some one who was watching and directing the whole performance and on the sharp lookout for anything which would expose the fraud of it. Things were going fine, so unexpectedly well that you would probably have been treated to a whole lot more if your mention of that name hadn't thrown a scare into the director; he wasn't giving you time to get your grip again; he gave that signal to ring down the curtain on the act, slipped out in the darkness, and then, when he was sure that the girl was too far away to be grabbed, he took one more chance and for just a moment switched on the lights. Of course, the luminosity of the draperies was lost; but it reappeared immediately when you were again in darkness, and that girl was evidently

so well trained that she wouldn't need much time for her get-away. Chief, give me a little time for preparation, and right in this office to-night I'll reproduce everything which you saw in Douane's study last night—even if I have to do the 'Little Eva' stuff myself."

Again Mr. Grant shook his head.

"That's just the point, Ned; it's the weak one in your explanation!" he protested obstinately. "Such fraud and trickery would require time and freedom for preparation; time and freedom which such precious rascals as your former associates could never obtain in Douane's jealously guarded house!"

Riordan gave a whistle of astonishment and jumped from his chair.

"Holy Moses, chief; you're not within a thousand miles of getting me!" he exclaimed. "Don't you see what I've been driving at? Of course, this thing isn't being worked by that bunch of cheap grafters! There's some one with real brains behind it; some one with brains enough to take over all the spiritualistic stuff that the old master, Phao Trott, knew, and then, after stealing all his stuff, put him away so that he couldn't squeal. And they did it right; they convicted him of a crime so loathsome that he was buried deep for it; so deep that it's a safe bet that even his fellow convicts shun him and no decent man would listen to anything he had to say. I know what happened, all right; they could use him and his tricks up to a certain point, but there was a point beyond which they couldn't make him go, so they framed him and railroaded him. And they're not taking any chances, chief; if they let the others play the game and use the old tricks some one is liable to be exposed and bring the half-forgotten swindle into the public eye, so they pass the word around to stop working—and what they did to Phao Trott has put the fear of God so strongly into those grafters' hearts that even old-timers, like Calkins and Doc Sinclair, are afraid to put the finishing touch over with Fosdick. No, sir; it was spiritualistic-medium stuff, but they——"

"*They, they, they; always they!*" interrupted Grant petulantly. "If you hope to convince me, Ned, you will have to be more definite!" Riordan shook his head hopelessly. —

"Chief, if the time ever comes when I can be definite, we'll have turned the trick and reached the bottom of this thing!" he protested. "I can't tell you who 'they' are, but I can sure tell you who they are not; they are not any of the pikers who are posing as mediums to-day; the reappearance of that twenty-five thousand dollars proves that, for there is no one left in the business who would loosen his grip on that much real money on the chance of making a million. But the people who would do it aren't the kind you want to give too much time to stack the cards; they wouldn't risk an ante of that size unless they were playing for a big pot; let's say about the size of Douane's bank roll—or what they could fleece from a confiding public with the indorsement of Douane & Co. for their scheme. Don't be too much impressed with the security of Douane's house; a gang that comes from the nowhere into the where, gets the whip hand over the whole bunch of swindling mediums, comes it over Douane, and even flimflams you; a gang that controls so much capital that they use twenty-five thousand dollars of real money as a white chip, wouldn't be stumped by a little thing like that."

"There's one thing you've forgotten, Ned!" retorted Mr. Grant. "Your mysterious 'they' apparently have the miraculous power of bringing the dead to life; for, either in the flesh or the spirit, that was Jessica Brewster who appeared to me last evening."

"Perhaps, although a trained man working from a photograph can do a lot toward creating a resemblance with wax," answered Riordan. "But, chief, how do you know that Jessica Brewster is dead? You take it on the say-so of a man whom Douane described as 'a treacherous little shyster,' a former pupil of Hodge & Strumel—and Douane didn't even take the trouble to verify the proofs which he offered."

Mr. Grant was never able to determine just which point raised by his young associate finally convinced him; perhaps it was the memories raised by the name of that despised firm which had elaborated the manufacture of perjured evidence into a fine art; perhaps it was the reminder of the peril of the name of Douane; but, whatever the cause, his skepticism suddenly returned with redoubled strength and he made an unconditional surrender. Riordan breathed a sigh of relief as he saw the color returning to the ashen face; a color which deepened to a blush as he signaled his capitulation with a nod and a furtive, sheepish smile.

"You are right," he acknowledged. "First and last, we have taken too much for granted in this whole Douane business; judged too much by appearances, as Douane himself put it. I stand corrected; I confess the error of my ways and that last night some one verified the saying that there is no fool like an old fool, for, as you would probably express it, they fooled me to the limit and then some."

Riordan grinned, and a suggestion of the mischievous twinkle came back to his blue eyes.

"Chief, you couldn't learn the language that I don't seem to be able to forget in a thousand years," he said. "I should have said 'flimflammed' or 'bunkoed,' but it comes to the same thing; they put it over on you, or words to that effect. And now, what?"

Mr. Grant smiled ruefully as he looked from one to the other of the younger men.

"I think that under the circumstances I shall continue to listen to the wisdom which comes from the mouths of babes and sucklings," he answered contritely.

"Not on your life, chief; you're still the real brains of this combination!" protested Riordan affectionately. "If you take my tip, you'll keep your eye on Douane so close that he won't have a chance to pull off what that spook is advising him to do. Let Harry keep on digging into what they've already done to him with that Phosphates thing."

"And you?" asked Mr. Grant curiously.

"Chief, I'm going to find out whether Jessica Brewster is dead or alive, for one thing. For another, I'm going to drag that living dead man, Phao Trott, far enough out of his prison tomb to find out a lot of things; who it is crabbed all his stuff; at any rate, the name of the girl whom no one else could have trained to do that Little Bright-eyes stunt as well as I did it in my palmiest days. And when we get that far, chief, we'll be pretty close to knowing just who is planning to get away with the millions that Douane inherited and the other millions he has made, for a gang that uses twenty-five thousand dollars for bait wouldn't leave him enough of it to pay car fare."

Looking into the twinkling eyes and at the firm, resolute chin of this young man who smiled at him so confidently, the old lawyer was suddenly conscious of the burden of his own years. A little wearily his eyes traveled over those boxes bearing such an imposing array of names; boxes which contained secrets which in the hands of unscrupulous men might profitably be employed in the purposes of evil, and he breathed a silent prayer of thankfulness for the impulse which had led him to take Ned Riordan into his employ. Rising from his chair, he placed an arm affectionately about his neck and walked with him to the door.

"Go as far as you like, and then some!" he said, smiling.

Riordan reached out and scratched his finger nail along the doorcasing.

"Chief, the next time a spook bothers you, just do that and see how fast she'll chase herself back across the shadowy boundary!" he said, a grin on his good-humored mouth.

CHAPTER IX.

Riordan's manner and bearing, as he started on his new quest, suggested nothing of the buoyancy and anticipation which had characterized his initial effort. He was not possessed of the temperament which borrows trouble;

but his eyes had been opened to the real gravity and danger of a situation which at first sight had appeared more ludicrous than menacing. Lispenard Douane, deluded and fooled by the timeworn tricks of spiritualism as practiced by the petty swindlers of the class of Professor Calkins and Doctor Sinclair, would in all probability have worked out his own salvation at a cost which would not have impaired his great fortune. Even the cleverest of them had never succeeded in making a big haul except when their victims were practically in second childhood, and repeated exposures had made the game so unprofitable that the brainiest professional players had deserted it for pastures new, leaving the old fields to be gleaned by the smaller fry.

But the fear which Calkins and Sinclair had betrayed; a fear sufficiently potent to restrain them from taking the prize ready to their hands, and the artistic perfection of the performance which he believed had been staged entirely for Mr. Grant's benefit, convinced him that cunning of a superior quality to anything he had ever encountered in his knowledge of the old game was directing the modern manifestation. The mysterious return of that twenty-five thousand dollars impressed him far more than it had impressed Douane, for just as it banished the banker's last lingering doubt, did it convince Riordan absolutely that the mind directing the campaign was aiming for a prize beyond the ambition of the boldest of the old-time operators.

There were so many promising leads for information that it was difficult to make a choice, especially as he realized the necessity for extreme caution. Absorbed in his own engrossing labors, he had not followed very closely the details of the report which Harry Spaulding had made, but he had taken in enough of the substance of it to appreciate that an immediate exposure of fraud or imposture in the Phosphates Concessions flotation would discredit Douane & Co.; the very thing which Mr. Grant was striving to avoid. That there was fraud in it, that Douane had

been tricked into fathering it, he had not the slightest doubt; but high finance was an unknown field to him, and, without hesitation, he dismissed that part of the mystery from his consideration.

From the summary disposition which had been made of Phao Trott, he reasoned that Calkins and Sinclair were not possessed of knowledge which would be dangerous to the plotters or of advantage to him; they had been ordered to cease working only because a possible exposure of their trickery might attract an unwelcome investigation of every branch of spiritualistic swindling and endanger the success of this far larger game. A little quiet inquiry had satisfied him that the prohibition was absolute in the whole brotherhood; that even the clairvoyants and crystal gazers operating in the poorer quarters of the city had received orders which they dared not disobey, and that for the time being any one desiring to get into communication with the spirit world would be forced to travel far from New York to find a medium. There was no record of other convictions than that of Phao Trott; that one demonstration of power had apparently sufficed to impose fear and enforce discipline, for in all of the great city not a spiritualistic trick was being turned.

His own position had changed so much, and his own personal association with the old game had been so slight and transient, that he doubted if the men using the old methods in their modern scheme were aware of it, or if they even identified him as the former newsboy; but any one connected with Mr. Grant's office would quickly come under suspicion by starting inquiries concerning spiritualistic affairs, instituting a search for proof of Jessica Brewster's death or information of her present whereabouts, or, above all, by questioning the justice of Phao Trott's conviction. But, convinced that the old trickster was the only man left in the business who was capable of teaching the methods used to impose upon Douane and of schooling the actress who had played the principal rôle to give

such a convincing performance that it had temporarily convinced his skeptical chief, he determined to run the risk of getting into communication with him.

Two fortuitous circumstances seemed to lessen the risk that an effort in that direction would excite suspicion if adroitly managed. Sing Sing Prison, where Trott was serving his term, was at the moment very much in the public eye as the scene of picturesque and revolutionary methods in the treatment of its inmates; methods to which Riordan had given enthusiastic indorsement and support. Several times during the past year he had visited the grim old place in his efforts to be helpful, so that another visit would not in itself excite comment or suspicion.

The warden, under whose supervision the new system had been introduced, looked at him curiously when within the privacy of his office Riordan requested an interview with the convict; an absolutely private interview, if that was not forbidden by the prison regulations.

"As you know, Riordan, we are not so rigid about enforcing regulations as the old crowd used to be—unless those regulations are clearly for the benefit of discipline, or for the protection of the convict himself," he answered. "I'm a little surprised at your request; Trott has been a prisoner here for some time, but the records show that he has never received a visitor until yesterday. If he had any friends they seemed to have forgotten him. We have never even had an inquiry about him, nor has he received a letter. And the call yesterday was more official than friendly; his visitor was the lawyer who defended him at his trial."

"Jake Haselburg?" inquired Riordan.

The warden nodded. "Judging from the lack of affection in your tone as you mention that name, I take it that you were not professionally associated with him," he said dryly. "Yes, it was Haselburg; and he, too, requested a private interview. He told me that he had discovered new evidence on which he expected to base an appeal after con-

sultation with his client. Of course, I granted his request; we feel under more or less obligation to Haselburg; he does more than any other one man in New York to prevent the disgraceful overcrowding here."

Riordan grinned. "I expect he holds the record for that, but I doubt if he'll give you an extra cell by freeing Trott. How much do you know about the old boy, warden?"

"Very little; his was not one of the cases which appealed particularly to me. I try not to play favorites, but we are looking for quick results and have to make selections. His record here is negative; he has been a model prisoner, but there was obviously no chance that he would ever be granted a parole, and his advanced age makes it most improbable that he will live to complete his sentence. He's one of the few convicts here who has taken his sentence without protest or complaint; you know that most of them assert their innocence and claim that they were framed up by the police. When he was brought in here yesterday he seemed absolutely indifferent, and I couldn't discover that he was particularly hopeful after the interview; in fact, he was depressed. You have a particular reason for wishing to interview him?"

"Yes, a very particular reason; I knew him well a good many years ago," answered Riordan quickly. "And, if you don't mind, warden, I wish that you could have him brought here ostensibly on some matter of prison routine, without passing the word that he has a visitor."

The warden hesitated; the very atmosphere he breathed made him suspicious.

"Riordan, under ordinary circumstances, I should refuse such a request as that," he answered. "I'll do it for you, but I wish that you would let me be present at the interview. In a position such as mine a man has to develop a sort of second-sight to accomplish anything, and I have a suspicion that there is something in the air; something from which I may learn. That is a request, not a condition."

9A P

Riordan assented readily enough, and, a few minutes afterward, Trott was brought in by one of the keepers, shambling in his gait, stooped of shoulders, and with hanging head.

With his long beard sacrificed, his hair closely cropped, and his bent, emaciated old figure clothed in the ill-fitting prison garb, it was difficult to recognize in this typical jailbird the suave, confident medium of former days, and, greatly to Riordan's relief, there was no sign of recognition in the eyes—blinded by the bright sunshine flooding the office after long confinement in a dusky gallery—which dropped to the floor after one furtive and suspicious glance. Riordan remained silent until the keeper left the room and the warden had briefly explained to Trott that he had been brought there to receive a visitor.

"An old acquaintance, too, Trott, although you apparently do not recognize him," he continued. "You remember Mr. Ned Riordan, do you not?"

The old convict started violently. For just a moment his face lighted up and a smile came to his lips, but it faded quickly, and, disregarding Riordan's outstretched hand, he shrank back until he touched the wall, his own hands raised in protest, his eyes filled with suspicion, his whole expression sullenly defiant.

"Ned, you wouldn't get poor old Phao in worse trouble than he is now, would you?" he whined. "I never did anything to you."

"Of course not, Phao; you know that I've always been on the level," answered Riordan earnestly. "As far as I can see, you've been handed about the worst that you can get, anyway, and, if it's any comfort to you, I'll tell you right here that I think it's a lot more than you deserve."

That expression of confidence did not seem to be of any particular comfort to the convict, and he expressed no gratitude for it.

"The judge and jury didn't share your opinion, Ned, and I'm taking what *they* handed me—and trying to take it without a whimper!" he protested sul-

lenly. "You're wasting your time, my boy; if I'm not complaining about it, I don't see where any one else has a license to cut in. All of the rest of the old bunch have forgotten me, and you'd better follow their example."

He spoke without bitterness; the imprisonment to which he had been sentenced seemed to have killed all human emotion in him; the short portion of it which he had served had evidently sufficed to breed in its place that hopeless resignation to the inevitable which is so common in long-term convicts who realize that death alone will gain them freedom from prison walls.

"Phao, if that's the way you look at it, I don't suppose that I have any license to interfere—so far as you are concerned," said Riordan quietly. "I went over the minutes of your trial; personally, I don't think that you are guilty; but, if you are satisfied with the verdict, I shall not argue it with you. In any case, you are probably not getting more than you deserve; not in punishment for the crime of which you stand convicted, but in just retribution for your treatment of Jessica Brewster!"

Riordan had risked a shot into the air. He was absolutely convinced that the woman who had played the part of the materialized spirit in Douane's study could only have been taught by Trott, and he was more than suspicious that she was, in fact, the woman who had vanished years before, alive and in the flesh, masquerading as a spirit at the dictation of sharpers, actuated, perhaps, by a desire for revenge on the husband who had deserted her.

Random as the shot had been, it was evident from the effect on Trott that it had scored a bull's-eye, and, with a cry of warning, the warden sprang from his chair, for the old convict stepped forward, his stooped shoulders suddenly straightened, the furtive eyes flashing dangerously, and his fists threateningly clenched.

Recalled to the futility of attempted violence by the warden's stern warning he stopped abruptly, the readiness with which he relapsed into the attitude

of sullen submission a silent but eloquent demonstration of how quickly fear may become a habit. Riordan shot a warning glance at the warden whose instinctive action to maintain prison discipline had momentarily, at least, frustrated the very outbreak which he had planned to stimulate.

"I suppose that that is the reason you accept your punishment so gracefully, Phao," he continued. "You always did have peculiar notions; I remember that in the old days you puzzled me, even as a kid. You used to take the sucker's money with one hand and pay it out with the other in what I always thought was purely a sucker's game; that trying to drag a spirit back from the other world. Is that why you take this dose lying down and without a struggle, Phao? Are you accepting it as a vicarious punishment for what you did to Jessica Brewster?"

Phao, whose living for many years had depended upon the accuracy of his observation and adaptability, had learned quickly in his comparatively short prison experience. He knew that even the most brutal and hardened of the keepers were tolerant of and patient under verbal abuse which did not threaten physical violence. Always in the minority and surrounded by desperate men, they regarded the hysterical vocal outbreaks of men condemned to perpetual silence as safety valves and ignored them, or listened with patient good nature so long as the convict's hands remained at his sides or were busied with his ordinary tasks. Even before the warden had resumed his seat, he had sidled back against the wall, but the flash which was dying in his eyes was rekindled at the repetition of the woman's name.

"Why do you come here to drag that woman's name into this accursed place?" he exclaimed passionately. "Even in the spirit she will not venture near this horrible tomb of the living dead. You are right, Ned, in believing that I am absolutely innocent of the crime for which I was sent here; but, just the same, I was adjudged guilty and sentenced by legally consti-

tuted authority. The very nature of the crime of which I stand convicted doubles the severity of that sentence; even the thugs, thieves, and murderers confined here draw away from me and shun me; but I foresaw that on that horrible last day in court when I faced the judge and listened without flinching or protest to the words which branded me as the lowest and most despicable of outcasts and consigned me to this living tomb. But for you, who have never received anything but kindness at my hands, to come here gratuitously, and, without the shadow of right or justice, torture and badger me, exceeds in cruelty and brutality my unjust conviction and punishment by the law."

It was a curiously bitter tirade which came from the old man's lips; the more curious because his muscles, as if instinctively conscious of the strict prison discipline, remained rigidly inert. He stood erect, flattened against the wall, his clenched hands idle at his sides, not a gesture emphasizing his passionate outburst. And still under the unconscious spell of that rigid rule which enables a handful of keepers to control hundreds of desperate men, it was only his eyes which moved when he disregarded Riordan and addressed the warden.

"Is this the humanity of which you prate?" he demanded scornfully. "Is it a merciful change to abolish the underground dungeons and permit a helpless man to be tortured in God's sunshine? Open them up again, send me to starve in filth and darkness, but never have me dragged here to listen to the profanation of all that I loved and held most sacred—to hear the name of a woman who went to her grave many years ago, the woman for whose memory I willingly suffer, dragged through this loathsome place. Send me back to my cell, sir, for I cannot answer for what I may do!"

Again the warden rose from his chair, but there was nothing but sympathy and kindness in his expression, and he laid his hand gently on the old convict's shoulder and impelled him toward the seat he had vacated.

"Yes, Trott, I am trying to practice a little of the humanity I have preached so strenuously right now, and I'm not afraid that you will attempt anything desperate if we treat you like a human being," he said quietly. "Sit down there and listen to reason; if there is one thing my administration here stands for it is the square deal. You won't get anything else from me, and I'm sure that Riordan wants to be of service to you. Sit down and tell us all about it. Was there anything in that new evidence which Haselburg has discovered which will help you out?"

Trott had responded readily to the first touch of sympathy and kindness he had known since the day of his arrest. The defiance had died in his eyes, and a pitiful little smile came to his lips as he mechanically obeyed and sank into the warden's chair, but it faded instantly, and his eyes looked furtively about the room as if seeking a loophole of escape at the mention of his lawyer's name.

"Nothing doing, warden; Haselburg wouldn't—that is—I mean that the evidence wouldn't do anything!" he answered, in a confusion which was palpably caused by fear. "I tell you it's no use; you can't do anything for me; nobody can. Just let me alone, I won't make any trouble!"

Riordan looked reproachfully at the warden who, with the best intentions, had managed to make a mess of things; for the mention of Haselburg's name had frightened the old man back into that hopeless resignation from which he had been aroused by his random shot. He had obtained just enough information to make him eager for more; for he had no doubt that the old convict had told the truth when he asserted that Jessica Brewster was really dead. But that Trott had known her in life strengthened his belief that he had been the instructor of the woman who posed as her reincarnated spirit, for the old trickster had been especially clever in the employment of modeling wax and make-up materials to reproduce the likeness of any one

he had ever seen. Minute by minute, with this visible example of the power which his unknown adversaries exercised before his eyes, his eagerness to identify them grew, and at the risk of incurring the warden's displeasure he ventured another shot.

"I'm inclined to agree with him, warden. What's the use in trying to help a man who won't help himself?" he exclaimed. "I came here believing that this old reprobate had been framed up; the thing which makes me doubt it now is that he says so himself, for he's proved himself to be an arrant liar. This woman—this Jessica Brewster—is not dead; she is alive and for years has been the tool and accomplice of this man who made his living in the swindling game of spiritualism!" He expressed himself with an intentional brutality which, as he had quite expected, irritated the warden; but the protest which came to the official's lips was cut short by a scream of rage from the convict.

"You lie, Riordan, and I can prove the truth of what I say!" he said, his voice quavering with passion. "I never wronged her by word or deed, and she is dead; she died in my arms, and with an hour of freedom I could take you to her grave. Why do you try to drag her from it, to expose her shame which I did my best to conceal?"

"I'm from Missouri, Phao; seeing's believing, and you've got to show me!" retorted Riordan skeptically, and, fortunately, the warden in his restless pacing back and forth between them, had come close enough to receive a surreptitious kick of warning. "Looking at a grave wouldn't prove anything; tell me where she died and I'll prove that you are lying by an inspection of the death records."

Trott suddenly weakened, and the eyes which he turned on Riordan were dimmed with moisture.

"That isn't like you, Ned!" he protested reproachfully. "What can you know of that poor girl who died while you were still a ragged boy, living by your wits and glad of the money I used to slip you for trying to help me

get a communication from her spirit. I believed you could, Ned, for then you were a square, honest little youngster, just the kind she would have trusted in life—as she never trusted me."

"Tell us all about it, Phao," said the warden earnestly; purposely employing the Christian name to emphasize his interest. "We want to believe the best; not to suspect the worst. I never betray a confidence, and I can assure you that Riordan is still square and honest. He has proved it time and again within these very walls."

The old man looked at him, a curious, vacant expression in his eyes.

"And to think that any one could accuse me of wronging poor little Jessica!" he said softly, his voice infinitely sad and tender. "Wronged she was, but, as God is my judge, from me she never received anything but kindness and protection. When she returned home, hoping to find a love and sympathy which would help her bear the shame she brought back with her, the door was closed in her face. She was a brave little thing; she might have received a grudging protection if she had told the name of the man who had deserted her, but rather than that she would have died in the gutter. Did I wrong her when I took her into my house—all of her worldly possessions the clothes on her back and a little bag so light that it did not even tax her strength? Did I wrong her when I skimmed and saved to give her every comfort and care in her hour of trial and pain? Did I wrong her when, until the day of her death, I shared with her every pitiful dollar of which she never guessed the source? Did I wrong her when I brought peace and happiness to her deathbed by promising to take up the burden which death forced her to relinquish? I claim no credit, but all of those things I did, and if her sweet spirit could materialize—as so often it has vainly tried and struggled to do—it would stand beside me here and testify that I have been faithful to the end. It can't materialize, but I—old Phao Trott, the trick medium who had fooled thousands of dupes

with fake materializations—have felt the touch of her spirit hand and have known that, though she was invisible to mortal eyes, she stood beside me. She stood there on that awful day in court, her hand in mine as I listened to the searing condemnation from the judge's lips and for her sake—for her—sake——” His voice faltered, and, assisted by tremulous hands on the arms of the chair, he rose unsteadily to his feet. His eyes, suddenly fixed and glassy, stared straight ahead of him, but he was apparently oblivious to the presence of the two men in his range of vision.

He had spoken like a man in a trance, and now for a moment he stood before them a cataleptic, as rigid as a statue carved from marble. Then he was again suddenly transformed, his quickly extended arms evidently trying to grasp something which was invisible to them, his fingers clutching spasmodically. And then, with a cry which was half strangled in a convulsed throat and an ineffectual effort of strangely twisted and distorted lips to form a word, he pitched forward to the floor and lay between them, his limbs twitching, his face hideously distorted in a convulsion.

CHAPTER X.

Ned Riordan showed small respect for the speed limit as he drove his car back to New York. Under the ministrations of the prison doctor, Phao Trott had partially recovered consciousness, but he was mentally so confused that further questioning would have been useless. Ned was disappointed, but, after all, he had discovered more than he had a reasonable right to expect—enough, at any rate, to convince him that he was on the right track. He had not felt at liberty to confide very much to the warden, but fortunately that official was convinced of his integrity and honesty of purpose, and at Riordan's request he consented to order Trott's complete isolation in the hospital of the prison, prohibiting all visitors on the ground that the old

convict's condition made him mentally irresponsible.

He left the prison more firmly convinced than when he came of Trott's innocence of the crime of which he stood convicted, but more deeply puzzled than before as to the old man's motive for accepting that conviction without protest. A powerful one it must be, and he knew enough of Trott's fearlessness in the old days to make him doubt that fear of personal violence sealed his lips. The habits of years are strong, and, even in his impassioned protest against the charge that he had ill-treated Jessica Brewster, he had been as vague as the alleged spiritualistic messages which he had for years transmitted to his dupes. There was only one absolutely direct and unequivocal statement. He had asserted positively that Jessica Brewster was dead, and that, although it did not fit in with the tentative theory he had formed, Riordan accepted as the truth. And, remembering the old man's free-handed generosity, he was quite prepared to believe that he had, indeed, given the girl every possible financial assistance; but why she had been in need of it, with the large sum which Mr. Grant had paid to her still in her possession and intact, was more than he could figure out.

It was strange that in their consultations they had never taken into consideration that other possibility at which Trott's protest more than hinted; that there might have been issue from that marriage which Lispenard Douane entered into so hastily and from which Mr. Grant so speedily had him freed. But, even if that were true, there was no reason that she should have been humiliated. There was absolutely no question of the legality of her marriage; Mr. Grant had satisfied himself of that; and, although it was so speedily followed by divorce, the child was legitimate and entitled to bear its father's name. It was inconceivable that the girl, proud and sensitive from the old lawyer's description of her, should have tacitly accepted shame and humiliation when a

word could have cleared her. But, if Trott's statement were true, she had never even mentioned Douane's name.

"Confound it, the chief says that she was always a puzzle to him in life, and she's a bigger one to me dead!" he said to himself as he drove through the city streets, so absorbed in his thoughts that he obeyed mechanically the signals of the traffic police without being conscious of them. And as a puzzle unsolved was always most irritating to him, he determined to set about finding the solution without delay. After consideration of the evidence and the manner in which the defense had been conducted, he was more than suspicious that Haselburg had deliberately sacrificed the interests of his client.

Before going to the office that morning, Riordan had taken steps to prove his suspicion that Trott had been convicted on perjured and manufactured evidence, and no one was better qualified to gather just the information that he wanted than this graduate of the city streets. He never lost sight of the fact that most of his own success was due to the fortunate chance that he had attracted the favorable notice of his chief, and for that good fortune he had endeavored to make vicarious payment by extending help and encouragement to the youngsters employed in his former calling. Half of the newsboys of the Park Row region were his protégés, and, selecting a half dozen of the shrewdest and quickest of them, he had put them on the trails of the juveniles who had testified against Trott, confident that they could quickly get at the truth without exciting suspicion. It was late in the evening before he received the last of those reports; he was tired from a strenuous day and the laborious night he had spent in studying the trial transcript; but the substance of them banished all thought of fatigue.

Of legal evidence on which he could lay charges against Haselburg they contained not an iota, but through that subtle freemasonry of the gutter his youthful investigators had gathered facts which more than justified his sus-

picious. Without exception, the witnesses against Trott were the offspring of slum dwellers, most of them frankly criminals. They were the victims of their environment and heredity; but, none the less, wise from their cradles in the ways of iniquity. With surprising ease the boys had gotten at the real truth beneath the surprising mass of lies to which they had so glibly testified in court; lies which they told fearlessly and in convincing detail, because they had previously been relieved of the fear that Haselburg's notoriously vicious cross-examination would be employed to trip them up. And once on the trail the youngsters had even exceeded his instructions, and in their enthusiasm had dug up evidence which would have seemed incredible to one less sophisticated in the ways of slum children than Riordan; evidence of careful coaching and preparation under the instruction of runners and hangers-on of Haselburg's office, and, even more significant, the fact that most of the parents or natural guardians of the juvenile perjurers were numbered among that criminal expert's clients.

With that evidence before him, the suspicion that Trott was a victim to Haselburg's callous indifference changed to the conviction that the miserable shyster had played even a viler part, that he had originated the whole plot by which the poor old reprobate was branded with the conviction for a crime so odious that even his prison associates shunned him. But from what he knew of Haselburg's character, he argued that he was incapable of originating a scheme big enough to call for such a drastic proceeding; that he was probably only the confederate or tool of men with larger plans, greater imagination, and a wider vision than this miserable little pettifogger possessed. And with that conviction came a possible solution almost as an inspiration, but a solution so absolutely incredible that he hesitated to formulate it in his own mind. Still, it contained just enough of plausibility to banish all memory of his fatigue and

to stimulate him to immediate action, and it made him reckless of espionage. To prove it, it was absolutely necessary that he should learn as much as possible of Trott's past history, and that he should discover the identity of the mysterious "Wops," who had gained such mastery over the spiritualistic brotherhood. Sinclair and Calkins undoubtedly possessed just the information which he wanted, and, in spite of the suspicion which had caused them to lapse so abruptly into silence at their last interview, he determined to have another try at them.

Their cards, announcing Professor Calkins as a gifted trance medium and slate writer and Doctor Philander Sinclair, "Seventh son of a seventh son; magnetic healer, clairvoyant, and hypnotist," gave him their address, and, although it was late, he was soon speeding uptown through the half-deserted streets toward it. He considered it a good omen when, as he turned from the avenue into the quiet side street where they lived, Doctor Sinclair, escorting a veiled woman, passed him without recognition, heading for a neighboring taxi stand. Of the two the doctor was the sharper and the more suspicious, and he welcomed the opportunity to question Calkins alone. He found the old man in the stuffy back parlor which served as his consultation room; its threadbare carpet and shabby furniture suggesting that his peculiar occupation was not a particularly lucrative one. The professor was seated at a large table on which were scattered the tools of his trade; a few slates, which to the casual observer differed in no particular from those used by school children, and a disordered pile of sealed envelopes. It was apparent to Riordan that, in spite of the prohibition, the professor had lately been "working;" but his cheerful congratulations upon the restored freedom of action brought no cheerful rejoinder from the old sharper who was apparently in the depths of depression.

"Sure, I've been working and on orders, too; but I can't see that there's anything in it for me, Ned, and I hope

you haven't come up here for the ten-spot I touched you for."

Riordan quickly reassured him upon that point, and, realizing that the old man was irritated to the point where he might be expected to make verbal protest, he wisely refrained from questioning him.

"I tell you, Ned, the game's fiercer than ever, and you're dead lucky that you never followed it up—although I will say you had talent," he volunteered after a moment's moody silence. "It was bad enough to get the word to lay low just when we were ready to make a killing, but I reckon we'd have been better off if we'd laid low as they told us to, instead of trying to string our old guy along for a measly meal ticket. Say, Ned, those blamed 'Wops have got our old bunch skinned a mile on the intelligence department; I don't believe there's a pin drops in this burg that they're not wise to, and the first thing we know they drop on us for our little séances we was keeping so quiet that we thought they wouldn't suspect 'em; and now I reckon the whole graft's spoiled."

"Did they scare your old boy off?" ventured Riordan.

"Scare him off? Let a good thing like that get away? Well, I guess not; that isn't their style; they copped him for themselves!" exclaimed the professor disgustedly. "Of course, when they came down on us and showed us that they had us dead to rights, I was plumb scared, so was doc, in spite of all his bluffing, for it ain't healthy for any one to disobey their orders—as poor old Phao found out. Anyway, I was so scared that doc says I was like that blamed parrot that talked too much; in trying to square ourselves I wised 'em up to just how good a thing we had, thinking mebbe it would make them go light on us; but, when they once found out how good the bait was, they went for it like a bunch of hungry sharks, and all that me and doc's liable to get out of it is a smell of the bare hook. He was just what they'd been looking for. Oh, yes; I've been working, all right, and I'll tell you right

here that I was sweating blood for fear I'd make a slip in the game I know so well that I could play it with my eyes shut. It wouldn't have been healthy to make a mistake; they'd sent old Phao's girl up here with the final instructions; she was in the other room there with doc, watching the whole business through a hole in the door. You can bet that there's no one in the business who could put anything over on her; Phao took her in hand early, and she knows all that he could teach her. Did you ever see her, Ned? I reckon not, for Phao kept her up in the country until about two years ago."

Riordan hardly dared answer for fear that the eagerness in his voice would arouse the old man's suspicions. He shook his head, summoning all of the indifference he could muster.

"Old Phao told me about her; but I don't believe I ever saw her, unless she is the skirt that I saw Doc Sinclair piloting toward a taxi just before I came in," he answered.

Calkins nodded. "That's right, and it's only a taxi because she didn't want to attract attention bringing her limousine into this punk neighborhood. Oh, she's in right; swell apartment and good eats—and it ain't so long ago that she slept on a shake-down in Phao's cabinet and looked on a hot-dog sandwich as a luxury. She ain't stuck up about it, though, I'll say that for her; she's a queer kid, and Phao worshiped the ground she walked on. I can't quite make her; but I was blame careful not to give her an excuse for saying anything unpleasant about us. It went off all right, too. I never turned a slicker trick than I did right here to-night. The old boy took a lot of care in tying those slates together after he'd slipped his letter between 'em; he had 'em so blamed tight that my fingers are sore from slipping the wedge in; but I got his letter out, and doc drew it under that rug into the next room."

Riordan fidgeted impatiently as the old faker, vain of his accomplishments, picked up a pair of the slates and prepared to give a practical demonstration. Every moment he felt

that the old man's unguarded garrulity was bringing him closer to the object of his visit, and he feared the interruption which he knew Sinclair's return would cause.

He dared not protest, however, and, knowing that a question would simply prolong the demonstration, he watched him in silence as he placed one of the sealed envelopes between the slates and then bound them round and round with stout twine. There was no question about the frames being fastened firmly together; not even a ray of light shone between them when the professor held them with their edges before the gas jet; but, after a few minutes of manipulation in plain sight above the table, he held up the identical letter which he had placed between them, a triumphant grin on his face as Riordan tactfully testified his admiration with an exclamation of astonishment.

"That beats the old slate writing hollow—and here's the little joker that does it!" he boasted, exhibiting a small wedge-shaped piece of wood, perhaps an inch long and of the thickness of a lead pencil. "Let me get the point of that between the frames and the string isn't made that won't stretch enough to let the letter slip out. Of course, the sucker never lets go of the slates, but he can't hold but one end, and I work on the other. He'll always swear that never once did I put a hand under the table; but you know how much that's worth. He always forgets that minute when I had to reach down and get the glasses which had slipped from my nose, or something like that, and, with doc helping me, that's all the time I need. You see this runner goes under the door into the next room, and doc's sitting in there waiting for the signal."

He turned back the rug, disclosing strings beneath; silk line, of the best quality, with a spring clip fastened near the table leg about which it was looped.

"That signal mean's that the sucker's letter is in the clip and the rest is easy," continued the professor. "Doc draws it in there, writes the answers to the questions—and he's a peach when

it comes to using up a lot of words that don't mean anything in particular but read like sense. Then he slips his letter back to me; I palm it and shove it in between the slates, and then I come out of my trance and tell the sucker to open 'em up. Say, the girl pretty nearly queered me to-night, though. Of course, we never let the sucker use more than one sheet of paper; the letter has to be thin, and doc always uses the thinnest we can find for the answers. She'd brought the letter she wanted passed over with her, and it was so thick I could hardly pass it in; but I got it finally, and the old guy never tumbled."

"What was in it, professor; the story of her young life?" asked Riordan, forcing a laugh.

Calkins shook his head despondently. "Search me, Ned; I can't even guess," he answered. "The old boy always showed me doc's answers; they were the kind that needed a lot of interpretation, but what he got to-night was evidently straight-from-the-shoulder talk, and, after reading it, he pouched that letter and beat it as if he was in a hurry to meet some one who was going to hand him a million dollars. Why, the old geezer even forgot to hand over the customary five-spot, and I've got a hunch that we've seen the last dollar of his money that we'll ever touch."

He relapsed into a sullen silence, brooding over his misfortunes.

Riordan feared to frighten him into absolute speechlessness, but the minutes were passing rapidly and he took a chance.

"It's too bad that Phao's girl has gone back on the old bunch," he suggested. "With the training she received from him she could——"

"Forget it!" interrupted Calkins curtly. "Phao wasn't training her for the likes of us. You know that the blamed old idiot was always digging around for what he called 'The Great Truth.' He always held that there was something in the materialization game; something he was on the edge of proving. There was one spirit that he

swore was always hovering around, trying to butt in even when he was faking. Of course, after he was sent up and the Wops got hold of her it was different; she knew a good thing when she saw it, and——"

They both started, the professor guiltily, as the warning signal of the brotherhood ripped through the room, and, turning, Riordan saw Doctor Sinclair standing in the doorway, scowling savagely.

"You blamed old fool; it would serve you right to have your tongue cut out, and it's something of that kind you're liable to get if you don't stop wagging it!" he exclaimed angrily, as he stepped into the room.

The professor seemed fairly to shrivel up with sudden terror, and Doctor Sinclair turned angrily on Riordan.

"See here, Ned, what are you trying to do?" he demanded. "Get us in dutcher than we are now?"

Riordan stared at him for a moment before answering. Underneath the bluster he read a fear as abject as that which the professor had betrayed, and he did a lot of quick thinking. Alone and uninterrupted with Calkins, he would, sooner or later, have obtained just what he was after through the old man's unguarded garrulity. But Sinclair was a rogue of different stamp; cunning and wary, on the lookout every minute for something which he might turn to his advantage; alert as a marauding crow in a cornfield for the slightest threat of danger. Calkins possessed the ingenuity which devised and planned their trickery; Sinclair the adroitness and skill which executed it and made it mutually profitable. It was evident that Sinclair's suspicions had been aroused and that he could hope to obtain nothing from him without satisfying him that it would be to his advantage to give it, or convincing him that he ran a greater risk by refusing to speak. He quickly reached a decision, the nature of it unconsciously influenced by his instinctive aversion to purchased evidence.

"No, doc; so long as you are on the level with me I'll never do you a bad

turn—and you know it!” he said. “I’m not quarreling with your way of making what you call a living; that’s your own business, and you know that I’ve never made it harder for you. After all, you and the professor have only been a pair of petty-larceny crooks; the most the police would ever have done to you would have been to drive you out of town; your game wasn’t big enough to pay protection money, and you would never have the nerve to go in for a big haul. How much did you expect to make out of old Fosdick, anyway?”

Disregarding him, the doctor turned furiously to his associate.

“You blithering, chattering old idiot!” he exclaimed. “Didn’t I tell you what would happen if you ever gave that name away? Do you know what we’ll get for this?”

The professor, his face blanched with fear, huddled down in his chair; turning a furtive, appealing glance at Riordan who came quickly to his rescue.

“Hold on, doc; your side partner didn’t give you away!” he said; interrupting an abusive torrent flowing from his lips. “I know all about Fosdick; perhaps more than you do. I know a lot of other things, too, and I know where I can find out about a lot more that I want to know and shall know before I’m a day older. You can save me a little time and trouble; make it easier for me if you’ll help me out right here and now. It’s your golden opportunity to get in out of the rain, doc. I know you two old codgers down to the ground; you’ve never done much harm, because you are only pikers; but right here is where you are getting out of your depth, and you need some one to throw you a line. You’ve let these brutes scare you silly by what they did to Trott; I’ll tell you right here that I’m going to yank him out of Sing Sing and do my best to put them—and every one connected with them—in there. If you will help me to do it in a hurry, I’ll promise to protect you and Calkins—”

“You? Where do you get that pro-

tection bug?” asked Sinclair derisively. “You’ll find out how much protecting you can do if you butt into this thing; you’ll be busy looking after your own skin, and you’ll find it full of holes some morning—or the coroner will! See here, Riordan, you get away from here, and stay away. They’re leery about you already; you didn’t do any one any good by going to see Phao today; he knows that, too, and that’s what drove him so nutty that he’s in a strait-jacket up there to-night. And how much good did you do yourself; I’m blamed sure that he never gave up.”

Right there Riordan realized that his efforts would be useless. Sinclair had very evidently received a convincing demonstration of a power great enough to inspire fear, and he had unwittingly betrayed more than he would voluntarily tell.

Riordan knew of that mysterious and most effective underground, grapevine method of communication which enabled outsiders to learn of everything which went on within prison walls. That his antagonists had so quickly learned of his interview with Trott and of its effect on the old convict, convinced him that their organization was even more perfect than he had suspected, and that nothing he could offer would tempt Sinclair to betray them. The man was bluffing, but underneath that he recognized a fear so intense that he could not hope to overcome it.

“Very well; I’m sorry that that’s the way you feel about it, doc, but I never try to force kindness down a man’s throat,” he said, as he rose from his chair. “If you won’t walk my way, you’ll have to follow your own path, and I can see where that’s going to lead you. Don’t forget that I gave you the chance to cut in with me.” He looked about the room with its shabby furnishings and the unmistakable earmarks of a hand-to-mouth existence lived in poverty.

“And just remember another thing; both of you,” he added slowly, kindness and sadness mingled in his tone:

"Years ago we traveled the same road together for a little while, and we came together to a parting of the ways. When I look at the result I can't help being thankful that we chose different paths; but now, after all these years, they cross each other. There's still a chance for you to leave yours and travel mine, and I'm ready to give you a helping hand over the rough spots until your feet get accustomed to it, but I can't drag you. Think it over; that hand will still be extended in the morning; but, if it isn't taken in friendship, don't hold me responsible if it has to close on you in retribution."

The professor rose unsteadily to his feet; his knees were shaking and his face was ghastly, but Sinclair grasped him roughly by the shoulders and pressed him back into his chair.

"Shut up; you old fool!" he exclaimed savagely. "Suppose that Ned does believe he's giving it to us straight and playing on the level, how much of a chance has he got to make good? Why, they'd wring his neck and put us where the dogs couldn't bite us. Get out, Ned; leave us alone, and we can take care of ourselves—we've got to do it the only way we know how, and we've got to do it quick. I'm not going to linger around here after they know that you came here after visiting Phao, and it's dollars to doughnuts that they'll be wise to it inside of an hour."

He almost pushed Riordan from the room in his eagerness; an eagerness which he realized was born of a panic

of fear. Calkins, cowed by the other and stronger personality, sat mute and helpless with terror. Riordan made no further protest; he knew that he had said enough to set the professor thinking, and he hoped that in consultation alone he might prevail over Sinclair. At any rate, his visit had been fruitful of results, and pointed out a trail which was most promising. Five minutes after leaving he stopped his car in front of the hotel around the corner where Sinclair and the girl had taken the taxi and signaled to the starter.

"About an hour ago an elderly man and a young woman engaged a taxi here; can you tell me the address they gave the chauffeur?" he asked.

The starter noted the significant move of his hand toward his pocket.

"No; but I might be able to find out by to-morrow morning—if it was worth the trouble," he answered. "That guy has turned in his car at the garage before this, but he'll be back on the first morning shift."

"That's a starter," said Riordan, passing over a bill which even in the flickering electric light the starter could see had a yellow back. "Get that dope to me before nine o'clock; if it's straight there will be five more of those waiting for you." And from the expression on the starter's face Mr. Riordan drove homeward to enjoy a well-earned rest, confident that in the morning he would know the abiding place of the girl whom he believed to be the key to the whole mystery.

TO BE CONCLUDED.



THE VALUE OF SOME KNOWLEDGE

N. O. MESSENGER, a brilliant writer on national politics, is called "Jack" by his familiars. Last fall everybody was wondering what extra legislation the coming session of Congress would try to put over. W. A. Crawford, also a powerful pusher of the pen, or, rather, a tremendous beater up of the type-writer, concerning national affairs, asked Messenger:

"Jack, what do you think Congress is going to do?"

"I don't know and I don't care," replied Messenger. "Knowing all about what Congress is going to try to do is about as profitable as knowing all about baseball."

Lovin' Kindness in the Hoss Country

By C. A. Bonfils

According to Big Dal, a man of large affairs in his part of the West, you can't make money by playing the "lovin'-kindness" game. The tender-heartedness of his partner in the horse business was the rock on which they split.

BIG Dal stood on one of the green poles that fenced the corral, the high heels of his expensive alligator boots hooked over it, leaned his elbows on the top rail, humped his high shoulders up to his ears, and watched Shorty Scoggins put the stallion through his paces. Scoggins, tapping the ground occasionally with the tip of a buggy whip to stimulate the horse and make him show his action, glanced anxiously at Big Dal's red face. What impression the horse was making he could not determine. Dalhart kept his small eyes fixed on the horse closely, but made no comment until Scroggins brought him to a stop and shortened up on the rope.

"What do you think of him, Mr. Dal?" Scoggins asked.

"Not a bad hoss for anybody that wants that kind, Shorty," Dalhart drawled. He might have said more damning things if he had had time to think of them.

"Think he's a little light?" pursued Scoggins half-heartedly.

"Yep, he's a way yonder light. He's saddle stock, Shorty, and we've got about as much use for saddle stock as we have for waltzing mice. How in glory did you ever come to buy him?"

"I thought we was gettin' a bargain in him," Scoggins offered defensively. "He's well bred, Mr. Dal. Ain't a better-bred hoss in the State than him, an'

I figgered that when he come full age he'd be big enough. We want a kinda general type of hoss." He flicked an imaginary fly off the stallion's shoulder, and the horse came close and nuzzled him in the neck, pretending to bite.

"No, we don't want a kinda general type of hoss," quoted Dalhart. "Nor a kinda colonel type nor a lieutenant kind, neither," he continued. "For my part, I don't think he's worth a cent. Put him up, Shorty; it hurts my eyes to look at him."

Scoggins led the prancing, high-headed horse back to his stall gloomily, while Dalhart straightened up and looked about him. It was the first time he had been to the ranch since he had gone into partnership with Scoggins a year before, for Mr. Dalhart was a man of big affairs in his part of the West, and the little ranch, with its half a hundred mares, was only a very small side line with him. He had trusted everything to the honesty and good judgment of Scoggins, who had worked a band of sheep two years for him, and, more than that, made good with them, though he didn't like sheep. When he came to Big Dal with his proposition to start a horse ranch Dalhart had listened. The venture seemed too good to have been overlooked, as Scoggins claimed it had been, and he rode the forty miles from his winter sheep camp to look it over. He found it even more

promising than Shorty had represented. The key to the proposition was a high, dry plateau, eighteen miles across between the breaks of Pass and Jack Creeks on the north and south, and twenty-five miles across from the deep cañon of the Platte on the east to the great hills it merged into on the west.

"Hoss country all right, Shorty," Dalhart had admitted when they rode across it.

"No doubt about it, Mr. Dal," Shorty joined in enthusiastically. "You see, it's flat as a floor, and there ain't a water hole nor a stream on it. No water except the creeks and the river runnin' at the east end, and you couldn't git down to that without a five-hundred-foot rope. Sheep can't range it in summertime because they can't git so far from water, and in winter the snow lays too deep for them on account of it being so flat; too deep for them to dig down to the grass."

"Mighty good proposition, Shorty," Dalhart had assented; "mighty good."

"Why, Mr. Dal, we oughta take off forty-five head of good hosses a year at least, and as many more as we want to up to five hundred head, if we can jist hold it. All we need is a little bottom land to raise a few tons o' hay on to kinda he'p 'em through the worst storms in winter."

"Hop to it, Shorty," Big Dal had instructed, "an' I'll see about holding it."

Shorty had "hopped to it" to the best of his ability. He homesteaded four forty-acre tracts along Pass Creek, managing to include forty acres of good hay land, and settled down to make a fortune. And now big Dalhart had come to pass judgment on what he had thus far accomplished. There was little enough for him to see around the ranch—just the small corral, the log stable, the flat-topped, mud-roofed and mud-chinked one-story log house, all new, the bark not yet peeling; the forty-acre field of alfalfa, heavy with stacks, for it was now autumn and the last cutting had already been made. In the field half a dozen old mares were feeding. From a gate in the far side of

the field a trail led up from the river bottom and on to the mesa. Dalhart's eyes came back from the mesa to look upon the comfortable old horses grazing in the field, and he shook his head. He took off his high-peaked black hat and mopped his forehead. Scoggins, looking out through the window of the stall, saw him do it, and took an extra precautionary knot in the rope as he tied the stallion. When Big Dal looked that way he wasn't pleased, and when he mopped his face he was thinking hard, and likely thinking hard things. Many times had Scoggins seen an explosion follow just such actions. When he came out he was prepared to hear Dalhart break right out with what was on his mind. He didn't. Instead, he asked quietly, settling the hat on the back of his head:

"Whose mares are them in the field?"

"Them's ours." Shorty tried to say it casually.

"What you got 'em in there for?" Dalhart was deadly calm. Scoggins looked up at him like a boy who has been pilfering jam but is not going to lie about it.

"Oh, them's jist old mares, Mr. Dal," he hurried along. "They wasn't in very good condition; it's been pretty dry on the mesa during the summer, and I thought I'd bring 'em down here an' git a little fat on their ribs before winter came on."

"Shorty"—Big Dal narrowed his eyes and looked at him intently—"you and me ain't going to hit it off the way I thought we was."

Dalhart got down off the fence slowly, as though he were very stiff. He was moving slowly because he was thinking slowly.

"No, sir," he continued, almost to himself, "you and me ain't going to git along in the hoss business a-tall."

Scoggins said nothing. He was waiting for Dalhart to get to the details, which he knew would follow in a moment or two.

"There's a good proposition here, Shorty; a bully good proposition. When you p'inted out to me the advantages of the Jack and Pass Creek

section for the hoss business it seemed to me that we might make a lot of money out of it. But I can tell you, son, the way you got things geared up they ain't nothing doin' at all."

"What's wrong, Mr. Dal?" Shorty almost pleaded. "What's the matter with things? If you don't like the stallion, we can sell him an' git the kind you like."

"It ain't that, Shorty, so much as your general idees of the hoss business. You don't know it as it has got to be run to make it pay right, an' I ain't got the time to teach you. But jest as an instance, you got pretty good feed right there in that paster, ain't you? And what you got feedin' on it? Half a dozen ole mares that'll never make you another colt an' altogether ain't wuth a chaw terbaccer. Did you he'p 'em any last winter, Shorty?"

"Well, yes, Mr. Dal, I did. Some way I jist couldn't bear to see the pore ole things starve. They come around the stacks and jist cocked they years up an' looked at me so, like they knowed I'd give 'em somethin', that I jist had to. At that, Mr. Dal, we wasn't but three tons short on the winter, an' I'm willing to pay somethin' myself on that. When we sell off the colts you can take what you think right outa my share."

"It's hell to be like you, Shorty," said Dalhart, looking squarely at him. "I shorely am glad that I ain't got sech a good heart. If I had had, I'd be herdin' sheep for some feller yet. Now listen to me, Shorty, you remember what I told you when we went in together. When I looked over this proposition I agreed with you it was hoss country. The snow lays too deep on that mesa during the winter for anythin' but a hoss. The sheep and the cattle can't paw down through to git at the grass. But you can't make no profits if you are going to feed all the decrepit ole mares on this range, and my money ain't a-goin' that way, Shorty; you git that? You'd oughta let nature take her course. Let them ole mares dig for it like the rest of the hosses do, an' if they can't make it—

why, that's their fault and nature's, not your'n. And I told you that at the time, Shorty. I told you we'll jest let 'em paw down to it or do without. We don't want to keep any that can't. Of course, when they's a very deep snow, you could scatter a little hay round on top of it, jest drive round a big circle and drop off some here and there.

"But I come down here and find that before the snow has flied this year you got a lot of ole mares feeding on good paster that ought to be shot jest to git 'em out of the way. No, Shorty, you and me ain't a-going to gee at all. I'm going out of business with you right now, Shorty. Yore heart's too soft."

"Awful sorry, Mr. Dal, that I ain't run it to suit you," said Shorty finally.

"Naw, Shorty, you ain't run it to suit me none. That ain't my way of running hosses. I believe in lettin' them rough it through. And you got idees to coddle 'em like they was children. We are going to split up right off. You keep the stud, Shorty. I don't want nothing to do with him. Also, we'll wipe that off the slate. You jest keep him because I wouldn't give him room no way. You can have my intrust in him. As to the rest—why, jest split 'em up half an' half as we agreed. You keep the brand and jest alter mine by havin' the left year slit. I'll send a couple of boys down here to help you, and you divide 'em up."

Dalhart started toward his horse, Shorty following.

"All right, Mr. Dal, if you don't want to podner no more with me. What'll you do about the hay? Half of that's yourn, and the wagons and stacker and sech."

"Well, Shorty, if you don't mind, I'll jest leave the hay and other stuff here for the present. I think I'll arrange with one of the boys down on the Platte to hay my bunch a little if they need it during the winter, and all that's left in the spring I'll sell." He walked to his horse and untied it. "No hard feelings, Shorty," he admonished. "We jest agree that we can't agree."

"Nope, no hard feelings, Mr. Dal.

And if you want me to hay your bunch——" hazarded Shorty.

"Not on yore life I don't!" laughed Dalhart. "You'd have me bankrupt before February. But I'm obliged jest the same. So long, Shorty, an' wish you luck."

"Same to you, Mr. Dal. Drop in an' see me, anyhow, when you're down this way," called Shorty, and Dalhart waved his hand.

Dalhart arrived at the buck camp at eleven o'clock that night, after a thirty-mile ride, in a very bad humor. He was destined to leave in a worse one. The foreman called him from the breakfast table the next morning to look at the havoc Black Cloud, a stallion, had wrought during the night. When Dalhart reached the stable he found a group of the men standing around a fine gelding lying dead in his stall, bitten, pawed, trampled, and mauled to death. His murderer was looking over the side of a neighboring stall, his great head up, his eyes aflame with the lust of killing, his ears pricked for a sound from his late adversary. The great bells of his nostrils opened and clutched shut with excitement, and he pawed and neighed and threw himself against the sides of his stall or back against the rope that held him fast.

"When did that black brute do this?" Big Dal roared at the foreman.

"Found him standing over the gelding this morning when I opened the door," explained the man, clearing his throat. "He'd broke out during the night, and the gelding couldn't get away; was tied up, and he just mauled him to death."

"What made you bring him in off the range?" stormed Dalhart.

"Old man Dove told me yesterday that if we didn't he'd kill him. He got after the old man day before yesterday, and if Dove hadn't been on a good hoss he'd 'a' caught him. You know how he acts. Let him see a man on hossback, and that man's got to get off that hoss or get outn the way, that's all they is to it."

"Yes, I know, I know," hurried Dalhart. "But go on 'bout old man Dove."

"They ain't any more to tell, 'ceptin' that I sent out two of the boys to get Black Cloud, intending to wait till you come and tell you about it."

"I'd oughta kill you, you big black murderer; that's what I'd ought to have done long ago!" muttered Big Dal as he walked toward the stall where the great horse trampled back and forth in his stall, threatening to break out again every moment. "I jest ought to put a bullet through your skull right now," he went on.

The stallion, inflamed with his deed of the night before, hardly saw the big man who was looking at him so intently, or, if he saw, gave little heed. Dalhart drew a huge pistol, and, leaning it over the side of the stall next to him, waited for the tossing, shaking head to become quiet an instant. The white blaze on the black forehead made a shining target.

Black Cloud had been a nuisance and worse ever since he had had him some four years. A black Percheron of the very best breeding, he had promised well, and Dalhart had had great hopes of him until his temper began to develop with his age and enormous strength. First he had almost torn the stable down one night to get at another stallion in another part of the building, nearly maiming himself in the effort. Turned out in one of the great pastures of the buck camp with a mixed bunch of mares and geldings, he had spent the days running the geldings out of his band, and had torn great bare spots on the haunches of some with his viselike teeth, and marked and scored them with his powerful feet. One or two he had injured so badly that they were all but ruined. And after his deadly malice toward the helpless geldings had been discovered and they were removed from the fury of his great strength, he had turned on some of the mares and run them out of the bunch. He was a sultan who knew no law but his own, and would think nothing of killing a favorite once he took a dislike to her.

After six months, Black Cloud had reduced his band to suit his taste, and there seemed nothing more that he could do in the way of destruction among his own kind. Then suddenly he developed a strange hatred for any person riding horseback. Perhaps he felt that his pride was lowered in seeing one of his kind so subject, himself an untamable viking. But whatever it was, he made it dangerous for any one who came within a mile of him on horse back. He would chase the insulter until left hopelessly behind, or, if he was close enough to run him down, would overturn horse and man in his mad charge and try to trample them.

If his peculiar whim were humored in time, if the rider, knowing his ideas about horses being ridden in his presence, deferred to them and dismounted, he would stop short within two or three hundred yards, and if the intruder gave no sign of remounting would whirl and gallop away. But woe to horse and man who did not know his strange pride, or, knowing it, were not quick enough. One or two had escaped only after the most desperate kind of chase.

A cowboy, taking a chance just for the fun of it, saved himself only by jumping into the narrow, perpendicular-walled gulch that ran through his range at a point where the huge stallion could not get down. Black Cloud hung his great black head and neck over the edge for a moment, lowering his shoulders, as though he were going to drop his whole ton of bone and muscle down the sixteen feet below him. And the cowboy, crouching by the wall, held his breath as the earth trickled down on him. The narrow, sandy gulch wound back and forth for half a mile before there was a slope where man or horse could get hold with feet or hands to climb out, and the cowboy was making ready for a run of it when the great warrior thought better of it, drew back his terrible front, and was off at a gallop for the runway, while the cowboy ran for another in the opposite direction, and made his way on his trembling pony off Black Cloud's range, his idea of a joke entirely altered.

With the gun cocked, Dalhart followed the broad forehead. At last the great head stilled as with kingly vision he looked through the open door far away to the freedom of the rolling brown hills. The long, polished blue barrel of the six-gun leveled in the big hand unwaveringly upon the white patch. For a second neither men nor horse moved nor breathed.

"Shores," Big Dal commanded abruptly, lowering his gun, "jest double tie him and hobble him in the stall. Hobble his front and hind feet together and put a bar behind him—tie him down if you have to—for two or three days until you can spare a couple of men for a while. I ought maybe to kill him right now and have done with it as I started to do two years ago. Maybe I'll regret it later on, as I did this morning. But I jest thought of a place for this rascal. I think I'll send him down on a new range where the feller that persuaded me not to kill him two years ago is ranchin' now. I'll give 'em a chanst to git reel well acquainted. He seems to like to have all the wuthless, ornery hossflesh in the country round him, and Black Cloud oughta be a valuable addition to the collection. You can jest turn Black Cloud out on the range with some mares I got down there, and we'll let this feller try his pettin' an' coddlin' on this brute. He knows Black Cloud like a book; would recognize him fur as he can see him. But at that he ought to make things nice and lively for him." Big Dal smiled, but in his humor was a bit of steellike grimness.

It was two months later, the latter part of October, before Big Dal came again into the Pass and Jack Creek country. There was a kind of remorse in his mind, along with a feeling that he wanted to look over the proposition again and see just how good it was. He didn't have a thing against little Scoggins, he admitted to himself; in fact, he liked him, but he felt sure that Shorty would be a failure in raising horses, and he might as well put him out of business and take the thing over

for himself. He was riding in from the north, the Jack Creek way, and had come from settling his sheep on their winter range. He had been kept later than he expected, and would have to stop at Scoggins' poor little place or ride twenty miles farther, and already he was tired. Counting the eighteen miles of mesa that lay between him and Scoggins' cabin, he would have done sixty miles that day, and his horse was as tired as he. There was a threat of snow in the sky, too, and the sun, nearing the horizon, was sinking, muffled up from the biting air, into great folds of gray clouds. Dalhart had ridden half a mile on the mesa from the breaks of Jack Creek when, several miles away, near the hills, an unusual sight met his roving eye. He knew almost by instinct what the white spot was—a sheep wagon. He drew up sharply, for not only was it not sheep range naturally, but it was not by express agreement.

According to this agreement, strong as written law, no sheep were allowed at any time on either side of that range of hills. They had been allowed to follow the range down in the fall and spring, follow it down to Jack Creek, but not beyond either slope. Here was an outfit that had not only broken the rule about not going below Jack Creek, but had also broken the other much stronger one which forbade their leaving the hill slopes. The intruders were evidently intending to "rim around" the great mesa, feeding back as far as possible during the day and bedding down near the river at night. Dalhart was a sheepman himself, and it might be supposed that he would be lenient with the transgressions of his kind. But his hand unconsciously reached to his waistline just in front of his hip, where swung his big gun. Not only were the intruders threatening a horse range which Big Dal already had in mind to keep for himself by taking all the water along Jack and Pass Creeks, hardly considering the petty obstacle which Shorty Scoggins represented, but they might take it into their heads to invade his winter sheep range one day's ride

away. And this Dalhart intended to stop before it started. He had an agreement with neighboring sheepmen; therefore, the trespasser on his to-be-acquired rights was a wanderer.

It was dark when he neared the dirty gray bulk of the canvas-topped sheep wagon, its lighted windows shining yellow and speaking of warmth and comfort inside. He could hear the sheep in the bottom bleating and calling, and he caught their acrid smell as he drew near. The warning bark of a sheep dog caused the lights to go out suddenly, and a man descended from the wagon, bareheaded. As he stooped down, the light from the kitchen stove revealed to Dalhart his identity, and with the eyes of a hawk the man recognized Big Dal. The stranger was a French Basque, the cook and camp mover of a pair who had been pirating on Dalhart's summer range off and on for two months. The parley between them was brief.

"What are you fellers doing down here?" stormed Dalhart. "Ain't you satisfied with stealing grass all summer without having to come down here in the hoss country and steal their winter range?"

"W'at eet eez you beezness?" came insolently from the man standing in the gloom of the darkened wagon.

"What it is my business, hey?" mocked Dalhart, spurring his horse closer. "Well, I'll tell you what it is my business quick. You fellers git your scabby sheep out of here by to-morrow morning or I'll come over with some friends and you won't have any sheep to move. Git that?"

The shepherd down in the bottom with the sheep had been hallooing, but had stopped when the dog barked, and if Big Dal had not been so intent on his conversation with the squat camp mover he would have seen the other come up on the edge of the mesa, look warily around, drop on his knees, and come crawling toward him through the tall clumps of salt sage. He had heard Dalhart's last threat plainly. He had been harassed all the summer, according to his code, and now it was starting

up for the winter. Big Dal, whom he knew by his voice, had been the chief persecutor during the summer, and the exasperated shepherd felt he owed this man grudges and to spare.

It was Dalhart, who, leasing some Indian land, had sent his men to oust him from feeding along the edge of it, and who had told the Indian agent about the Basques' sheep crossing the reservation line. It was Dalhart again who had sent his men to tell the forest ranger and had helped keep them from feeding along the narrow margin where safety lay on either side of the west line of the forest reserve. It was now Dalhart again, out in the dark, alone, threatening his partner as though he, Dalhart, were king and owned all the land in the world and wanted to drive them from the last foot of it.

"So, Meester Dal'ar'," he called out, rising to his feet. "So, you gone run me off dees place, too, *hein?* Di'n't you have come to make me go hout the forest resairv?" He was speaking quietly, the Basque shepherd, but there was an ugly whine to his voice, a whine intended to add to the insult he was going to hurl. "Di'n't you have came to make me go hout the Eenyan lan's, *hein?* Now, you are to do eet plenty more, *hein?* Well, my fr'en', lat me tell you dat not you, not a t'ousan' lak you, can make me move some more. Now you git hout dees place or I shoot you hout dat saddle." The Basque drew down on Dalhart, and the big fellow knew he meant every mispronounced syllable of it. He knew also that the Basque had a gun in his hand, ready to carry out his threat. But in spite of this, he whirled his horse and spurred toward the man, intending to ride him down.

As the horse reared and turned there was a flash of fire from beside the front wheel of the sheep wagon, and the heavy six-gun flew from his hand as the horse leaped almost from under him. Before he could prevent it the horse ran wildly across the mesa, plunging and snorting, and when he finally pulled him to a stop Dalhart could feel blood running down his left

leg in a stream. When he tried to work his foot in the wet boot it felt strangely numb. He realized that the bullet had broken his leg below the knee. The frightened horse was trembling and sweating. Dalhart, burning with anger, longed to go back, but his judgment told him it was folly. On horseback he would make an unmissable target for them, while they, with the wagon for cover, could keep entirely hidden. Even as he started off a rifle bullet tore the air close to him. The man who stood beside the wagon wheel sought to finish the job his partner had begun. And Dalhart rode away into the night toward Shorty's.

It was quite dark now and cloudy, threatening to storm before many hours, and Big Dal knew that he must hurry. He knew also that he had another cause for anxiety. His boot was already filled with blood, and he was beginning to feel faint and sickish, though he wouldn't admit it. He lost a few precious minutes while he loosened his saddle rope, and, slipping his foot out of the stirrup with his hand, drew the noose over his leg and above the knee. Then he set it as tight as his strong hands could draw it, with a hitch around the saddle horn. This he did three times, until his limb was held as in a vise and only a trickle came warmly down the numbing part.

He started his horse forward again, hurrying it with spur and quirt. Occupied with plans for summary revenge on the Basques, it was half an hour before he noticed the unusual lagging of the horse, which even the long trip they had made during the day would not explain. Big Dal had never spared horseflesh, and the animal he was riding was plucky to the core, but there was no response to his urging. It was only when the horse plodded wearily in a walk that the reason flashed into his mind. Then he looked at the rapidly gathering clouds forming themselves into a heavy gray felt in the west, calculated the keen bite in the air with open lips, felt the rising wind tug at his hat, and knew that unless he was in Shorty's cabin

within two hours he would never reach it. He knew the mesa only slightly, and if the coming blizzard swept round him there it would mean a white winding sheet for him. He knew, too, that the poor creature under him was dying, killed by the same shot that had broken his leg, and that its strength was ebbing, and ebbing terribly fast.

He had but one chance, and that was one in a million. If he could, within the next half an hour, while the horse was yet able to stand, find the horses ranging on the mesa, he might be able to ride up to them quietly, rope one, and saddle it from his horse's back. Shorty was gentle with horses, and Dalhart's prayer was that he might find one of the tame old mares he had seen in the pasture. And then a sudden rush of bitterness came over him, and he felt to see if his rifle were safe under his leg, cursing himself for not killing Black Cloud when he had the bead on him in the stall two months before. He set about making a noose in the shortened part of the rope left after making the tourniquet for his leg, straining his eyes meantime into the gloom.

It seemed that an hour passed without sight of anything or even a sound, save the slowing, weary thump of his horse's feet and the rising minor of the wind, when his horse stumbled. He held the dying creature up, and let it rest a moment, though every second lost was that much given out of the few minutes between him and his last chance for life.

Then he seemed to hear, very faint and far away, the rumble of the flying feet of horses. He waited, holding his breath. The sound stopped for a moment, and Dalhart's heart stopped with it. Then it came louder than before; they had crossed a small draw that had swallowed the sound.

He turned in his saddle, and against a long, thin edge of copper-colored light between the heavy gray sky and the black of the distant horizon he saw tiny black spots rising and falling. He could not tell whether or not they were coming toward him, but as the gusty

wind thrust his hat brim back from his eyes, like the touch of a strong hand, he came as near praying as he had in forty years, praying that they might come by him and that something had happened to Black Cloud since the day he had sent him down with the chance that he might destroy Shorty's band and make Shorty's poor lot all the harder.

They dipped below the horizon again, but he could hear the growing rumble of their approaching feet.

A few hundred yards off, they again came into the light, a wondrous tangle of thin black legs supporting a moving black cloud, and then Dalhart's hand jumped to his saddle horn and tugged at the stock of his rifle. For there in the lead, unmistakable for his great size, despite the mingling of his dark coat with the darkness of the night, was Black Cloud. His head was up, and Dalhart seemed to see the great, arched, thick neck, as he could hear now the separate pounding of his terrible feet.

"You black murderer! You black brute criminal! We'll have it out, anyway," Dalhart panted, tugging at the rifle, which had caught and would not budge. "We'll go together. Come on, tromp me down! I'll put every bullet in this into your big carcass. Come on; don't stop!" he yelled. "I'll git it out before you git here." The rifle finally came loose, the stock and lock blood-clotted and blood-smearred. Dalhart's hands were stiff with the cold, and a whirl of feathery flakes fluttered round him as he tried to thrust down the lever to load and cock it. The great horse was all but on him now. Then the poor creature under him sank, lurched to its knees, and the bullet sang high above the herd.

Faint, far off in the rear, came a voice: "Hay-yup, hay-yup!" The cheerful voice of Shorty. And as the stallion thundered up Dalhart wondered what Scoggins would think when he found his mangled body.

Dalhart was in Shorty's mean little bunk, the hardest bunk he had ever felt,

and Big Dal had slept in blankets on all sorts of ground as cowboy and sheepman for twenty years while he was getting his start. He was propped up with his own heavy greatcoat; Shorty's slicker was spread across his lap for a tablecloth, and he was drinking coffee out of Shorty's one saucer. A luxury, this drinking out of a saucer, that his wife no longer permitted. His left leg in splints and a three-sided wooden box trough was carefully covered with a red horse blanket. The lamplight made the rude little room cheerful, and the roaring kitchen stove made it a warm and homelike haven from the howling, snow-driving wind outside. Twenty-four hours had passed since Dalhart and his dying horse had toppled to the ground in front of the charging Black Cloud, and he had expected the next instant to feel the impact of one of the brute's great forefeet crashing against him, mangling flesh, and crushing through bones, or the grip of those powerful jaws on shoulder or limb. The doctor had come and gone, promising to telephone Dalhart's wife that he was all right.

"Shorty, how did it come that Black Cloud didn't kill me las' night?" he hazarded, sipping his coffee slowly and appreciatively.

"Lovin' kindness, jist lovin' kindness done it," grinned Shorty, thrusting a pan of biscuits into the oven. "How you like yore biskuts, Mr. Dal, brown er jist meejum?"

"Oh, any way so's they're hot. But tell me about this lovin' kindness with a murderin' brute like Black Cloud," persisted Dalhart.

"Why, I jist won his heart, Mr. Dal," chuckled Shorty, evidently greatly pleased with himself. "You ole houn' you, he oughta trömped you a little bit, anyway, fer sendin' him down here on me. You see, the boys jist out a devilment didn't tell me a word about turnin' him out on the range. They jist he'ped me brand the hosses, and then went on about they business, 'thout even mentionin' the name of Black Cloud. Two or three nights later I come on my stallion all tore up and

nearly ready to drop, and I had no idee what had happened. It took me all day, purty nigh, gittin' him back to the ranch. He'd been run way off'n the range and was almost dead. Well, after I got him fixed up I started out huntin' fer what it was that almost et him up, and I couldn't believe my eyes when I see ole Black Cloud. He seen me a mile away, an' come right after me, but he couldn't do much. When I got up clost I see he can't hardly move. In the fight my stallion had kicked him on the hip some way, and he couldn't put his laig to the ground. He hadn't had much to eat, an' scurcely anything to drink fer a week, and he was purty nigh gone. Couldn't git down off the masy to the creek his laig was so sore. When he comes at me he was mighty feeble, and I jist used the quirt on him, and it taken me all that day to git him back to the ranch. He jist set hisse'f, an' I dragged him down the trail like a sled. My hoss was pretty nigh all right then, and I taken him out of the barn an' turned him loose. He lights out, and I ain't never seen him sence. Then I puts ole Black Cloud in, and it taken me nearly a month to git him so he could walk all right. He's be'n a pet ever sence. He's quit all his bad habits, too, and I use him fer a ridin' hoss now. I rid him over after the doc las' night after I got you here."

So that was why the terrible hoofs had not descended, why the great jaws had not seized him. Big Dal remembered now how helpless he had lain, the rifle under him, his unhurt leg caught under the fallen horse, when, almost on him, the great creature had stopped, drew near—slowly, gently—and sniffed him. The horses had formed a frightened, timid ring around him and the fallen horse, threatening every moment to dart away. Then had come Shorty's pleasing, cheerful, "Yup, hay-yup!" He had been driving the horses down in front of the storm. Then Dalhart had called, and the big horse waited until Shorty came up, then rubbed his nose against man and horse.

"An' speakin' of lovin' kindness," Shorty interrupted his reverie, "Black

Cloud an' me went over to see them Basques in that sperrit this afternoon. I had on two cannon, a long-range rifle with a telescope sight, and a Swedish wood-carvin' tool fer clost appeal to the finer sensibilities of man. But they had vamoosed, takin' their sheep with 'em, and I don't think we'll see 'em in this neighborhood ag'in."

"If they keep out of sight, they'll hear nothing from me," laughed Dalhart. "By the way, Shorty, how aire you gettin' along with your hosses?"

"Jist bully, Mr. Dal, an' ole Black Cloud is my stan'-by. An' say, I'm makin' them ole mares step round now and earn they alfa'fy all right. They he'p me with the young hosses to beat the cards. You see, I don't break hosses, I jist train 'em, Mr. Dal, an' the ole, useless mares he'p me out that way. They run with the bunch, an' I can go up to 'em enywhere I meet 'em. They ain't afraid, and the young uns gits so they ain't skeered neither. They ain't never learned they was anything to be skeered of. An' you'd be surprised to see how easy they aire to handle. I thought fer a time I'd be a little skimped fer money, though. How do you like yore bacon, Mr. Dal, crisp er limber?"

"Limber."

Dalhart was thoughtful. "Lovin' kindness" again, lovin' kindness in the horse business, and working as though it were made for it; a place for the old horses to earn board and keep by teaching the young ones; the cost a wisp of alfalfa during the raging, blood-freezing blizzards, to give them a fighting chance to see the spring come greening across the range, the cottonwoods to come out in flashing splendor, and to feel again the soft and smiling sun.

"Say, Shorty," abruptly, almost roughly, "you jest fergit that you was ever up against it fer *dinero*, will you? From now on you ain't. I guess my bank book's fat enough to back this proposition."

"Thanks, Mr. Dal. That's mighty good of you, and you bet if I git

pinched fer money ag'in I'll shore call on you." The beaming Shorty brought over a plate of bacon and fried potatoes and a pan of crisp, brown biscuits.

"Surrup, too, when you're ready fer it," suggested Shorty, with the properly subdued tone due to such complete and magnificent hospitality. He waved one hand carelessly toward a clean white pine shelf, whereon, all alone, sat a diminutive molasses pitcher, all but empty. Dalhart had noticed it before, as well as the limp sack with scarcely a pound of flour in one corner, of which Shorty had made such a brave joke, offering it as proof of his bad housekeeping. He knew, too, that the last of Shorty's supply of bacon would be set before him for his breakfast.

After a pause long enough to speak in eloquent praise of Shorty's biscuits and bacon, and to rub away a film of moisture suspiciously brightening his eyes, Big Dal said: "Say, Shorty, if you think they's room enough fer two in this proposition, I'd like mighty well to be tuk in fer a podner ag'in—an' the lovin' kindness goes, too," he added, smiling. "What you say?"

"Suits me from the ground up," glowed Shorty. "Suits me fine an' dandy, Mr. Dal. I don't know nobody I'd druther podner with than you."

"Same here," returned Big Dal, still smiling. "An' fer ninety years. An', say, Shorty, I jest happened to think that I owe the comp'ny a little on account, seein' as how I haven't done nothing fer it this summer. So you'd better he'p the house out with a fifty you'll find in that leather in my right-han' hip pocket. Now that we're podners ag'in"—he started up hurriedly to prevent the thanks he saw rising to Shorty's smiling lips—"I got a confession to make. I use to didn't think so, Shorty, but when it comes to the hoss business you certainly do know some things. An' one of 'em is"—he paused between bites to resume with great warmth and heartiness—"how to fry bacon and make the damndest best biscuits I ever et."

The Wire Devils

By Frank L. Packard

Author of "On the Iron at Big Cloud," Etc.

II.—STACKED CARDS

STILLNESS! Then the chattering of a telegraph instrument, and, coincident with this, low, scarcely audible, a sound like the gnawing of a rat.

A half mile away from the station, along a road that showed like a gray thread in the night, twinkled a few lights from the little cluster of houses that made the town of Bald Creek. At the rear of the station itself in the shadow of the walls, it was inky black.

The chattering of the instrument ceased, and coincidentally there ceased that low, gnawing sound, and, crouched against a rear window, the Hawk chuckled a little grimly to himself. Within, and diagonally across from the window, an otherwise dark interior was traversed by a dull ray of light that filtered in through the open connecting door of the operator's room beyond. Inside there were Lanson, the division superintendent, and Martin, the trusted Bald Creek operator, while at any minute now MacVightie, chief of the railroad detective force, would be up on No. 12. They were preparing to spring their trap for the Wire Devils to-night!

Again the sounder broke into a splutter, but this time the gnawing sound was not resumed; the window fastenings were loosened now.

Came then the distant rumble of an approaching train; the rumble deepening into a roar; the roar disintegrating itself into its component sounds, the wheel trucks beating at the rail joints, the bark of the exhaust; then the scream of the brake shoes biting at the wheel tires, the hiss of steam, and, in

the mimic pandemonium, the Hawk raised the window and crawled in over the sill.

And again the Hawk chuckled to himself. Up and down the line to-night, at all stations where there were no night operators, the road's detectives stood guard over the telegraph instruments. It had been MacVightie's plan, originated the night before. It was very clever of MacVightie—if somewhat abortive. Also, quite irrelevant of course, and quite apart from that little matter of ten thousand dollars which he, the Hawk, had taken from the paymaster's safe last night, MacVightie to-night was likely to be in no very pleasant mood.

The engine without, blowing from a full head of steam, drowned out all other sounds. The Hawk picked his way across the room to a position near the connecting door, and composedly seated himself upon the floor behind a number of piled-up boxes and parcels. With a grin of acknowledgment to the escaping steam, he coolly moved two of the parcels a few inches to right and left, providing himself with an excellent view into the operator's room. From one pocket he took an exceedingly small flash light, and from another a notebook, and from his hip pocket an automatic revolver. This latter he transferred to his right-hand coat pocket. Bunching the bottom of his coat over his hand, he flashed on the tiny ray, found a convenient ledge formed by one of the boxes, and upon this laid down his notebook. The first page, as he opened the book, contained

a neatly drawn sketch of the interior of Bald Creek station. He turned this over, leaving the book open at a blank page, and switched off his light.

The door from the platform opened and closed as the train pulled out again, and a man stepped into the operator's room, and in the darkness the Hawk smiled appreciatively. It was MacVightie, and MacVightie's thin lips were drawn tighter than usual, and the brim of the slouch hat, though pulled far forward, did not hide the scowl upon MacVightie's countenance.

"Well, you're here, all right, Lanson, eh?" he flung out brusquely. "Nothing yet, by any chance, of course?"

Lanson, from a chair at the operator's elbow, nodded a greeting.

"Not yet," he said.

MacVightie was glancing sharply around him.

"Martin," he ordered abruptly, "close those two ticket wickets!"

The operator rose obediently, and pulled down the little windows that opened, one on each side of the office, on the men's and women's waiting rooms.

"What's that door there?" demanded MacVightie, pointing toward the rear room.

"Just a place I had partitioned off for stores and small express stuff," Martin answered. "There's no back entrance."

"All right, then," said MacVightie. He pulled up a chair for himself on the other side of the operator as Martin returned to his seat. "You know what you're here for, Martin—what you've to do? Mr. Lanson has told you?"

"Yes," Martin replied. "I'm to test out for east or west, if there's any of that monkeying on the wire to-night."

"Show me how it's done," directed MacVightie tersely.

The operator reached over to the switchboard and picked up a key plug.

"I've only got to plug this in—here—or here. Those are my ground wires east and west. The main batteries are west of us, at Selkirk, you know. If I ground out everything east, for in-

stance, and he's working to the east of us, the sounder'll stop because I've cut him off from the main batteries, and we'll hear nothing unless I adjust the relay down to get the weak circuit from the local batteries. If he's working west of us, the sounder will be much stronger, because the main batteries at Selkirk, with the eastern half of the division cut out, will be working on a shorter circuit."

"I see." MacVightie frowned. "And he'd know it—so Mr. Lanson told me last night."

"Yes, he'd know it," said Martin.

"Well, you can do it pretty quick, can't you?" suggested MacVightie. "Sort of accidentally like. We don't want to throw a scare into him. You'd know almost instantly whether he was east or west, wouldn't you? That's all that's necessary—to-night. Then let him go ahead again. We'll have found out what we want to know." He turned to Lanson, his voice rasping suddenly: "Did you see the *Journal* on the 'Crime Wave' this afternoon?"

Lanson's alert gray eyes took on an angry glint.

"No, I didn't see it, but I suppose it's the old story. I wish they'd cut it out! It hurts the road, and it doesn't get them anywhere."

"Perhaps not," said MacVightie, with a thin smile; "but it gets *me!* Yes, it's about the same—all except the last of it. Big headlines: 'Ten thousand dollars stolen from paymaster's safe last night'—'What is being done to stop this reign of assassination, theft, outrage, crime?'—'Has the clew afforded by the Hawk's release from Sing Sing been thoroughly investigated?' And then a list of the crimes committed in the last ten days—two murders, one in the compartment of that sleeping car; the theft of the diamond necklace; the express robbery; and so on through the list, ending up with last night. Then a nasty shot at the local police, and finally prefacing* the remark with the statement that the crimes were all connected with the railroad, a thinly veiled hint

that I am either a boy on a man's job or else asleep, in either of which cases I ought to be—well, you understand?" MacVightie's fist came down with a crash on the operator's table.

Lanson, with a worried look, nodded his head.

MacVightie laid his hand on the operator's sleeve. "Look here, Martin," he said evenly, "you're the one man that Mr. Lanson has picked out of the division, you're the one man outside of Mr. Lanson and myself who has any inkling that these secret messages coming over our wires have anything to do with these crimes; you understand that, don't you? This is pretty serious business. The newspaper didn't exaggerate any. We're up against a gang of crooks, cleverly organized, who will stop at nothing. Murder appears to be a pastime with them! Do you get me—Martin?"

For a long second the two men looked each other steadily in the eyes.

"Yes," said Martin simply.

"All right," said MacVightie. "I just want you to realize the necessity of keeping anything you may hear, or anything that may happen here to-night, under your hat." He turned to Lanson again, the scowl heavy upon his face once more. "I was going to say that I know who the man is that slipped through my fingers last night."

"You—*what!*" Lanson leaned sharply forward in his chair. "But he got away! You said he——"

"It was the Hawk!" MacVightie bit off the words.

"The Hawk?"

"The Hawk!"

"But how do you know?" demanded Lanson incredulously. "You said yourself that he had left no clew to his identity. How do you know?"

MacVightie reached into his pocket, took out his pocketbook, and from the pocketbook passed a new, crisp ten-dollar bank note to Lanson.

"What's this?" inquired Lanson. "The counterfeit ten-dollar bill you showed me last night?"

"No, another one," MacVightie an-

swered curtly. "Look on the other side."

Lanson turned the bank note over, stared at it, and whistled suddenly under his breath.

"With the compliments of the Hawk!" he read aloud. He stared now at MacVightie. "Perhaps it's a fake, inspired by that newspaper article last night," he suggested.

"It's no fake," declared MacVightie grimly. "The Hawk wrote that there, all right; it was inside the *pay bag* in which the ten thousand was carried away from the paymaster's office last night."

"You mean—you recovered the bag?" cried Lanson eagerly. "Where? When?"

The Hawk, watching MacVightie's face, grinned wickedly. MacVightie's jaws were clamped belligerently, and upon MacVightie's cheeks was an angry flush.

"Oh, yes, I 'recovered' it!" MacVightie snapped. "He's got his nerve with him! It was found reposing in full view on the baggage counter at Selkirk this afternoon—addressed to me. Nobody knows how it got there. But"—MacVightie's fist came down again upon the operator's table—"this time he's overplayed his hand. We knew he had been released from Sing Sing, and that he had come West, but it was only surmise that he was actually around here; now we *know*. In the second place, it's pretty good evidence that he's in with the gang that's flooded the country with those counterfeit tens, and you'll remember I told you last night I had a hunch it was the same gang that was operating out here—well, two and two make four!"

"You think he's——" Lanson swept his hand suggestively toward the telegraph instruments.

"Yes, and the leader of 'em, now he's out here on the ground," returned MacVightie gruffly.

The Hawk had taken a pencil from his pocket, and was scribbling aimlessly at the top of the page in his notebook.

"Sure!" confided the Hawk to him-

self. "I thought maybe you'd dope it out like that."

There was silence for a moment in the office, save for the intermittent clicking of the sounder, to which the Hawk now gave his attention. His pencil still made aimless markings on the top of the page; it was only routine business going over the wire. Then Lanson moved uncomfortably in his chair, and the chair legs squeaked on the bare floor.

MacVightie spoke again:

"Well," he said bluntly, "you've got all of my end of it, except that I've placed men in hiding at every station on the line where there are no night operators. What about you? Started your outside line inspection?"

"Yes," Lanson answered. "I've had three men out with section crews working from different points. But it's slow business making an inspection that's careful enough to be of any use, and even then it's a pretty tall order to call the turn on anything when there's already so many legitimate splices and repairs on the wires."

"Well, any results?" asked MacVightie.

Lanson shook his head.

"We found what we thought was a new splice in one place, but it turned out to have been made by one of our own men two weeks ago."

MacVightie's eyes narrowed.

"One of our *own* men, eh?" he repeated curtly. "Who was it?"

"Nothing doing there!" Lanson shook his head again, emphatically this time. "It was Calhoun."

"Calhoun, eh?" observed MacVightie softly.

Lanson bridled slightly.

"What's the matter with Calhoun?" he inquired testily. "Got anything against him?"

"Never heard of him before," said MacVightie, with a short laugh. "But I'll take pains to make his acquaintance."

"Then you might as well spare yourself the trouble," advised Lanson. "I can tell you beforehand that he carries a good record on this division, and

that he's one of the best linesmen we've got."

"I dare say," admitted MacVightie coolly. "But, among other things, we're looking for *good* linesmen to-night. You needn't get touchy, Lanson, because one of your men's names comes up. You can make up your mind to it there's an inside end to this, and —"

The tiny ray of the Hawk's flash light shot suddenly upon the notebook's open page as the sounder broke into a sharp tattoo.

"'Wtaz'—stroke at four," he muttered, as he began to write. "Three—one—two. They've changed the code to-night—'*quxpetk*——'"

There was a sharp exclamation from the other room.

"Listen! There he is now!" Martin cried.

Chairs were pushed back; the three men were on their feet.

"What's he sending?" questioned MacVightie instantly.

The Hawk scowled, as, over their voices, he concentrated his attention upon the sounder. He wrote steadily on:

"—*huzwkmuhhdtlqqvh*——"

"Same as usual," Martin replied. "Just a jumble of letters."

"Well, then, get ready to throw that ground, or whatever you call it, into him!" ordered MacVightie tensely.

"I'm ready," said Martin.

"All right then—*now!*"

The Hawk nodded to himself as his pencil unflaggingly noted down letter after letter. The sounder was very perceptibly stronger.

"West!" Martin cried out. "You noticed the difference in strength, didn't you? He's somewhere between here and Selkirk. That's——"

The sounder had suddenly ceased.

"But he's stopped," said MacVightie, "and you said if he stopped——"

"That's nothing to do with it!" Martin interposed hurriedly. "The wire isn't grounded now."

"He's taken to cover, I guess," said Lanson. "I was afraid he would scare,

no matter how—" He broke off abruptly. "Wait! What's that?"

The sounder was clicking again, but the sharp, quick tattoo was gone, and in its place, as though indeed it drawled, the sending came in leisurely, deliberate fashion.

The Hawk's pencil resumed its labors, and then, with a queer smile, the Hawk scratched out what he had just written. It was no longer code; it was in exceedingly plain English.

Martin was reading directly from the sounder:

"Try that game just once more, and the division goes up in the air and a train or two maybe to a place that Mister MacVightie will some day honor with his presence. That's quite plain, isn't it? If you think this is a bluff, call it. Now keep off the wire or have it cut. Suit yourselves."

"Well, by glory!" exploded MacVightie furiously.

"And the worst of it," said Lanson shortly, "is that he's got us where he wants us!"

Once more the sounder broke into the old, quick tattoo. The Hawk was writing steadily again. There was silence now between the three in the office.

A minute, two, three went by; the sounder ceased; the Hawk closed his notebook. Then, in its leisurely drawl, the sounder broke again, and again Martin read aloud:

"Pleasant evening, isn't it? Ask MacVightie if he has seen anything of the Hawk. Good night."

But this time there was only a menacing smile on MacVightie's lips.

"He's west of here, you say?" he shot at Martin.

"Yes," said Martin briefly.

"And that splice of Calhoun's, Lanson? Where was that?"

Lanson, drumming with his fingers on the edge of the operator's table, looked up with a frown.

"Nothing but coincidence," he said tersely. "Yes, it was west of here; pretty near Selkirk." He moved toward the door. "There's nothing more we can do here to-night. I'm going

back on No. 17. Let's get out on the platform until she shows up."

The Hawk very carefully replaced his notebook, his flash light, and his pencil in his pockets, and, as MacVightie and the superintendent went out of the door, he retreated softly back to the rear window. The window being up, he quite as noiselessly slipped out over the sill. He debated a moment about the window, and decided that if any significance were attached to the fact that it was found open, MacVightie, for instance, was fully entitled to make the most of the significance. Then the rumble of a wagon sounding from the direction of the road, the Hawk moved along to the end of the station and waited.

The wagon, in the light of its own smoky oil lamps, proved to be the town hotel bus. There were evidently other passengers for Selkirk besides himself and the two officials, as several people alighted from the bus. In view of this fact, the Hawk calmly lighted a cigarette, though the glow of the match exposed his face only to the blank wall of the station, and walked around to the front platform.

He located MacVightie and Lanson, and, thereafter, at a safe distance, did not lose sight of them. MacVightie's memory for faces would hardly be overrated if credited with being able to bridge a matter of considerably less than twenty-four hours, particularly as MacVightie had evidenced unusual interest in the occupant of the room on the first landing over a certain ill-favored saloon the night before. The Hawk, therefore, was unostentatiously attentive to MacVightie's movements, so much so that when No. 17 pulled in and MacVightie and Lanson boarded the chair car at the rear of the train, the Hawk, when No. 17 pulled out, quite logically boarded the smoking car at the forward end.

The Hawk chose the most uncomfortable seat in the car—the rear seat, with stiff, upright, unyielding back, that was built against the washroom—and, settling himself down, produced his notebook and pencil. The water cooler

could be quite confidentially trusted—not to peer over his shoulder.

On the second page of the notebook—the first having been devoted to the sketch of Bald Creek station—the Hawk had written the cipher message which he had taken from the sounder.

The Hawk tore out a page from the back of the notebook, and began the laborious task of decoding.

They were well on toward Selkirk when the Hawk finally completed the deciphering of the message:

Number Three and Seven Isaac Kirschell's cash box to-night as planned. Calhoun to report all line splices his own. Number One says Hawk slender white hands, manicured, medium height, eyes and hair black, expensive tailored clothes. Two thousand dollars out of reserve fund to Number that puts a bullet in him.

The Hawk inspected his hands, and smiled whimsically. Number One was the Butcher. He had not given the Butcher credit for being so observant. Presently he stared out of the window.

"Wonder how much of a haul I can make to-night?" he murmured. "Regular El Dorado—having 'em work it all up and handing it to you on a gold platter. Pretty soft! Hope they won't get discouraged and quit picking the chestnuts out of the fire for me—while there's any chestnuts left."

And then the Hawk frowned suddenly. The chestnuts appeared to be only partially picked for him to-night. What was the game—as planned? There must have been a previous message that had got by him. His frown deepened. There was no way of remedying that. To hope to intercept them all was to expect too much. There was no way whereby he could spend twenty-four hours out of twenty-four in touch with a sounder. He shrugged his shoulders philosophically after a moment. Perhaps it was just as well. They credited him with playing a lone hand, believing that his and their depredations were clashing with one another simply by virtue of the fact that their mutual pursuits were of a competitive criminal nature, that was all. If it happened with *too* much regu-

larity, they might begin to suspect that he had the key to their cipher, and then—the Hawk did not care to contemplate that eventuality. There would be no more chestnuts!

The Hawk read the first part of the message over again. Who was Isaac Kirschell? The name seemed to be familiar. The Hawk studied the toe of a neatly fitting and carefully polished shoe thoughtfully. When he looked up again he nodded. He remembered now. He had lunched the day before in a restaurant that occupied a portion of the ground floor of an office building, the corridor of which ran through from street to street. In going out he had passed along the corridor and had seen the name on the door panels of two of the offices.

He resumed the study of his boot toe. It was not a very vital matter. A moment spent in consulting the city directory would have supplied the information in any case. He nodded again. MacVightie was unquestionably right. Some one on the inside, some railroader, and probably more than one, was in on the game with the Wire Devils, and it was perhaps as well for this Calhoun that MacVightie, already suspicious, was not likewise possessed of the key to the cipher. Also, Lanson had been right. It was no easy task to locate a new splice on the wire that was already scarred with countless repairs. Still, if Lanson's men went at it systematically, and narrowed down the radius of operations, it was not impossible that they might stumble upon a clew—if Calhoun did not placidly inform them that it was but another of his own making. But even then, granted that the wire was found to have been tapped in a certain place one night, that was no reason why it should not be tapped fifty miles away the next. The Hawk grinned. Mr. Lanson and his associates, backed even by Mr. MacVightie, were confronted with a problem of considerable difficulty.

"I wonder," communed the Hawk with himself, "who's the spider that spun the web, and I wonder how many

little spiders he's got running around on it?"

He perused the message once more, but this time he appeared to be concerned mainly with the latter portion. He read it over several times: "Two thousand dollars to the Number that puts a bullet in him."

"Nobody seems to like me," complained the Hawk softly. "MacVightie doesn't, and the Butcher's crowd seem peeved. Two thousand dollars for my hide! I guess if I stick around here long enough, maybe it'll get exciting—for somebody!"

The Hawk tore up the message, the sheet on which he had deciphered it, the sketch of Bald Creek station, tore all three into small fragments, opened the window a little, and let the pieces flutter out into the night. He closed the window, returned the notebook, innocent of everything now but its blank pages, to his pocket, and, pulling his slouch hat down over his eyes, appeared to doze.

Twenty minutes later, however, the Hawk's drowsiness was little in evidence. As No. 17 pulled into division he dropped to the platform while the train was still in motion, and before MacVightie and Lanson in the rear car, it might be fairly assumed, had thought of leaving their seats. The Hawk was interested in MacVightie for the balance of the night only to the extent of keeping out of MacVightie's sight; his attention was centered now on the office of one Isaac Kirschell and the possibilities that lay within Isaac Kirschell's cash box.

He glanced at the illuminated dial of the tower clock. It was eighteen minutes after ten.

"That's the worst of getting the dope a long way down the line," he muttered, as he hurried through the station and out to the street. "But I had to get a look at MacVightie's cards to-night." He struck off toward the downtown business section of the city at a brisk pace. "It ought to be all right, though, to-night. More than enough time to get in ahead of them; they're not likely to pull any break in

that locality until well after midnight. Wonder what Kirschell's got in his cash box that's so valuable? I suppose they *know*, or they wouldn't be after it. They don't hunt small game, but"—the Hawk sighed lugubriously—"there's no chance of any such luck as last night again. Ten thousand dollars in cash! *Some* haul! Yes, I guess maybe they're peeved!"

The Hawk, arrived at his destination, surveyed the office building from the opposite side of the street. The restaurant on the ground floor was dark, but a lighted window here and there on the floors above indicated that some of the tenants were working late. It was therefore fairly safe to presume that the entrance door, though closed, was unlocked. The Hawk crossed the street unconcernedly and tried the door. It opened under his hand—but noiselessly, and to the extent only of a bare inch, in view of the possibility of a janitor being somewhere about. Detecting no sound from within, however, the Hawk pushed the door a little farther open, and was confronted with a dimly lighted vestibule, and a long, still more dimly lighted, corridor beyond. There was no one in sight. He slipped inside, and, quick and silent as a cat now in his movements, darted across the vestibule and into the corridor.

Halfway along the corridor, he halted before a door on whose glass panel he could just make out the words, "Isaac Kirschell," and, beneath the name, in small letters, the intimation that the entrance was next door. The Hawk's decision was taken in the time it required to produce from his pocket a key ring equipped with an extensive assortment of skeleton keys. If by any chance he should be disturbed and had entered by the designated office door, his escape would be cut off; if, on the other hand, he entered by this unused door, and left it unlocked behind him, he would still be quite comfortably the master of the situation in almost any emergency.

The door seemed to offer unusual difficulties. Even when unlocked, it

stuck. The Hawk worked at it by the sense of touch alone, his eyes busy with sharp glances up and down the corridor. Finally, succeeding in opening it a little way, it was only to find it blocked by some obstruction within. He scowled. A desk probably close against it! The door was certainly never used. He would have to enter by the other one, after all, and—no! He had reached his arm inside. It was only a coat stand or something of the sort. He lifted it aside, stepped in, and closed the door behind him.

The Hawk's flash light—not the diminutive little affair that had served him for his notebook—began to circle his surroundings inquisitively. He was in a small, plainly furnished private office. There was a desk, two chairs, and a filing cabinet. Also there were two doors. The Hawk opened the one at his left, and peered out. It gave on what was presumably the general office, and at the rear of this was a partition with the name, "Mr. Kirschell," upon the door. He looked at the panel of the door he had just opened. It bore no name.

"This belongs to Kirschell's secretary probably," he decided. "The other door from here opens, of course, into Kirschell's private office. Wonder what Mr. Isaac Kirschell's business is?"

He closed the door leading into the outer office, and moved across the room to the second door that already stood wide open, and almost directly faced what he had taken for granted was the secretary's desk. He stepped over the threshold. Mr. Kirschell's sanctum was somewhat more elaborately furnished. Apart from a rather expensive flat-topped desk in the center of the room, there was a massive safe, new and of modern design, a heavy rug upon the floor, and several very comfortable, leather-upholstered chairs. A washstand, the metal taps highly polished, and a mahogany towel rack occupied the far corner. The Hawk inspected the safe with the eye of a connoisseur, scowled unhappily by way of expressing his opinion of it, and

turned to the desk. He opened a drawer, and picked up a sheet of business stationery. The letterhead read:

ISAAC KIRSCHELL.

Loans, Mortgages & General Exchange.

"Ho, ho!" observed the Hawk. "Sort of a glorified pawnbroker, eh? I——"

The sheet of paper was shot back into the drawer, the flash light was out, and on the instant the Hawk was back in the other office and crouched on the floor behind the desk. Some one had halted outside in the corridor before the office door, and now a key was turned in the lock. The door was opened and closed, footsteps crossed the general office, paused for a moment outside Mr. Kirschell's door, then the lights in Mr. Kirschell's room went on, a man entered, tossed his hat on a chair, and sat down at the desk. It was obviously Mr. Kirschell himself.

Through the wide opening between the ends of the desk that sheltered him, the Hawk, flat on the floor, took stock of the other. The man was rather small in stature, with a thin, hatchet-like face, sharp, restless, very small black eyes, and he was extremely well dressed; the Hawk noted the dainty little boutonniere in the lapel of the man's coat, and smiled queerly. From Mr. Kirschell's face he glanced at the face of Mr. Kirschell's safe, then back at Mr. Kirschell again, and reached into his pocket for his automatic.

The Hawk, however, made no further movement; Mr. Kirschell's actions suggested that it would be unwise. The man, though apparently occupied with some mail which he had taken from his pocket, kept glancing impatiently at his watch. It was quite evident that he expected some one momentarily. The Hawk frowned perplexedly. The message that night, even when deciphered, left much, too much, to the imagination. It was quite possible that Mr. Kirschell was to be relieved of his cash box with more address and finesse than by the bald expedient of ruining Mr. Kirschell's safe. This appoint-

ment, for instance, might— And then the Hawk smiled queerly again.

The corridor door had opened and closed for the second time. A heavy step traversed the outer office, and a man, hat in hand, in cheap store clothes, stood before Mr. Kirschell's desk.

"Mentioned in dispatches!" said the Hawk very softly to himself. "I guess that's Calhoun. So that's the game, eh?"

"You're late, Mr. Calhoun!" Kirschell greeted the other sharply. "Five minutes late! I have put myself to considerable inconvenience to give you this appointment."

Calhoun's hair was tossed, there was a smudge across his cheek, and his hands were grimy, as though he had just come from work. He was a big man, powerfully shouldered. His gray eyes were not friendly as they met Kirschell's.

"I couldn't help it," he said shortly. "I've been up the line all day. I told you I couldn't get here until about this time."

"Well, all right, all right!" said Kirschell impatiently. "But, now that you are here, are you prepared to settle?"

"I can give you a small payment on account; that's the best I can do," Calhoun answered.

Kirschell tilted back in his swivel chair, and frowned as he tapped the edge of his desk with a paper cutter.

"How much?" he demanded coldly.

"Forty dollars." Calhoun's hand went tentatively toward his pocket.

"Forty dollars!" There was derision in Kirschell's voice, an uninviting smile on Kirschell's lips. "That's hardly more than the interest!"

"Yes," said Calhoun, snarling suddenly, "at the thieving rates you and the bloodsuckers like you charge."

Kirschell's uninviting smile deepened.

"Considering the security, the rate is very moderate," he said evenly. "Now, see here, Calhoun, I told you plainly enough this thing had to be settled today. You don't want to run away with the impression that I'm a second Marakof, to be staved off all the time. I

bought your note from the pawnbroker's estate because the executors didn't like the look of it, and weren't any too sure they could collect it. Well, I can! I'm new out here, but I'm not new at my business. Excuses with me don't take the place of cash. I hold your note for five hundred dollars, which is past due, to say nothing of six months' interest besides, and you come here to-night and offer me forty dollars!"

"I would have paid Marakof," said Calhoun in a low voice, "and I'll pay you as fast as I can. You know what I'm up against; I told you when you first got after me, as soon as you got that note. My brother got into trouble back East. What would you have done? That five hundred kept him out of the 'pen.' He's only a kid. Don't play the shark! Marakof renewed the note; why can't you?"

"Because I don't do business that way," said Kirschell curtly.

Calhoun's voice grew hard.

"How much did you pay for that note, anyway?"

Kirschell shrugged his shoulders.

"I didn't say I wasn't taking *any* risk with you," he replied tersely. "That's the profit on my risk. And as far as you are concerned, it's none of your business!"

Calhoun shrugged his shoulders in turn, and, taking a small roll of bills from his pocket, smoothed them out between his fingers.

"I got a wife, and I got kids," said Calhoun slowly. "And I'm doing the best I can. Do you want this forty or not?"

"It depends," said Kirschell, tapping again with his paper cutter. "How about the rest?"

"I'll pay you what I can every month," Calhoun answered.

"How much?" bluntly.

"What I can!" returned Calhoun defiantly.

The two men eyed each other for a moment, and then Kirschell tossed the paper cutter down on the desk.

"Well, all right," he decided ungraciously. "I'll take a chance for a

month, and see how you live up to it. Hand it over, and I'll give you a receipt."

Calhoun shook his head.

"I don't trust the man who don't trust me," he said gruffly. "I don't want that kind of a receipt. You'll indorse the payment on the back of the note, Mr. Kirschell, if you want this forty."

"What?" inquired Kirschell, staring.

"You heard what I said," said Calhoun coolly. "I'm in the hands of a shark, and I know it. That's plain talk, isn't it?"

"But," Kirschell flared up angrily, "I——"

Calhoun calmly returned the money to his pocket.

"Suit yourself!" he suggested indifferently. "I ain't asking for anything more than I have a right to."

"Very well, my man," said Kirschell icily. "If our dealings are to be on this basis, I hope you will remember that the basis is of your own choosing." He swung around in his chair, and, rising, walked over to the safe.

And then, for the first time the Hawk moved. He edged silently back along the floor until far enough away from the doorway to be fully protected by the darkness of the room, and stood up. Kirschell was swinging the heavy door of the safe open. The cash box was to be produced! Lying down, the Hawk could not hope to see its contents if it were opened on the desk; standing up, he might be able to form a very good idea of how tempting its contents would prove to be.

Kirschell took a black-enameled steel box from the safe, and returned to the desk. He opened this with a key, threw back the cover, and the Hawk stuck his tongue in his cheek. A few papers lay on the top; otherwise it was crammed to overflowing with bank notes. Kirschell selected one of the papers, and picked up a pen in frigid silence.

But the Hawk was no longer watching the scene. His head was cocked to one side in a curious, birdlike, listening attitude. He could have sworn he had heard the outer office door be-

ing stealthily opened. And now Calhoun was speaking rapidly, his voice raised noticeably in a louder tone than any he had previously employed.

"I ain't looking for trouble, Mr. Kirschell," he stated hurriedly, as though relenting, "and I don't want you to think I am, but——"

There was a sharp cry from Kirschell. The room was in darkness. Came a quick step running in from the outer office, no longer stealthy now—the crash of a toppling chair—a gasping moan in Kirschell's voice—the thud of a falling body—a tense whisper: "All right. I've got it!"—then the steps running back across the outer office, the closing of the corridor door—and silence.

The Hawk, grim-lipped, had backed up against the wall of the room.

Calhoun's voice rose hoarsely:

"Good Lord, what's happened? Where's the electric-light switch?"

Kirschell answered him faintly:

"At—the side of the door—just—outside the partition."

The lights went on again, and the Hawk leaned intently forward. Calhoun was standing now in the doorway between the outer and the private office, his eyes fixed on Kirschell. The swivel chair had been overturned, and Kirschell, a great, crimson stream running down his cheek from above his temple, was struggling to his knees, clutching at the edge of the desk for support. The cash box was gone.

Kirschell's eyes swept the top of the desk haggardly, as though hoping against hope. He gained his feet, lurching unsteadily. A crimson drop splashed to the desk.

"My chair!" he cried out weakly. "Help me!"

Calhoun stepped forward mechanically, and picked up the chair. Kirschell dropped into it.

"You're hurt!" Calhoun said huskily. "You're badly hurt!"

"Yes," Kirschell answered; "but it—can wait. The police first—there was—three thousand dollars—in my cash box." With an effort he reached out across the desk for the telephone,

pulled it toward him, and, on the point of lifting the receiver from the hook, slowly drew back his hand. A strange look settled on his face, a sort of dawning, though puzzled, comprehension, and then, swaying in his chair, his lips thinned. He drew his hand still farther back until it hovered over the handle of the desk's middle drawer. His eyes, on Calhoun, were narrowing.

"You devil!" he rasped out suddenly. "This is your work! I was a fool that I did not see it at first!"

Calhoun's face went white.

"What do you mean?" he said thickly.

"What I say!" Kirschell's voice was ominously clear now, though he sat none too steadily in his chair.

"Then you lie!" said Calhoun fiercely. "You lie, and if you weren't hurt, I'd——"

"No, you wouldn't!" Kirschell had whipped the drawer open, and, snatching out a revolver, was covering Calhoun. He laughed a little, bitterly. "I'm not so bad that I can't take care of myself. It was pretty clever, I'll give you credit for that. You almost fooled me."

Calhoun cursed. "Do you mean to say I've got your cash box?"

"Oh, no," said Kirschell. "I can see you haven't. I don't even know which of you two struck me. But I do know that you and the man who has my cash box worked up this plant together."

Calhoun stepped forward threateningly, only to retreat again before the lifted muzzle of the revolver.

"You're a fool!" he snarled. "You've nothing on me!"

"That's for the police to decide," returned Kirschell evenly. "It would have been a pleasant way of disposing of that note—wouldn't it?—if you hadn't underrated me! And your pal for his share, I dare say, was to take his chance on whatever there might be in the cash box. Why did you say you couldn't come until *night*, when I gave you until to-day as the last day in which to settle? Why did you insist on my indorsing the payment on

the note, which necessitated my opening the safe and taking out the cash box in which you knew the note was kept, for you saw me put it there a week ago, when you first came here? And just after I was knocked down I heard your accomplice whisper, '*All right, I've got it.*' It's possible the police might form the same opinion I have as to *whom* those words were addressed."

Calhoun's face had grown whiter.

"It's a lie!" he said scarcely above a whisper. "It's a lie! I had nothing to do with it!"

"I want my three thousand dollars!" Kirschell's lips were set. He held a red-stained handkerchief to his cheek. "If I call the police now, they'll get you, but it's your accomplice that's got my money. I'll give you half an hour to go to him and bring the money back here, and leave the police out of it. If you're not here in that time, I put it up to the police. Half an hour is time enough for you to find your pal, and it's not time enough for you to attempt to leave the city and get very far." Kirschell laid his watch on the desk. "You'd better go; I mean half an hour from *now*."

Calhoun hung hesitant for a moment, staring at the muzzle of Kirschell's revolver. He made as though to say something, and instead, abruptly, with a short, jarring laugh, turned on his heel and passed out of the room.

The Hawk was already edging his way along the wall toward the corridor door.

"Three thousand dollars!" The Hawk rolled the words like so many dainty morsels on his tongue as he communed with himself. "I guess it's my play to stick to Mr. Calhoun!"

The Hawk reached the door as Calhoun stepped into the corridor from the general office and passed by outside, evidently making for the main entrance of the building. He opened the door cautiously the width of a crack, and held it in that position. A voice, low, guarded, from the corridor, but from the opposite direction to that taken by Calhoun, reached him.

"Here! Calhoun! Here!"

Calhoun halted. There was silence for an instant, then Calhoun retraced his steps and passed by the door again. There were a few hurried words in a whisper, which the Hawk could not catch, and then the footsteps of both men retreated along the corridor.

The Hawk opened the door wider, and peered out. They were well down the corridor now, and now, as they passed the single incandescent that lighted that end of the hall, Calhoun's companion reached up and turned it out.

"Why, say—thanks!" murmured the Hawk, and stepped out into the corridor himself.

It was now quite dark at that end, and the men had disappeared. The Hawk moved silently and swiftly along, keeping close to the wall. Presently he caught the sound of their voices again, and nodded to himself. He remembered that in going out this way yesterday he had noticed that the corridor, for some architectural reason, made a sharp, right-angled jut just before it gave on the side-street entrance. He stepped now across to the other side of the corridor, and stole forward to a position where he could look diagonally past the projecting angle of the jut. The two men, standing there, showed plainly in the light from a street arc that shone into the entranceway through the large, plate-glass square over the door. The Hawk, quite secure from observation, nestled back against the wall, and an ominous smile settled on the Hawk's lips. The face of Calhoun's companion was covered with a mask.

"There's nothing to be leery about here," the man was saying. "There's no one goes out or comes in this way at night. Well, it's a nice mess, eh? So the old Shylock called the turn on you, did he?"

There seemed to be a helpless note in Calhoun's voice. He passed his hand heavily across his eyes.

"What's the meaning of this?" he cried out. "What do you know about what happened in there?"

IIA P

"Nothing much," said the other coolly. "Except that I'm the guy that pinched the swag and hit Kirschell that welt on the head."

"You!" Calhoun involuntarily stepped back.

"Yes, sure—me!" The man shrugged his shoulders. "Me and a pal who was outside. He's away now, putting the cash box where it won't come to any harm—savvy? He'll be back pretty soon."

The Hawk's lips moved.

"Number Three and Number Seven," whispered the Hawk gently.

"I—I don't understand," said Calhoun dazedly. "Then why are you telling me this? And why are you staying here? And how did you know that Kirschell accused me of being in it?"

"That's another one that's easy," announced the man evenly. "Because it was part of the game to *make* him think so."

Calhoun seemed to stiffen up.

"What! You mean, you——"

"You're getting it!" said the other shortly. "But you'd better wait until you get it all before you start spitting your teeth out. Maybe you've heard of a little interference with the telegraph wires, and a few small jobs pulled off around here where some innocent parties accidentally got croaked? Ah, you have, eh? Well, that's where you come in, Calhoun. We want you, and when we want anything we get it! See? We knew about that note, and we've been expecting the railroad crowd to wake up some time, and we had you picked out to place our bets on against them. They woke up today and began to nose over the line. It ain't likely to do them much good, but there's a chance, and we ain't taking chances. We don't want much from you, Calhoun, just a little thing, and it'll bring you more money than you ever saw in your life before without you running any risk. All you've got to do is stand for anything in the shape of a splice or tap on the line that they're suspicious of; you can say it's a repair job of your own, see?"

An angry flush was tingeing Calhoun's cheeks.

"Is that all?" he burst out passionately. "Well, I'll see you in Hades first!"

"Will you?" returned the other calmly. "All right, my bucko! It's your funeral. Take your choice. That—or twenty years in the penitentiary. You're in cold on this. Think it over a bit. For instance, how did you come to make the break of wanting Kirschell to indorse the payment on the back of the note, which made him open his safe?"

"How do you know I did?" Calhoun flashed back sharply.

"Mabbe I'm only guessing at it," said the man nonchalantly; "and mabbe I was back in the outside room when you did. But, say, you don't happen to remember, do you, a little talk you had with a stranger up the line to-day? And how the conversation got around to loan sharks, and how he told about a trick they had of giving receipts that were phony, and how he beat one of them to it by making the shark indorse on the paper itself? Kind of sunk in, and you bit—eh, Calhoun? We don't do things by halves. We happen to need you. And what do you think I made the break of whispering so Kirschell would hear me for?"

The color was ebbing from Calhoun's face.

"It's not proof!" The defiant ring in his voice was forced. "I——"

"It's enough to make Kirschell believe it, and that's all we wanted for a starter. We'll take care of the rest!" stated the man grimly. "What did he say to you?"

Calhoun answered mechanically:

"He said if I didn't return in half an hour with the cash box, he'd notify the police."

"Oh, ho!" The man's lips widened in a grin under the edge of his mask. "So he's going to wait here, eh? Well, so much the better! It'll save us a trip to his house. Now, see here, Calhoun, let this sink in!" He put his hand in his pocket and drew out a slip of paper. "Here's your note. It was on the desk

where Kirschell was writing on it, and I pinched it when I pinched the cash box. We didn't figure we were going to make the haul we did to-night; we were after you. But there's *some* money in that cash box, as you saw for yourself. Here's the idea: Kirschell's read a thing or two about what's going on around here—enough to make him know that there ain't much our gang'll stop at. If you say you're with us, me and my pal'll go in there and throw the fear of God into him. Do you get it? He'll think himself lucky to keep his mouth shut about to-night when he finds out who he's up against. Also you get the note back and a share of the cash, and more to come later on."

"No!" Calhoun cried out. "No! I'm no thief!"

"All right," agreed the other indifferently. "That's one side of it; here's the other. Kirschell certainly believes you took it. He's a shark, all right, and he thinks more of his money than he does of anything else, or he wouldn't have given you the chance he did. But when you don't show back there with the coin, he'll take the only other hope he's got of getting his money and turn on the police tap—see? What are you going to do then? Make a break for it, or let 'em get you? Well, it doesn't matter which. This note and a chunk of the cash gets mailed to-night, and the police get tipped off to watch your mail in the morning. Kind of reasonable, isn't it? Your pal, not being able to find you, and not tumbling to the fact that the police have got you until too late, comes across with your share like an honest little man. I think you said something about proof, Calhoun? And I think I told you before that we didn't do things by halves. How about that on top of Kirschell's story—do you think it would cinch a jury, or do you think they'd believe any little fairy story you might tell them, say, about meeting me? Does it look any more like twenty years than it did?"

There was a sudden agony in Calhoun's face. "You—you wouldn't do that?"

The man made no answer. He still

held the note in his hand, but in the other now he carelessly dangled a revolver.

"You wouldn't! You wouldn't!" Calhoun's voice was broken now. "I've a wife and children, and——"

"That half hour Kirschell gave you is slipping along," suggested the other uncompromisingly. "Here's the note, and there's easy money waiting for you."

Calhoun turned on the other like a man demented.

"Do you think I'd touch that cash?" His voice was tense. "Or touch that note! I owe it! I may not have been able to pay it, but I owe it!"

"Oh, well, suit yourself as to that, too," said the man cynically. "It's the other thing we want. What's the wife and the kids you're talking about going to do if you go up for twenty years?"

Calhoun, with a miserable cry, buried his face in his hands.

There was silence; a minute dragged by.

"Well?" prompted the man curtly.

Calhoun dropped his hands, met the other's eyes for an instant, and turned his head away.

"Ah, I thought you would!" said the man calmly. "My pal ought to be back by now, and as soon as he comes we'll go in there and hand Kirschell his little jolt, and——" He stopped. There was a light rapping on the entrance door. "Here he is now! We'll——"

The Hawk was retreating back along the corridor. Again he opened the door of what he had designated to himself as the secretary's office, and for the second time that night stepped silently into the room, closing the door behind him. The sound of running water came from Kirschell's private office, but there was no other sound; the Hawk made none as he once more gained his place of vantage behind the desk. Kirschell was bending over the washbowl, his back turned, bathing his temple and face, and now, straightening up, he bound a towel tightly around his head.

The Hawk watched the proceedings impassively, his head, in that birdlike,

listening attitude, cocked on one shoulder toward the outer door. Steps were coming along the corridor. But this time Kirschell, too, heard them, for he turned, and, as the corridor door opened, started toward his desk. He reached it and sat down as Calhoun entered the room.

"Ah, ha!" snapped Kirschell triumphantly. "So you've thought better of it, have you? I imagined you would! Well, where's the——" The words seemed to freeze on his lips; there was a sudden terror in his face. "What—what does this mean?" he faltered.

Two masked men, the one who had been with Calhoun in the corridor, and a taller, more heavily built man, had stepped in behind Calhoun, and were advancing toward the desk.

The short man pointed a revolver at Kirschell's head.

"Calhoun says he keeps a gun in the middle drawer of the desk," he grunted to his companion. "Get it!"

The other, leaning over, pulled the drawer open, and, appropriating Kirschell's revolver, stuck it in his pocket.

Kirschell's tongue circled his lips. He looked wildly from one to the other.

"We just dropped in to make a confession, Mr. Kirschell," said the short man, with an ugly jeer. "We don't like to see an innocent man suffer—understand? I'm the one that lifted your cash box, you measly shark!—me and my pal there. I heard you trying to stick it on Calhoun. We ain't asking any favors for ourselves, and when we get through with you, you can tell the police it was us, and that we're part of the crowd that's been making things lively around these parts. You've been reading the papers, ain't you? But you open your mouth about Calhoun, you put him in bad when he had nothing to do with it, and inside of twenty-four hours you'll be found in a dark alley somewhere with a bullet through you! Get me? You know who you're up against now, and you've got fair warning!"

Kirschell was huddled in his chair. His little, black eyes were no longer

restless; they were fixed in a sort of terrified fascination on the speaker.

"Yes." He licked his lips again. "Yes, I—I understand," he mumbled.

From one of the Hawk's pockets, the Hawk took a mask, which he slipped over his face; from another he took his automatic.

"I don't think he believes you," sneered the second masked man, with a wicked grin. "Perhaps mabbe we'd better twist his windpipe a little, just to show him in a friendly way that there ain't any mistake about it, eh?"

"No, no!" Kirschell's voice was full of fear. "No, no! I believe—I——" His words ended in a choked scream.

The man's hands had shot swiftly out, and closed on Kirschell's throat. He was shaking, twisting, and turning Kirschell's head from side to side. His companion laughed brutally. Came a series of guttural moans from Kirschell, and Kirschell's body began to slip limply down in his chair.

Calhoun had gone white to the lips.

"Stop it! My God, stop it!" he burst out frantically. "You promised me you wouldn't do him any harm."

"You mind your own business!" snarled the man with the revolver. "We know how to handle his breed. Give him enough to hold him for a while, Jim! We——"

"Drop that revolver! *Drop it!*" The Hawk was standing in the doorway.

There was a startled oath from the leader of the two men as he whirled around, a gasp as he faced the Hawk's automatic, and his weapon clattered to the floor. The other, in a stunned way, still hung over Kirschell, but his hands had relaxed their hold on Kirschell's throat.

"Thank you!" drawled the Hawk. "I must say I agree with Mr. Calhoun. It's not a pleasant sight to watch a man being throttled." His voice rang suddenly cold. "You, there!" His automatic indicated the man beside Kirschell. "Stand back at the end of the desk, and put up your hands!"

Calhoun had not moved. He was staring numbly at the Hawk. Kir-

schell, making guttural sounds, was clawing at his throat.

"Mr. Calhoun," requested the Hawk coolly, "as I happen to know that you have little reason to love either of these two gentlemen, will you be good enough to pick up that revolver and hand it to me?"

Calhoun stooped mechanically, and extended it to the Hawk.

"And now our friend over there with his hands up, Mr. Calhoun," purred the Hawk. "You will find two in his pockets—his own and Mr. Kirschell's. Mr. Kirschell, I am sure, is already fairly well convinced that you are in no way connected with the robbery of his cash box, and I am equally sure that in no way could you better dispel any lingering doubts he might still entertain than by helping to draw these gentlemen's teeth."

Calhoun laughed a little grimly now.

"I don't know who you are," he said, his lips set, as he started toward the man; "but I guess you're right. I'd like to see them get what's coming to them."

"Quite so!" said the Hawk pleasantly. He accepted the two remaining revolvers from Calhoun, and from his pocket produced his skeleton keys. He handed them to Calhoun, designating one of the keys on the ring. "One more request, Mr. Calhoun," he said. "I entered by the door that opens on the corridor from this other office here. Will you please lock it, and, on your way back, also lock this connecting door through which I have just come in; the key of the latter, I noticed, is in the lock."

Calhoun nodded, took the keys, and stepped quickly from the room. Kirschell, evidently not seriously hurt from the handling he had received, though still choking a little and clearing his throat with short coughs, was regarding the Hawk with a questioning stare. The eyes of the other two men were on the Hawk's revolver. The shorter of the two suddenly raised a clenched fist.

"The Hawk!" he flashed out furiously. "You cursed snitch! You'll

wish you were dead before we're through with you!"

"So the Butcher told me last night." The Hawk smiled plaintively. "Move a little closer together, you two; yes, like that, at the far end of the desk, beside each other. Thank you; you are much easier to cover that way."

Calhoun returned, locking the connecting door behind him, and handed the door key, together with the key ring, back to the Hawk.

The Hawk moved forward to the desk. He was alert, quick, ominous now; the drawl, the pleasantries were gone.

"Out there in the hall," he said coldly, "I heard Mr. Calhoun refuse to take back his note—from a thief. You"—his revolver muzzle jerked toward the short man—"hand it out!"

The man reached viciously into his pocket, and tossed the note on the desk.

The Hawk pushed it toward Kirschell.

"Mr. Kirschell," he said quietly, "you no doubt had good reasons for it, but you have none the less falsely accused Mr. Calhoun. Furthermore, Mr. Calhoun has been instrumental in laying these two who have confessed by the heels. Under the circumstances, if you are the man I think you are, you will tear that up."

Kirschell fingered the note for an instant. He looked from Calhoun to the Hawk, and back at Calhoun again.

"Yes," he said abruptly, and tore it into several pieces. "I suppose I could hardly do less. You are quite right! And, Mr. Calhoun, I—I apologize to you."

A flush spread over Calhoun's face. He swallowed hard, and his lips quivered slightly.

"Mr. Kirschell," he stammered, "I—I—"

"That's all right," interposed the Hawk whimsically. "Don't start any mutual-admiration society. I dislike embarrassing situations, and besides, Mr. Calhoun"—his eyes traveled from one to the other of the two masked men—"I think you had better go now."

"Go?" repeated Calhoun, somewhat bewilderedly.

"Yes," supplemented the Hawk. "As far as you are concerned, you are clear and out of this now. Stay out of it, and say nothing; that's the best thing you can do."

"Well, that suits me," said Calhoun, with a wry smile, "if Mr. Kirschell —"

"Exactly! I see!" approved the Hawk. "It does you credit. But Mr. Kirschell and I are quite capable of settling with these two, and you can thank Mr. Kirschell further to-morrow if you like—when I'm not here. Now, if you please!"

Calhoun turned, and walked to the door. His footsteps echoed back from the general office. Then the corridor door closed behind him.

The Hawk addressed the two masked men.

"Last night," remarked the Hawk gently, "it was the Butcher, and to-night it is—pardon me"—he was close in front of the two now, and with a jerk snatched the masks from their faces—"Whitie Jim and the Bantam! Well, I might have known from the Butcher! You're all out of the same cocoon! The poor old simp at the head of your gang is sure stuck with a moth-eaten lot! He's sure collected a bunch of left-overs!"

"You go to blazes!" growled the Bantam, with an oath. "You'll *crawl* for this yet!"

"You are not nice to me, Bantam," said the Hawk, in a pained voice. "You don't appreciate what I'm doing for you. It was a piker game you tried to hand Calhoun, but even at that I wouldn't have queered it if it would have helped you work out a few more little deals, so that I could skim the cream off them. But it wouldn't. I don't see what you gain by interfering with the telegraph-lines, but I'll let you in on something. I've been keeping an eye on MacVigtie because MacVigtie's been keeping an eye on me, and I overheard him talking to the superintendent to-night. MacVigtie's got an idea that Calhoun's fooling with the

wires now. See where you would have been? If Calhoun had ever got started on the real thing, some of you would have been nipped, and, say, there's nothing like that going to happen if I can help it! You and your crowd are too valuable to me to take any chances of your getting in wrong anywhere. I'm getting well paid."

"You'll get paid, curse you!" The Bantam's voice was hoarse with fury. "You butted in once too often last night. The Butcher warned you. There ain't any more warnings. You've got the drop on us here to-night, but —"

"It's getting late," said the Hawk wearily, "And I am sure Mr. Kirschell agrees with me that it is about time to produce that cash box—do you not, Mr. Kirschell?"

Kirschell made no reply.

The Hawk smiled—unhappily.

"I don't think you put it back in the safe; I see that the door is still wide open. A drawer in the desk, then, perhaps? Ah, *would you!*" There was a sudden deadly coldness in the Hawk's voice. The Bantam had edged around the corner of the desk. "If any of you move another inch, I'll drop you as quick as I'd drop a mad dog! Now, then—if the Cricket will oblige? I'll give him until I count three. One—two——"

Kirschell swore. His face was livid and contorted. He wrenched a lower drawer open, and flung the cash box on the desk.

"The Butcher, Whitie Jim, the Bantam, and the Cricket," murmured the Hawk. "It's good to see old New York faces out here, even if you do size up like bush-leaguers trying to bust into high society. You can take that towel off, if you like, Cricket; it doesn't become you particularly, and as you've washed off the heart-rending effect of that little bag of liquid stain you smashed over your temple, I'm sure you'll look less like a comic-opera star!

No? Well, please yourself!" The Hawk was coolly transferring the contents of the cash box to his pockets with his left hand. "These papers," mused the Hawk deliberately aloud, "appear to be some securities you lifted on that Pullman-car raid. Rather neat idea this, establishing this office; sort of a clearing house, I take it, for the gang's dragnet—'loans, mortgages, and general exchange!' I take back part of what I said; this shows a first faint glimmer of brains. Well, keep the office going; your interests are mine. You'll notice that I was considerate enough to get Calhoun out of the way before the show-down. You were very generous, magnanimous even, Cricket; I admire you! Calhoun'll swear Mr. Kirschell is the squarest man on earth, and don't forget that's another little debt of gratitude you owe the Hawk. Three thousand dollars!" The Hawk's pockets were bulging. "Must have been what you separated some one from when I wasn't looking. Glad you weren't stingy with your bait for Calhoun. I heard to-day that Mr. Kirschell kept a good deal of cash in his safe, but I had no idea that Mr. Kirschell was the Cricket—not till I came here this evening to take a look at Mr. Kirschell's safe. I must say it has been a surprise—a very pleasant surprise."

The cash box was empty.

"You will observe," smiled the Hawk engagingly, "that this is now the only exit, and that as I walk backward across the outer office any one who steps into this doorway will be directly in the line of fire." He bowed facetiously, backed through the doorway and across the general office, and, still facing the inner room, opened the corridor door, and stepped out.

And then the Hawk spoke again.

"I bid you good evening, gentlemen!" said the Hawk softly. "You will pardon me if I put you to the inconvenience of locking this door—on the outside."

The third story in this series—entitled "The Third Party"—will appear in the April 20th POPULAR.

The Rosin Back

By Buck Connor

Author of "A Kinsman of Cain," "The Nigh Leader," Etc.

Making you intimately acquainted with a circus horse and a musical elephant, who understood each other and had many things in common. A story of animal heroism, if you will

SNOWY white—just as white as the chalk his groom had washed into his white coat the day before could possibly make him appear; with his blackened off fore hoof pawing contentedly into the soft soil of the circus lot as his pink muzzle nosed his morning's allowance of nice timothy hay; with his closely braided and bandaged tail swishing now and then in an attempt to dislodge a pestering fly, stood Glory, the principal "rosin back" of the Riding Haydens.

Glory had won his spurs honestly, so to speak. His trainer had schooled him from a four-year-old. From doing a pedestal in the manège and high school and on up to the "liberty" and statue work with a group of men and women in white costumes, he passed through the different stages of the circus horse.

Glory had always been the cool-headed and even-tempered animal that takes an interest in his work. He had made many a parade and entry, and now his act was the one act with the Sells show that was excused from parades. He had but to occupy the center ring for a period of twenty minutes or so of the afternoon and night performances. He did not fill in for the "spec" or entry, nor did he have to bother about the bugle call for parade each morning. The Haydens were a feature act.

As he stood there in the horse top and ate his hay, he would occasionally toss a little bunch over to Cleopatra, of Bartlett's Musical Elephants, and receive her trumpeted thanks, or feel

her trunk dragging gently over his stable blanket in an affectionate rub.

The Bartlett Musical Elephants—Cleopatra, Cæsar, Nero, and Sheba—formed an act whose chief attraction was their daily performance upon musical instruments, such as ringing bells that the men would strap to their four feet, or stamping on bellows that would give forth sounds not unlike the deep, bass tones of a reed organ. They would close their act by playing a number of simple chords on horns, fitted to their trunks, in concert with the show band—all this to the dancing of four beautiful girls, which always got them much applause.

Rinaldo, the buckskin, cake-walking horse who worked on the hippodrome track, looked up suddenly across the withers of Glory's teammate. "How you feelin' this mornin'?" he asked.

"Pretty fair," mumbled Glory, as he jerked his head up to see who might be speaking. Swallowing the hay he was chewing, he added: "Got a bump or two last night. That engineer we had when we left that last town ought to be shot!"

"He sure was a rough one," agreed the buckskin, recalling the slamming and banging together of the circus stocks as they were getting out of town.

"How's your friend?" snickered Rinaldo, with a grin that showed his teeth, as he tossed his head toward Cleopatra. "She's some queen!"

"That's about all we'll hear from you!" snapped the white horse, rising

to the taunt of the buckskin. He stopped eating and rolled an angry eye at the buckskin.

"Oh, don't get sore about it, Glory," the buckskin snorted patronizingly. "It won't do you any good. 'Nuther thing, if you can't take a little kiddin', you'd best quit troupin' an' go back to the farm, where you belong," he added meaningly.

"I'm not sore, only it's gettin' so around this trick that a horse can't even load in the same car or stand alongside of a mule unless some of you dry-lot troupers think he must be a jackass!" Glory retorted loftily, while his teammate snickered and the buckskin became all at once busy with his hay. Cleopatra, her little eyes twinkling, laid her trunk caressingly on Glory's back.

A hook-rope team, pulling the last quarter pole into position, directed by the assistant boss canvasman as the big top was being raised; the property men and members of aerial acts setting up their riggings in the dome of the giant canvas, while others set up the ring curbing or busied themselves in hanging stage curtains amid the clatter-clatter sledging of the last stakes being driven somewhere on the lot, spoke well of circus efficiency.

On the front of the lot the ticket wagons, both the red and the white one, had been placed just beyond the beginning of the Midway, and were open for the advance sale.

Canvasmen were busily engaged raising the banner poles that carry the large paintings of freaks, curiosities, and other entertainment offered in the "kid show," as the side show is termed by professional people.

There was hissing steam from fire-engine boilers in the rear of an oblong tent that was set off to the side of the lot and away from the horse tents. The rattle of enamel dishes and silverware fairly shouted to hungry workmen that dinner would soon be ready for the hundreds of show people.

"There goes first call for parade, Glory," said his teammate, as the staccato notes of a bugle sounded from over near the pad room. The two

horses raised their heads and looked over the canvas side wall that had been lowered to allow them fresh air and sunshine.

Had you been looking over the side wall with Glory, you would have seen the workmen remove the canvas coverings of the dens and tableau wagons. You would have seen girls in costumes of Richard III. period astride horses whose white-enameled trappings rivaled their milky white coats. And there were the gold-leafed, wood-carved wagons drawn by six and eight-horse teams, and Roman chariots with their four-abreast thoroughbreds, driven by men in flowing robes. There were men and women in jockey riding costumes and park riding habits, and you would have seen there what made for the big free street parade.

Already the band was playing as the procession coursed its way down the main street from the show lot, and the third section of the pageant was moving off the lot when the steam-calliope player struck up some popular air.

Bartlett's elephants, in trappings of Oriental splendor, and topped with canopied howdahs in which rode the four costumed girls of the act, swung into line, as Cleopatra tossed her trunk in a good-by salute to Glory.

"Certainly is some swell parade, Glory," commented his mate as the tail end of the procession passed from view to the lessening strains from the calliope.

"None better, Chester," Glory nickered proudly and turned back to his hay pile.

When the horses, with their heavy wagons, had returned, all tired and hungry, from an eight-mile parade, and had been put in their stalls for dinner, many a little friendly scrap often took place between them as they ate—and some that were not so friendly.

Glory heard the groom when he stripped Rinaldo of his trappings: He saw him when he dumped a large measure of oats into the canvas feed trough. But he did not see the buckskin reach underneath the other white horse's neck

when he bit Glory's leg—he felt it, which was enough.

"Now, listen here, you sorrel-topped, mud-colored fool," squealed Glory, "I've stood about enough from you, and I'm tellin' you right now, 'n' for the last time, cut it out!"

The buckskin did not reply with words. Something had put him in an ugly mood. He lunged back on his halter strap and broke loose, whirled around to the rear of Glory's teammate, and rose high on his hind legs. He landed on the rosin back and planted his teeth deep into his neck. Cleopatra, on the farther side of Glory, trumpeted an angry protest at such treachery as jumping a horse when he couldn't get loose to fight. Stepping up quickly as Glory drew back, she wrapped her trunk around his tie strap and jerked it in two, so that he was free as the buckskin.

Both horses stepped back a few feet, and then rushed at each other with wide-open mouths, viciously pawing and striking with their shod front feet. Other horses became excited, and began nickering and squealing. Men ran toward them, then fell back to get pitchforks, brooms—anything to be used in separating the two. Down one side of the horse tent to the farther end they fought. When they had reached the end they reared and wrestled, man fashion. Rinaldo overpowered the white horse and bore him to the ground. Glory turned over on his side, and, with the buckskin on his back and biting him, struggled to his feet, whirled, and kicked Rinaldo in the stomach. A whack that made Rinaldo grunt.

Grooms shouted advice to one another, but no man ventured close enough to grab the horses. Up the other side of the tent they went, ducking and dodging, biting and kicking.

When they had reached the place they had started from, and were both struggling to get a neck hold with their teeth, Cleopatra turned swiftly—an elephant is a surprisingly quick animal—and with her trunk outstretched she pointed it low between the two horses,

and, raising her head with a jerk, she broke them apart. Then grooms rushed in and grabbed them.

Scarred, panting, unconquered still, they rolled angry eyes at each other, neither owning defeat. They had fought savagely and long, as only two stallions can fight, and not a groom knew why. But they knew, and the other horses knew. Cleopatra, huge, imperturbable, swinging her trunk, swaying a little as she stood—Cleopatra knew, too, and thanked Glory with a twinkle in her little eyes.

Glory was kept strictly among horses with whom he was friends. Rinaldo had been shifted in the horse top, and was standing at the farther end since the day of the fight. Glory had not seen him except as he would pass by whenever the location of the big top made it necessary for the ring stock to pass out that end of the tent.

The night show was over, and the wagons were being drawn by massive teams, rattling along over the pavements on their way to the "runs." Glory had left the lot with the other stock, as had been the custom all season. On the way down to the train they passed through the main street of the town, at the foot of which was where the wagons loaded.

There was a long line of flats with torch beacons flickering the light by which "polers" were guiding the heavy wagons and dens from one car to the next as the pull-over team hauled them across the train. Farther down the track—below the railroad crossing—were the stocks that carried the horses.

It would not be long until the show was loaded, Glory thought, as he looked at the line of cars fast filling up with wagons.

When his string had arrived at their car, the elephants had been loaded in the one end assigned them, and the other end had its quota of pony stock. Glory's string had the car space in between, and when the grooms had finished making his halter fast to the bar that ran along the side of the car, Cleopatra threw her trunk over his withers

and curved it in an embrace that spoke her feelings louder than she could have trumpeted them.

It does not require long for experienced men to load a bunch of experienced horses, and when the last animal had been tied to the bar, and the sliding door closed, the horse run was unhooked from its fastenings, and placed on the truss rods underneath.

A slamming together of the cars, with men with lanterns running here and there shouting orders, told them that the train would soon be pulling out.

The ring stock of the Sells show traveled in the third section. They did not leave town until after the "flying squadron," which carried the cook-house, horse tops, and a portion of the working crew. Nor did they leave until the second section, with the big top, side show, and a bulk of the dens had gone. Glory's train was known as the "Kinker section."

The lights in the houses they passed on their way out of town told the horses that the third section was made up and was rolling out of the yards for a night's run to the next stand, a couple of hundred miles distant.

The rumbling, shifting of feet in the cars as the slack of the train was taken up or let out when the engineer had curves or grades to make was evidence enough that the section was making up the few minutes it had lost at a siding while a limited passed them.

There would come that hissing of escaping air as the cars slowed down suddenly for an instant, then regain its speed. Then they would see the lights of a town ahead. A little blinking red light, changed to a white, would send them through town after town on a clear rail.

In the latter part of the night—in the darkness of early morn, to be exact—when the moon had slipped over the hill, the show train was nearing the next stand. They were passing through a large junction that had many switches, when a broken frog sent the car ahead of Glory's onto the ties with a bumping and jolting that knocked the horses

off their feet. The coupling parted, and the car came to a stop crosswise of the track. The car carrying Bartlett's elephants and the Hayden string crashed into it, with a squealing of crippled and dying horses shrilling above the crash of breaking timbers. The car turned over on its side and partly broke in two, then skidded onto the one in front, turned over again, and rolled, with much speed for a thing of such weight, down the abrupt embankment, stopping only when it reached the bottom, a twisted and broken cage that held elephants, horses, and little ponies jumbled together.

The train watchman, sitting on one of the stocks in front, was the first to see the wreck, and with his lantern he waved the engineer to a standstill. He told them what had happened, and they backed up. When they reached the overturned cars, men who had heard the wild squealing of the horses, or perhaps felt the jolting of the cars, came running up, inquiring the cause.

"Two stocks wrecked," answered the watchman to the first to arrive, and added: "Better tell Sells about it, and call Bartlett, too!" as the man was already running toward the coaches.

"Call everybody on the train, 'cept in' the ladies!" ordered the superintendent, who was just emerging out of the darkness. And he added: "Get the axes and pinch bars! Where are they?"

"In the possum-bellies of the flats," replied the watchman, as he ran to get the tools. "Come on, some of you fellows, give me a hand with 'em!"

"We've got to get this stock out of here at once, men!" cried Sells, as he set about directing them in the removing of doors and roofing of the cars. "Can you see how many's down?"

One of the men groaned: "Boss, they're 'most all down, an' some of 'em are dead surer'n blazes!"

With the arrival of the axes and bars came more men from the coaches, spurred on by shouts from their bosses. The flat roofs of the cars that lay on their sides had been removed, and

the work of dragging out the dead and crippled animals had begun.

"Poor Whipple!" cried a sobbing woman on the edge of the crowd, as they pulled her pet, a calico pony, out of the wreck.

"Take them fool womenfolk away from here till this work is done!" ordered the manager, who well knew the effect crying women have on men in work like that which lay before them.

When a hole had been cut in the roof of the car of elephants and horses, and some of the animals that were dead had been dragged out, the men set about leading or carrying out the stock that was yet alive. They found two of the elephants down and lying across each other. Hayden, who was there, working harder than any one of them, just wanted to get Glory out before he was tramped to death by an elephant. He knew he was alive. Hadn't he heard Glory's nicker a few moments ago?

Except for a few gashes and bad bruises, some of the elephants were all right. But where was Glory? They could not see him, but they found Cleopatra standing with her hind legs braced up on the side of the car. They started to make a rope fast to her head and pull her body around so the others might be gotten out. When they looked closer they saw her eyes blinking eloquently in the glare of the lantern, as though she had a secret bit of good news to tell them.

"Heavens, fellows, look here!" shouted one of the rescuers.

The men rushed up to see what had attracted the man. There, under Cleopatra, nibbling unconcernedly at a few wisps of hay he had found on the car floor, was Glory, his sleeping blanket not even torn, but with a bruised knee-cap where he fell when the first jolt of the wreck had thrown him off his feet.

The men looked at one another and marveled—not at the horse's escape, but at the elephant, standing there on her head, deliberately forming a living arch of protection to her friend Glory, the horse that had fought for her.

They took Glory out, and Cleopatra let herself down with a grunt of relief and ambled where her keeper led.

Trojan work, carried on under efficient direction, soon brought the wrecked train into shape for traveling. They left a force of men to bury the dead stock, and, by shifting and crowding the animals in the other cars, they made room for the wounded. When they had them loaded they proceeded into the town where they were to show that day, a little late, but in time to cut the parade and give two performances.

And once more the men could only wonder at the queer freaks of animals. But Glory knew why it was that he could go on with the show while those others lay stiff beside the track. And Cleopatra knew, and blinked her little eyes and waved her trunk knowingly, and rested it lightly on Glory's back when he threw her wisps of hay.

At the close of the season of the Sells show, the Hayden act for good reasons did not ship to South America or Cuba, as had been their custom for years. They had always gone South with the coming of winter and returned in the spring for the opening. But this year things were different.

To remain the feature act of the big show they must make some changes, and changes to them meant that they needed to brush up their act and get more thrills in it, better trappings, and in general reframe it. Then there was a young Hayden or two—Albert and Thelma—who had to be broken into the four-in-hand tandem. The kids, as everybody called them, had worked every afternoon during the road season on a safety rigging when the big show was over, and now they were in shape for a real winter's work of finishing up.

Glory, rigged with an old biting rigging, was in the ring barn, held by one of the grooms, and Albert and Thelma, in black bloomers, were receiving their final instructions from their father and mother.

"Now, you take your work first on Glory, kid," said the boy's father, as he beckoned the groom to put the white

horse in the ring. He snapped the safety to the belt the boy wore, and, gathering his ring whip, started Glory on the slow, easy gallop with a flourishing wave of the whip that ended in a deafening crack. "Ready?" he said, and the youngster made sure of his footing and crouched a little on his haunches to take the somersault leap. The mother held the safety—a rope that was reeved through a single pulley fastened on a cable between the two walls.

"That's fine!" encouraged the father, when the boy had risen from his crouching position to a graceful, backward somersault and landed on the broad, rosined rump of Glory. The horse, too, seemed to know that the boy had done well. He came to the slow, easy gallop, at a whip cue from the man, with his head proudly tossing. The boy gave him a gentle little pat on the thick neck, and slid to the ground.

Glory stood there and champed the bit until the groom unsnapped the reins which freed his head, and led him around the ring at a walk.

The horse suddenly stopped and turned, perking his ears inquiringly toward the doorway that led into the "bull barn."

All alone in the far corner of the elephant barn, which had at one time been a large machine shop, her front feet shackled with a heavy linked log chain to a large ring set deep in the cement floor, her trunk swinging as she swayed her huge body, her small eyes rolling wickedly, stood Cleopatra.

That Cleopatra was a dangerous beast none could deny. Her trainer was taking no risks, nor was he permitting his assistants to handle her any more than was absolutely necessary. Cleopatra had turned what showmen called a killer. She had lately gone bad for some unaccountable reason, and had killed her old trainer and crippled two valuable horses so badly that it was necessary to destroy them. There was a persistent rumor about the show that she had got a man or

two in Europe while touring that continent with the *Circo Wolfé*, though it was never confirmed by her owners.

At one side of the barn the keepers had placed a large stove to keep the building comfortable for both the men and beasts. Around this stove every evening, and a greater portion of the day, workmen had been accustomed to gather and spin yarns of seasons gone by while they toasted their toes in comfort.

Dinner was over in the cookhouse, and the showmen had gathered in the bull barn, forming a little circle around the stove, and had settled down for an afternoon of loafing and swapping of stories or to discuss the work on the show property that was being rebuilt and repainted for taking the road the coming season.

Chicago Whitie was telling of the big blow-down in Keokuk several years before, when the elephants had all stampeded and took to the timber, as he expressed it. He was telling the men how long it took O'Brian and his men to get near enough to quiet them down; telling them how they had to leave the cars for them in that burg, and then put them in express-train service in order to have them on the show when it played day and date with the Hagermann outfit in Omaha.

Other old showmen who had heard of that stampede listened intently as they smoked their pipes and now and then offered a little data here and there that helped to confirm Whitie's yarn.

It was near evening when one of them asked for a pail, that he might go out and get a "growler," as they termed the beer brought from a near-by saloon in a bucket.

"Over there by the locker, Irish," said one of the elephant men, who was doing his turn on watch, as he pointed to a large, cupboardlike closet in the corner nearest the ring barn. "You'd better go out through the ring barn. It's not so far over to McMann's when you go that-a-way."

Dugan—"Irish" every one around winter quarters called him—got a galvanized bucket from the locker as di-

rected, and, pulling his hat down over his eyes before venturing out into the raging wind, started for the man-sized door that led through to the ring barn.

The door was not a loose-fitting door, and it had to be slammed to get it closed. It was closed now, and was so tight that it took an extra push or two to open it. The man was twisting on the knob and pushing, swearing, as men do over trifling annoyances.

Cleopatra, with a swinging trunk and half-closed eyelids, watched him. A malignant twinkle was in her eyes. Of a sudden she gave a lurch at her foot chains, and, with trunk raised high over her head, she brought it down across the man, and, as he fell to the floor, grabbed his clothing and pulled him to her. She did not toss the body for a hundred feet or more, nor did she remember him as the man who had given her tobacco several years before, as the threadbare story, that has been told times without number, goes. What she did do was to set both feet on him, and trumpeted loud and long.

"Stop her!" some one shouted in the crowd as the men rushed toward her, only to stop at a safe distance.

"Get a bull hook!" commanded another. "She's killing him!"

Panic seized the other elephants at the loud calls of Cleopatra. She stood there now with one foot on her victim, and pummeled his lifeless, broken-boned body. Men shouting and yelling only added uproar to the confusion. They were as helpless as babes.

Among the crowd, as in every crowd, generally speaking, is some one person who is equal to the emergency. There was in that crowd one man who did not yell, nor did he order some one to get this or that.

Cy Harris saw what had happened. He saw Irish, his circus pal, as the elephant struck him. He had been around the different shows, and had seen bad bulls too long not to reckon the result in an instant. While other men ordered or shouted or did nothing but stand mute, Cy, with a quick glance that took in the bull barn and its contents, saw on the floor, not far from the locker,

a bull hook, the iron spear with a hook on it that elephant men use to handle their charges. He rushed to where it lay, and, picking it up, he said:

"Stand clear, fellows! I'm going to whip that bull."

Men warned him in emphatic and profane language.

Cy rushed at the maddened elephant with the hook poised over his head. Cleopatra saw him coming, and, in her killing-crazed condition, she advanced as far as her foot chain would permit. Cy did not stop nor even hesitate to attack her. She made a vicious slap at him with her trunk, which he ducked, and, before she could recover to grab his body, he had, by a fortunate aim, hooked her in a spot behind the ear. With his right hand clinging to the handle close up, he grabbed one of her tusks with his free left hand and swung high enough to wrap his legs around her trunk. Like a demon she lunged and parted a link in her heaviest chain.

Men scrambled for safety; they reasoned quickly that Cy was as good as dead. They could do no better than save themselves, and as the last went through the main door he slammed it tight.

Inside, the elephant raged and lunged and fought to free herself of the man, who clung to the bull hook with desperation. He yanked downward on it, the while shouting: "Cleo"—as her keeper called her; "down, Cleo!" But the maddened beast only seemed to fight the harder.

"Down, Cleo; down!" he continued to shout.

Some one had rushed over to the office to tell the manager.

Inside the bull barn was the rattling of chains dragging at her heel; the shouting of the man's voice as he fought now, not to conquer the elephant, but for his very life:

"Cleo! Cleo! Down, down, Cleo!" as she raced about the barn to the encouraging trumpeting of the other elephants.

"Don't go in there!" ordered Lou Sells, as a man started to open the

door. "Keep away till they quiet down, all of you!"

The other animals at the winter quarters sensed that something had gone wrong, and set up a screaming, growling, and roaring that was almost deafening.

"Down, Cleo!" shouted Cy Harris as he rode her trunk, and was relieved to see her weakening. He jerked the harder on the hook.

All of a sudden the elephant fell to her knees, not from exhaustion, but the hook had found the one spot that Harris had hoped it would. It had penetrated the thick, leathery flesh. When she lay over on her side he did not give up, but fought her still, and whipped her until she cried.

When she had been thoroughly secured with chains, and a temporary stall built around her, the coroner's jury ventured in.

They, the jury of the more-or-less best citizens living in that district, heard all the evidence. They took into careful consideration the position of the beast and the group of men at the time of the killing. They questioned the keepers as to Cleopatra's behavior prior to the killing. Had she ever shown any particular dislike for the victim? None could remember having seen Irish near the elephant, except when he and the others were gathered about the stove.

Had she ever killed or crippled any one else in her life? No one on the show could answer that, but it was certain they had never seen her kill any one. Wasn't her old keeper found dead in the car when the grooms arrived with the horses? He was, but since he alone handled all four elephants, there was no witness to the affair.

After much discussion, they came to the decision that Cleopatra, having killed, must herself pay the death penalty. They also elected themselves a committee to witness the execution, which was to be carried out in any manner that the management saw best to do it. They had to be, so they in-

formed him gravely, satisfied that she was killed.

The killing of an elephant is not the simple thing it sounds. The manager believed that nothing short of a cannon ball would snuff out Cleopatra's wicked life. He looked up at the great traveling crane overhead that had been used in other days to handle heavy pieces of machinery, and said that he would hang her, if that would satisfy the jury. The jury, eying Cleopatra uneasily, said that it would.

Several chains were hurriedly borrowed, from the railroad people and rigged up to the overhead traveling crane.

With some labor and considerable risk they got the chains around Cleopatra's neck—one huge chain doubled in such a manner to form a slip or sliding loop. Another chain was lowered from the crane and bolted fast to the noose, and at a signal from the man below her foot chains were removed and the drum of the crane started winding.

It's no slight job to hang an elephant, even with providential machinery to do it with. The crane's strength was tested to capacity with the enormous weight of the brute. She struggled as the noose set tighter and tighter. The whole building shook when she was drawn clear of the floor and started swinging.

Out in the ring barn they heard the noise and felt the tremble of the barn. "They must be hanging her now!" some one shouted, and every one rushed outside to where the crowd was gathering. It happened that in the excitement Glory's groom neglected to tie him, but rushed out with the others.

Glory heard the noise. He, too, had felt the building tremble. But he did not go with the crowd. Glory knew, with sure instinct, the meaning of that horrible, throaty rumbling. Cleopatra's voice he knew, even though it came to him in strangling gasps as she fought off death.

He listened, his head thrown up, his nostrils belled and quivering. He ought to help Cleopatra now in her need.

Just what was her need he did not know, but by her voice he knew that it was terrible. She was suffering, in some deadly peril, and he felt in his heart that he was somehow failing her.

With a neigh that called shrilly at first and ended in a groan, he started for the door. It was closed, and from beyond came those sounds—those terrible sounds! They were fainter now; they did not come so often. Even as he reached the closed door they stopped, and the silence was worse than her choked voice had been.

He listened. He knew then that he had not helped; knew that he had failed Cleopatra, who had not failed him. What was wrong with him? He grew faint as a fluttering beat stirred the heaviness that lay in his chest.

He dropped to his knees, and with a deep sigh he fell over on his side to rest. It was getting cold—terribly cold—and he was tired. He swung his head weakly around to his side to ease the queer pain he felt there, and saw that his white coat was darkened with sweat. He rested his head there, where the heaviness lay in his side. Cleopatra—what horrible thing had come to her in there beyond the closed door a while ago? She had had one of her fits of rage; he had heard her trumpeting and stamping, had heard men running and yelling, had heard the punishment they gave her afterward. He had wanted then to go to her, though these things he knew and understood.

But now—now it had been different. This had not been punishment; it had been death. And he had failed her. But he had not meant to fail; the door was shut so tight, and he was so tired.

The groom, now that the crowd was dispersing, came back to look after the horse. Even the hanging of a man-killing elephant may no more than halt a rehearsal for a little while, and the Haydens would want to go on with the act.

"Get up, Glory!" he called carelessly, and reached down to get him by the headstall. Horses did take queer streaks sometimes! He ran his fingers along Glory's cheek. It was wet, and the horse was shivering, which startled the groom so that he straightened up and ran.

"Hey, Mr. Hayden! For God's sake come here, quick, and see what's the matter with this horse!" he yelled from the doorway, and ran back again distractedly to where Glory lay shivering, his eyes glazing.

The veterinarian came on the run, and examined him hurriedly and shook his head. "He's about gone; I can't —"

Glory raised his head, looked at the closed door, and gave a little, rumbling nicker. Sighed when silence came chill from beyond the door, punctuated by the shuffling of men's feet and the clank of chain. Looked again expectantly, and dropped his head back again upon his side.

You can call it heart disease, if you want to. You can call it fright or a case of chills and fever. You can name it whatever you like. But Glory knew; perhaps Cleopatra knew, too, if she heard him call in that last, strangled moment before her wicked old brain was closed against thought and her wicked old heart stopped beating.

CHARLIE SCHWAB ASKS FOR HIS MAIL

WHEN Charlie Schwab, the steel king, was stopping on one occasion in a Philadelphia hotel, he was expecting a special-delivery letter addressed to him to reach the hotel early Sunday morning. At about eight o'clock he went to his room telephone and called down to the clerk, who happened to be either green or not at home in the head:

"Has anything come in by mail for Mr. Schwab this morning?"

"No; nothing for you, Mr. Schwab, by mail," replied the mental lightweight, "but there's something down here for you by special delivery."

No Show At All

By Victor Maxwell

Author of "Our City's Greatest Asset," "When Little Things Count," Etc.

Notable for two things was the coming of Terwilliger's Epochal Wild West Show to Mill City. In the first place, it was the first show that had tempted Fate in Mill City since the year of the Flood; and in the second place, it was dated for Sunday, and entertainments were barred on that day, according to a law passed in Territorial days

MILL CITY was the most perfectly regulated town in the world, without a doubt. It was a veritable laboratory in which the forces of supply and demand were balanced against each other so exactly that there was never anything left over. The great industrial plants along the river bank paid out to their employees from ten to fifteen thousand dollars every two weeks; and upon this money, immediately diverted through various channels in the course of the semimonthly "settling up," Mill City found all that sustained it and its other activities.

All the stores in Mill City ran charge accounts. Most of them had signs prominently displayed to the effect that "all accounts must be settled the day after pay day." This, of course, didn't mean all accounts; it meant the accounts of those who worked in the mills. The other people had a different code of life, and this tale does not concern them at all. So delicate was the balance in Mill City between supply and demand, between income and outgo, between assets and liabilities, that a very little thing could throw the community into chaos.

For instance, when the scale in the mills had been two dollars a day, shaves had cost ten cents and hair cuts twenty cents, and pork roast sold for eleven cents a pound. Then came the fateful day when the scale was increased to two dollars and a quarter a day, and

at once Mill City became a seething maelstrom of tempestuous finance until the balance was restored by raising the price of shaves to fifteen cents, hair cuts to a quarter, and pork roast to fourteen cents. That took care of the surplus capital, and once again the town went on methodically and peacefully leeching the mill hands. And peace and quiet reigned until Terwilliger's Epochal Wild West Show billed the community, with a promise to give two performances on Sunday, the fifteenth.

It was the second day of the month when the glaring posters appeared unexpectedly upon the drab walls and thrilled Mill City from foundation to its tallest pinnacle. Not for years had a circus or a Wild West show or even a reputable road company of dramatists attempted to make a stand at Mill City; for the canny showmen had learned by bitter experience that the balance of income and outgo was so delicately adjusted in the great industrial center that there was nothing left over for the itinerant palm reached out to milk the public purse. Occasionally a "lyceum show" took a chance and invaded Mill City under the "auspices" of some church, but even these ventures were rare. Mill City had its three moving-picture houses, and they drained the last cent of amusement money to be had; in fact, there were murmurings from the other business men that the movies were "hurting trade almost as much as the saloons." There were sev-

enteen saloons, so if the murmuring was true, the movies must have been doing a tremendous business.

And now came this circus thing. Its paper went up on the dead walls on the second, and it was billed to show on the fifteenth. Thirteen days yet; plenty of time for Mill City to manage things. Mill City had a way of managing. On the fourth the advance men for Terwilliger's Epochal Wild West arrived in the town, and commenced to learn things. The suave Jimmy Pittle, who was intrusted with getting the window cards up, found that Mill City merchants had a marked aversion to "brightening up their show windows with lively scenes," as Jimmy was wont to express it. Even the saloons and pool halls appeared not to care for half-sheet lithos depicting the buffalo prancing o'er his native heath. Nor did the drug stores or cigar stands welcome Jimmy and his offers of "one reserved seat, mister, if you'll just let this card set in the front of your case for ten days."

Bob Oakleigh, whose duty it was to look after the feed for the horses, secure the grounds, get hotel accommodations for the stars, and line up local concessions, also noticed that Mill City seemed to be strange to the ways of showmen. The only suitable site he could get for the big show was on the west side of the river, right at the city limits, and seven blocks from the inter-urban car line. And while the ground rent for this was not exorbitant, Tobias Butterworth, who owned the "lot," wanted it in advance. He wouldn't take an order on the show, he wouldn't take Bob's check, and so Bob had to come over to the hotel to cash a draft on Terwilliger so he could give old Butterworth the money.

"What's the matter with you folks in this burg?" he demanded of Cliff Henderson, the more or less genial proprietor of the Merchants' Hotel. "Don't you realize what an educational advantage it is to the rising generation of your city to have a show like——"

"That ain't it, friend," interrupted

Cliff. "It's a matter of money. Just that, and that's all."

Bob Oakleigh paused and looked at the hotel man closely. "Money; what you mean?" he demanded after a minute. "Ain't this town got a pay roll of nearly six thousand a week? And don't we show here the day after the first pay day in the month? What you mean, money?"

Cliff Henderson selected a five-cent cigar from the case on the desk and bit the end thoughtfully. Then taking a purple-and-green match from the empty inkwell on the register rack, he lighted the thing and blew the gray fumes directly into the showman's face.

"You got it sized up right, stranger," he said. "This town has a pay roll of better than six thousand a week, and you show here the day after the first pay day in the month. That's what's the matter—there's going to be about thirteen thousand dollars in the public's jeans the night before your show gets in here, and the merchants and other fellows who want that thirteen thousand, and who feel they're rightfully entitled to it, they just naturally hate to have the public packing that money around and thinking of a circus."

Bob Oakleigh, almost overcome by the combination of this revelation and the smoke from Cliff's cigar, motioned the hotel man to open the case and sell him one. Then, armed with a counter-irritant, he leaned over the desk and thoughtfully watched Cliff put his nickel in the cash-register drawer.

"So," he said, "that's the idea! This show has come in on the preserves of the local highwaymen, eh? And they don't aim to encourage us none?"

Cliff Henderson hitched one fat leg over the gate that kept loungers in the lobby from wandering behind the hotel desk, and nodded his head. "You have an inkling, stranger—just an inkling—of the condition you're up against. Listen now, and I'll make it plainer. Outside of myself, every man in this town lives off'n the mills. Either they get their wages direct in the pay envelope, or they get 'em secondhand.

Outside of the mill hands, there's maybe a thousand people here, and half of 'em have got to be reckoned with. There's thirty-three lawyers, seven ministers, eight doctors, and a manicure to begin with. Then there's two undertakers and two florists. There's two department stores, one millinery joint, one ten-cent store, three ladies'-goods stores, five drug stores, two hardware stores, one furniture house, six grocery stores, four meat markets, and a creamery. There's two bakeries, one automobile garage, three real-estate offices, and the local gas company. Also there's two water companies aside from the city plant, there's the electric-light company, which is a branch of the big one down at the city, and there's two clothing stores and a shoe shop. That's our principal business register. Aside from that, there's the saloons and pool halls, and some cigar stands and small stores that I forget the names of—and there's two livery barns. And, oh, yes, there's three movie houses, too. Now each one of these wants their bit of that pay roll, and they want it every pay-day night, if they can't get it oftener. So what you might call the mercantile interests of this town don't look kindly on interloping circuses and things like that; they sort of jeopardize the financial stability of the place, see? And then we got two banks here, and some mortgage sharks, and they're dead set against all amusement; think it's sinful. And then we got eight churches, you know, and your bills say you're going to give two performances on Sunday. Do you begin to see your condition, stranger?"

There was nothing unkind in the way Cliff Henderson said it. Bob Oakleigh realized that; Cliff was simply stating facts. Now that it was diagramed to him, he could see it all. And it didn't look good.

"I suppose these here public citizens of yours sit up nights planning how they'll cut up that pay roll," he said, with a bitter laugh.

"Take it from me, stranger," solemnly answered Cliff, "as an actual fact, I have heard right here in my

own hotel dining room, young Wessels, who runs the Emporium, tell old man Shaughnessy, of the Reliable Department Store, not to hold a special on shoes till next month because he was going to advertise silk stockings and white petticoats at big reductions this week. And I guess that is gauging things pretty close, ain't it?"

"Who owns the newspaper here?" asked Oakleigh. "The mills, I presume?"

Cliff shook his head. "Nope—this town don't go according to Hoyle. The paper is owned by a runt named Fealey—when the mills want anything they buy it, same as anybody else that wants anything from Fealey."

At this the Wild West advance man seemed to take new heart. "Good!" he exclaimed, with real feeling. "I know that kind; used to buy 'em myself. Guess you'd better save a room for me; I'll be here a coupla days, anyway. I'll probably have some wires from the boss, too, which I'll ask you to hold for me. And now, mine host, you peel your eye, for you're going to see something happen that you wouldn't have expected. Who's the foxiest attorney you've got in this burg, and where's his office?"

Cliff Henderson dislodged his leg from the gate, and shoved the register at Oakleigh. "Room'll be a dollar," he said. "Lawyer Hoskins, over the post office, is spoken of as a good feller; he handles some of the mill business."

Bob Oakleigh signed his name on the Merchants' Hotel list of notables, threw a silver dollar upon the counter, and, tossing the cigar he had been smoking on the floor, swung through the door and walked down the street. Cliff scanned the name scrawled on the register, and shook his head. "Mighty cocky feller, he is," he said to himself. "I'd like to see him make it, too. But I reckon Mill City will do for him, just as it has for the rest of us." And he swore, as many other people have done whenever they spoke of Mill City.

Almost an hour afterward, having first made several visits to the telegraph office in the depot, Bob Oakleigh

climbed the creaking stairs over the post office and entered the office of the Honorable Lysander Hoskins, one of Mill City's legal lights. Mr. Hoskins was a smooth-shaven gentleman of about fifty years, thin-haired, suave in appearance, and well but quietly dressed. His stenographer abruptly left her desk in his office as Oakleigh entered, and she shut the door behind her as she went out.

"What's your fee for a legal opinion, sir?" asked the visitor.

The Honorable Lysander Hoskins observed that his caller was a stranger in Mill City and that he did not appear to be of the class that were looking for work. He also noted an air of energy and dispatch about the stranger that made him surmise the gentleman might have something to do with the coming circus or Wild West show.

"Fifty dollars," he replied.

Bob reached down in his pocket and tossed two twenty-dollar gold pieces on the table, following them by a ten-dollar bill from another pocket.

"Mr. Hoskins," he said, "I'm advance manager for Terwilliger's Epochal Wild West Show. Is there any legal reason, any law upon your statute books, that will prevent us from showing matinee and night here on the fifteenth? The date is Sunday. We've showed in other towns in the State on Sunday, but I'm just fifty dollars' worth curious enough to know our legal rights."

The Honorable Lysander Hoskins tipped back in his chair, and, placing his hands, palms together, tickled himself on the chin with the twin points of his extended fingers. Looking at the ceiling, he rendered his opinion as follows:

"There are no city ordinances governing Sunday amusements, save that there is a provision in the charter that no parade shall be granted a permit to march on the streets during the hours of public worship. So the matter of Sunday performances would be governed entirely by the State law, which is as follows: 'On the first day of the

week, commonly known as the Sabbath or the Lord's Day, it shall be illegal to keep open any store or booth for the transaction of public business, or to present in any hall or tent an entertainment for purposes of amusement to which an admission fee is charged; provided that the provisions of this act shall not apply to doctor shops, apothecaries, undertakers, slaughterhouses in the months of July and August, and meetings of spiritists or other bona-fide religionists that might be regarded by unbelievers as being more entertaining than serious.' That, sir, is the law; passed in Territorial days, and since amended by the legislature in these words: 'The provisions of this act shall not be held to apply to theaters or the operation of public-service utilities.' You see, the law is rather unsatisfactory. However, it is easy to interpret in spite of that. Your performance, I take it, is not presented in a tent, but in the open air?"

"Correct, judge. And it isn't an amusement enterprise, either. We advertise that our show has great educational value."

"Well, then, sir, we have a hopeful situation. In the first place, your performance is not specifically forbidden by the Sunday-closing law. More than that, it is a principle of jurisprudence that a legislative body cannot pass a law governing activities of which it has no knowledge. When this law was passed there were no such things as Wild West shows, and there were no such things as baseball games. I mention the latter because the supreme court has already held that as baseball was unknown as a pastime when this law was passed, the statute could not be construed to apply to baseball games, and so Sunday baseball is permitted under the law in this State. Ergo, were the matter brought before it for consideration and review, the supreme court would probably decide that as Wild West shows were not in existence at the time this law was enacted, the law did not apply to them. I should very much like to take the matter before them, sir."

Mr. Robert Oakleigh felt much cheered, and, reaching into his pocket again, he produced a sheaf of contract forms. Filling out duplicates, he presented one to the attorney.

"Mr. Hoskins, Oakleigh is my name; Robert Oakleigh. I herewith hand you one of our contracts, calling for payment to you of the sum of one hundred dollars on the day of our performance in Mill City. You are to consider this contract a retainer, and are to regard yourself for the time being as local counsel for the Terwilliger Epochal Wild West Show. You are to protect its interests, and more particularly you are to combat by whatever legal measures that may be necessary, efforts that I strongly suspect will be made to prevent our showing here on Sunday. Is that agreeable to you?"

The Honorable Lysander Hoskins glanced over the contract, folded it up, and put it in a portfolio on his desk. "Perfectly satisfactory, Mr. Oakleigh," he said. "And now permit me to give you a word of advice; don't spend any money in this city. Give contracts. The hope that they will be able to realize upon them will make our citizens more lenient toward you. If anything occurs in which you feel that you need my help, pray call on me; evenings when I am not in my office I am usually at home or at the Elks' Club. There is a telephone in both places."

Bob Oakleigh's next call was upon Francis Frederick Fealey, "the little runt" who controlled the destinies of the Mill City *Enterprise* and the job-print shop connected therewith. Mr. Fealey had heard that Mr. Oakleigh was in town, and had been waiting for him some hours. He greeted him cordially and offered him one of his three-for-ten-cents cigars, which Bob accepted in self-defense.

"Mr. Fealey, we are business men, both of us, so let's get down to cases," he said. "I want to do a hundred dollars' worth of advertising in your paper in the course of the next two weeks for Terwilliger's Epochal Wild West Show. Do you want the business?"

"Our amusement rates are forty

cents an inch," laconically said Mr. Fealey.

"That will be about sixteen inches a day then," answered Bob Oakleigh. "I have a six-inch double electro I'll leave with you, and there'll be four inches of hand-set type which you'll keep standing below the electro. And you'll give us about half a column of press notices a day?"

Mr. Fealey, accustomed to the Mill City way of doing business, was rather taken off his guard by the contrasting liberality of this offer, and by the manner in which Mr. Oakleigh accepted his terms, which were about fifty per cent higher than he usually charged. With an approving smile he watched Bob write out one of the show's contracts, and took it with great satisfaction.

"Now," said Oakleigh, once the business details had been attended to, "I'd like to meet your editor and buy him a drink."

Mr. Fealey didn't patronize the Mill City saloons himself; his wife was in "society," and he couldn't afford to do it. But he introduced Oakleigh to Culbertson, the brainy youth who got out the *Enterprise's* four pages for him every day, and Bob led the editor to the best bar in town. After the formalities had been gone through with, Oakleigh gave the editor a fistful of passes.

"Now, son," said he, "I want you to realize that there's going to be news in this show playing here on Sunday. And anything you can do for us will be appreciated in a substantial way. I'll be back here about five days before we come to town, and I'll see you then."

There was "news" in the coming of the Terwilliger Epochal Wild West Show to Mill City. In the first place, it was the first show that had tempted fate in Mill City since the year after the Flood, and in the second place the fact that it was dated for Sunday at once produced an increasing stream of protests. The Ladies' Aid, of the First Church, brought in the initial protest, and they were followed by the Men's Brotherhood and the Knights of St. George. Culbertson saw the news value of each protest, and played it up on the

front page of the *Enterprise*. Then Culbertson discovered that the Honorable Lysander Hoskins, perhaps the city's leading attorney, had some interesting views on the Sunday-closing law and its relation to the Wild West show, and there was a column interview with Mr. Hoskins in the paper the next day. The outside papers, for which Fealey and Culbertson were the correspondents, also came to know of the impending clash in Mill City; so in one way or another Terwilliger's Epochal Wild West Show got a good deal of advertising aside from the sixteen inches a day that Fealey's contract demanded.

On the Monday before the show was due to arrive in Mill City—the afternoon of the ninth, to be exact—there gathered several substantial citizens in the offices in the rear of the Mill City National Bank. There was Samuel L. Dickinson, the city attorney; David P. Dickinson, his brother and president of the bank; George Wessels, manager of the Emporium; old Pat Shaughnessy, owner and manager of the Reliable Department Store; Abner Welland, owner of the Blue Front Clothing Store, and old Ezra Dickinson, father of the Dickinson brothers, and reputed to be the heaviest mortgage holder in the county. The gentlemen's faces were grave, and they were evidently facing a situation of the utmost seriousness.

"I've been thinking over what you said," commenced Samuel Dickinson, "and it seems to me that the easiest way out of it is to have the council instruct the chief of police to arrest the ticket seller as soon as he begins to sell tickets for the afternoon performance. He'll probably be yelling his head off, and we can hold him for disturbing the peace."

"We got to do something," said George Wessels. "Here I got about two hundred dollars out in charge accounts, and I'm not going to have any circus come in and scoop that money out of my hand. Business has been rotten lately, anyway."

David Dickinson, president of the bank, nodded his head. "I know what

it will be if we don't stop it. There's maybe forty of the boys won't come in and pay their interest on their home payments. There's old Jim Partney, now; he's got nine kids. At two bits apiece, with him and his wife, that'll be two-seventy-five he'll blow in at this here circus, to say nothing of what he'll spend for peanuts and lemonade. He'll probably blow all of three dollars there Sunday if we don't stop it—more than he'll make at the mill in a whole day. And there's lots of others like him."

"Jim, he owes the Blue Front eleven dollars ninety now," interjected Mr. Welland, referring to a notebook in his hand. "He was to have come in last pay day and settled, but he said one of the kids was sick and he had to pay the doctor. I didn't dream there'd be no circus, so I let him off."

"I see by the *Enterprise* that Lysander Hoskins says the law can't touch this show," rumbled Pat Shaughnessy. "Lysander he usually knows the law."

This got a rise out of Ezra Dickinson, who looked proudly at his boy Samuel. "I reckon our city attorney knows as much law as Lysander Hoskins," he squeaked, in his high falsetto. "But that ain't all of it. We don't want to let this get into the courts, where maybe Lysander would pull some trick. We got to appeal to folks' common sense; we got to find some way to make them realize that this is a—a sacrilege to have a circus on Sunday."

"Fiddlesticks! It's no more sacrilege than the baseball games up at the capital," said David Dickinson. "And you know, father, last year you and I went to nearly all of them."

"It is, too, boy," replied Ezra, uncomfortable at having been so exposed before his fellow townsmen. "And I never have felt just right about them games we went to see last year, anyway. You notice I ain't gone to none this year."

"That sacrilege idea is a good one," thoughtfully remarked Samuel, the city attorney. "We got to play that strong. You people see your ministers, and I'll get my wife to feed it into Fealey's

wife. Maybe she can make him put it in the paper."

"Fealey's getting a hundred dollars for what he's putting in the paper," said Wessels discouragingly. "He showed me his contract the other day. I was up there yelling for a cheaper rate, and he showed me how this circus was paying him forty cents an inch. Honest!"

"So you been trying to get a lower rate than me, have you?" bellowed Pat Shaughnessy. "Huh, just let that runt give you a cut under me and I'll put on a clearance sale that will ruin you, so help me! And I'll advertise to in circulars, too; so Fealey won't get a cent."

The other members of the conference hastened to suppress the budding quarrel between the two department-store managers, and then returned to the discussion of their problem. It was over an hour later when they adjourned, and Samuel Dickinson telephoned up to the *Enterprise* and asked Culbertson to step down to the bank for an important interview.

In view of the gravity of the occasion, Samuel gave the young editor a seven-cent cigar—wholesale price, the way he bought them—and then outlined the city's plan to protect its morals.

"After a conference with some of our leading citizens, Culbertson, you may announce that we are determined that Mill City's Sunday peace and quiet shall not be sullied by the braying bands of a circus, nor shall the rest of our people be disturbed by the ruffianism and hysteria usually coincident with a performance of this nature—the discharge of firearms, the charging of horses, and the like. The council will refuse to-night to issue a permit for a street parade to this show, and it will also instruct the chief of police to swear in extra officers to arrest any person or persons who may try to carry on the activities of this performance at the show grounds. The charge will be 'disturbing the public peace by behaving in a loud and boisterous manner in a public place.' I wish you would

give this announcement prominence, so that the excitement that has already been created among our people may have a chance to subside. Believe me, Mr. Culbertson, feeling against the sacrilege of a circus performance on Sunday is running very high."

That was news, all right, and Culbertson did it justice in the *Enterprise*. The front page of the little paper fairly shouted in black type that there would be no Wild West show the following Sunday if the peace officers of Mill City could prevent it. The children, young and grown up, were vastly disappointed, and the city was more dismal than usual until the next edition of the *Enterprise* got upon the streets. Then it appeared that the children, young and grown up, had an unsuspected friend in the person of the Honorable Lysander Hoskins.

For Mr. Hoskins had gone before the circuit judge, and had applied for an injunction, restraining the peace officers of Mill City and the city officials from interfering in any way with the performance of that great educational and open-air spectacle, Terwilliger's Epochal Wild West Show, on the following Sabbath day. While the circuit judge had not granted the application for an injunction, he had issued a temporary writ, and had set Friday as the day upon which the application should be heard and argued. This was even greater news than the announcement of the city attorney, and the *Enterprise* and Culbertson did it fitting honor with black type and bombastic language.

That day, also, Mr. Robert Oakleigh returned to Mill City, and had dodgers distributed on the street, offering a prize of eight reserved seats at Terwilliger's Epochal Wild West Show to the boy or girl in each grade of the Mill City public schools who could write the best essay on "The American Bison." Promptly Professor Gordon, the city superintendent of schools, rushed to the *Enterprise* office and made a forceful statement to the effect that any child writing a composition or essay on the American bison would

be summarily dismissed from class. Mr. Gordon was elected by the school patrons, who were also the leading merchants and taxpayers of the community.

Mr. Oakleigh, being informed of this by the earnest Mr. Culbertson, thereupon wrote a letter to the editor of the *Enterprise*, in which he craved a small amount of valuable space to announce that at the Sunday afternoon performance of the great, educational pageant of the plains, otherwise known as Terwilliger's Epochal Wild West Show, any boy or girl presenting an essay on the American bison would be given one free-admittance ticket at the box office on the grounds.

There was sure plenty of news in the *Enterprise*, and one of the more ambitious papers at the capital sent a special man down to cover the excitement at Mill City.

So matters went along until Friday morning, when Samuel Dickinson, city attorney, appeared early at the office of the Honorable Lysander Hoskins, and slammed the door behind him.

"Listen, Lysander," he said. "I'm not going into court and make a fool of myself arguing against your motion for an injunction against the city. I know you'll claim that there will be no disturbance of the peace and that the city and its officers will be prejudiced, and all that. And you'll get your writ, all right, in the end. You go over and tell the judge that you'll withdraw your application, and I'll give you my word as city attorney that no city officer will attempt to interfere with your blooming circus."

"It's not a circus, Sam, it's a——"

"I don't care what it is. You withdraw that application, and I'll quit. I'm not going to make a fool of myself, and have it heaved back at me next election."

"Oh, very well, Sam, if that's the way you feel about it. I'll do it now." And, reaching for the telephone, Mr. Hoskins called up the circuit-court chambers. "Judge? . . . This is Lysander Hoskins. I'd like to withdraw that application for a writ of injunc-

tion, if it's all right with you. . . . Eh, what's that? . . . Oh, yes, it was a good deal of a bluff. Much obliged, judge; good-by."

Having no business to keep him in Mill City, the circuit-court judge, with a sigh of relief, thereupon adjourned court until the following Monday, and departed for the capital, where he went out to the Country Club to play golf. And the *Enterprise*, when it heard the news, told in its blackest type how the city had withdrawn its objections to the Sunday performance of Terwilliger's Epochal Wild West Show.

This, however, is not the end of the story. Mr. Robert Oakleigh thought it was, but he was a stranger in Mill City. Mr. Cliff Henderson, proprietor of the Merchants' Hotel, and one of the two independent men in Mill City, hoped it was; but, knowing the community, he had his doubts. These doubts he tried to impart to Mr. Oakleigh, but the latter only laughed, and reminded Mr. Henderson that he'd promised him a surprise.

While the people believed the show victorious, and while the *Enterprise* was still fulfilling its contract as regards advertising and news, things were happening, however. Old Ezra Dickinson, dressed in his best coat, and playing the trump card of the Mill City rulers, was in the governor's office in the capital, nearly a hundred miles away. Ezra Dickinson, if you did not look too closely, was a venerable-appearing man of the stamp that incites respect—a sort of a good-grandfather type. He was looking at the governor earnestly with his rheumy eyes, and he was talking in as serious a tone as his falsetto voice would permit.

"Your excellency," he said, "the people of Mill City appeal to you to save them from a disgrace that threatens them through no fault of their own. Owing to the misguided zeal of a young man who happens at this time to be the editor of our one daily paper—a most excellent young man, governor, but one lacking in an appreciation of the finer distinctions of life—we are threatened with the sacrilege of our Sabbath. An

unprincipled itinerant showman has offered to bring to Mill City on Sunday one of these conglomerations of Indians, cowboys, and stockmen commonly called a 'Wild West show.' Against the wishes of the better element of our city, this man is determined to give his performance. And this young man, who is editor of our paper, not realizing the seriousness of the situation, but seeing only the spectacular side of the issue, has supported in the columns of our daily this showman's efforts to override the desires of our taxpayers and property owners. Our city officials are powerless under the law; we have refused this band of performers a permit to hold a street parade, but our charter gives us no further power. My son, our city attorney, unwisely let it be known in advance that he was planning to arrest the showmen for disturbing the peace, and, on learning of this, the circus people, through their attorney, applied for an injunction restraining the city officials from interfering with them. And so our hands are tied, governor, and we come to you. We do not know whether you can do anything for us, but we earnestly pray that you can.

"I have here, your excellency, an appeal signed by the seven ministers of our city; signed by our leading business men, and by our most substantial citizens. They ask you to do what you can to prevent this shameful thing happening to us, and I join my plea with theirs. Mill City, governor, has always looked up to you as the State's executive; Mill City gave you a majority of two thousand at the last election, governor, and now Mill City asks you to simply enforce the constitutional rights of its citizens and make it possible for them to enjoy the Sabbath without having it desecrated by this howling mob of Indians, cowboys, stockmen, and the riffraff that always goes with shows of such caliber."

The governor was a sincere man, and a busy man. The happenings in Mill City since the flaring posters of Terwilliger's Epochal Wild West Show had first appeared upon its drab walls had

not been recounted to him. All he knew about the matter was the report that white-haired Ezra Dickinson gave him. He looked at the petition that Ezra laid on his desk, and he saw well-known names, and he saw seven names prefaced by "Reverend." He was a governor, and he hoped to be reelected governor. What could he do?

Reaching for the telephone, he called up the attorney general. Rapidly he repeated to that official the report that Ezra had brought him. "What can I do?" he asked.

The attorney general, being a lawyer, had noted some of the reports in the papers regarding the Mill City situation. In particular had he noted the interview with the Honorable Lysander Hoskins, concerning the limits of the Sunday-closing law, and he knew the interpretation that the supreme court had put upon it in the case of the baseball suit. And he knew Mill City, where five-sixths of the population were more or less like dumb, driven sheep.

"I don't know, governor," he answered, "that you can really do anything. But you can run a bluff; you can threaten to call out the militia."

"I've done that three times this year," answered the governor, "and I don't want to do it again; not now, anyway."

"Well, why don't you go down there, and take along a bodyguard?" suggested the attorney general. "Probably the circus men won't shout 'Hey, rube!' at you."

Sunday, the fifteenth, dawned bright and fair, a perfect day. Two hundred small boys stood down at the railroad depot from four in the morning until they got hungry, waiting to see the show train come in. By nine they had all gone back to their homes to explain their absences as best they might, and to beg breakfasts of their mothers. At ten minutes after nine the passenger from the north pulled in, and the governor, followed by eight stalwart members of the State constabulary, alighted from the smoking car. The first man

to reach the executive's side was Bob Oakleigh.

"Governor, Oakleigh is my name. I'm assistant manager of Terwilliger's Epochal——"

He got no further. The governor raised his hand. "I forbid you, sir, in the name of the State, to attempt to give a performance of your show in this city to-day," he said.

Somewhere beside the governor there was a clicking noise, and young Culbertson, editor of the *Enterprise*, hastily folded up his camera. "I got it," he said.

Oakleigh turned away from the governor on the run, and with the newspaper man sped to the Merchants' Hotel. It was some time later that one of the State constables succeeded in locating him and told him the governor wanted to see him. Oakleigh followed the constable to Ezra Dickinson's office in the rear of the Mill City National Bank, about which a crowd of idlers was gathered. Within, he faced the State's executive with a smile.

"Sorry to have rushed off so, governor," he said, "but I wanted to see if it was a good picture. If it hadn't been, I was going to ask you to pose again. But it turned out fine. We're going to use it on eight-sheets just as quick as we can get it made—picture of you forbidding me to give my show. Under it in big letters will be: 'This is the governor forbidding Manager Oakleigh to present Terwilliger's Epochal Wild West Show in Mill City. Come and see it and find out if he was

justified.' It'll be the biggest piece of advertising we ever had."

The governor frowned. "Where is your show?" he asked.

Oakleigh laughed. "Oh, the show? That's gone on to Greenvale, where we're booked to show to-morrow. Culbertson, our new press agent, got the tip last night that you were going to block us here, so we didn't even haul in. We always try to please the people, and as long as you didn't want us to show here, we thought we'd better humor you."

Monday morning Francis Frederick Fealey, owner of the *Enterprise*, was the first caller in the Honorable Lysander Hoskins' office.

"Lysander," he said, "I've got a contract here with the Terwilliger Epochal Wild West Show, calling for the payment of one hundred dollars for advertising. They didn't come here, and I want you to sue 'em for it. Attach their show, if you can, too; they stole my editor."

The Honorable Lysander Hoskins laughed. When he recovered from his mirth he looked at the owner of the *Enterprise*, and then gave him the shock of his life. "It can't be done, Fealey," he said. "The contract says that the outfit will pay you in silver or gold coin on the show lot upon the afternoon of their arrival. They didn't arrive, and you can't collect till they do. But cheer up; I've got one just like it, only mine reads 'due for legal services.' That boy Oakleigh was a wonder, Fealey; he got us *both*."

In the next issue there will be another story by the author of "No Show At All." "Opals Are Unlucky" is the title. In it Maxwell reintroduces Arabia, the interesting young woman who appeared in "Cougar," and "The Little Girl Who Got Lost." It is a story of the Secret Service, with international complications.

Sticking to It

By Foxhall Williams

Author of "The House in Greenwich Village," "Business Is Business," Etc.

Just a simple matter of getting a gentleman to affix his signature to an option—but Steve Magruder, who assayed the task, had to run the gantlet of the police, take refuge in a cave, and live through as wild a twenty-four hours as ever any desperado experienced

STEVE MAGRUDER, crouching behind a fence that hid, more or less completely, a vacant lot and an assortment of tin cans, derelict umbrellas, broken packing cases, and similar odds and ends, had difficulty in restraining his impulse to give vent to a hysterical burst of laughter. Steve looked, at the moment, like the latter end of a misspent life. One sleeve of his excellent raincoat was missing altogether; he was covered with mud; and his face was streaked with blood from a cut across his cheek. He was listening intently to the measured tread of an approaching policeman whom he had seen, just in time, he hoped, to take shelter behind the fence, but who might, despite the calmness of his approach, have seen him first. Altogether, it did not seem that Steve should have undue difficulty in restraining his desire to laugh.

Yet it was so. And the reason he wanted to laugh was that he had just thought, inconsequently, of the immortal lines of Mr. Henley—the ones that go:

In the fell clutch of circumstance
I have not winced nor cried aloud—

The fell clutch of circumstance! Steve knew that he had never understood that line before. He had always liked the poem, but it was not until that moment that its inner meaning was revealed to him. He had liked it just because of its fine, sonorous quality—because it rolled so smoothly on his tongue, and sounded so deep and sig-

nificant. The fell clutch of circumstance! This was it! He was in it. And fell wasn't the word. It was too weak, too feeble, altogether.

Left, right! Left, right! Steve began to get fanciful as he listened to the policeman's heavy feet. He had a good, rhythmical tread, this cop. His footsteps were perfectly timed. They made Steve feel as if he were listening to the ticking of a monstrous clock, marking off the seconds that remained before they would come and open his cell door and take him out to the scaffold. And—

But, perhaps, it will be as well to explain briefly how Steve happened to be crouching behind that fence, and why circumstance had him in its fell clutch.

Steve wasn't a murderer or even a burglar. He was about as innocent as any male old enough to wear long trousers ever is. Even had that cop caught him he would have been released ultimately, without a stain on his character. But by that time the beans would have been spilled. As things stood Steve knew that the best explanation in the world wouldn't get him anywhere with Mr. James Gray Clinton, vice president and general manager of Graham & Clinton, Incorporated, for which corporation Steve was privileged to toil at a weekly honorarium of twenty-five dollars. Not, that is, unless he delivered the goods

—
It's no use. You must be patient. This narrative is going to be much

easier to follow if you will go back to a point somewhere near its beginning.

Steve Magruder had been working about a year. James Gray Clinton had, with a good deal of reluctance, sanctioned his addition to the pay roll just after an ancient seat of learning at New Haven, Connecticut, had conferred a degree upon Steve. Mr. Clinton himself had never been so honored by any university, although one or two had intimated, with becoming indirectness, that any little thing in the way of a Litt. D. or a Ph. D. that he yearned for would be his, with an appropriate cap and gown, if he would loosen up to the extent of a new building or a fat check for the endowment fund. But Mr. Clinton had never risen to the bait. Not that he couldn't have afforded such a degree; the point was that he didn't believe in a college education for a young man who had to make his living.

If you cornered him, Mr. Clinton could be forced to admit that most of the bright young men who did the actual work that made it necessary for him to grow blasphemous when any one said income tax in his hearing were college men. But he would always go on to explain that that was just a coincidence, and to tell you how he, personally, had knocked the college nonsense out of them in jig time.

"You can go to work, young man," Mr. Clinton had said, bending a stern eye upon Steve Magruder. "And if you can keep from thinking all the time about what a great man you are because you went to college and rowed on the crew, you can probably live it down. I've given strict orders that no man in this organization is to be discriminated against just because he went to college. But it's a handicap you've got to overcome. I've got a friend who makes it a point to employ as many released convicts as he can. And he follows the same policy. Just the same, until they've proved that they're all right, the other men do rather frown on them."

Steve, having been forewarned, did not grin. He didn't even smile, but

managed to look solemn and grateful without overdoing his gravity to the point of making Mr. Clinton suspicious. And so he had settled down to work. Work, at first, had not been altogether what Steve had hoped it might be. The romance he had imagined must lie in the clash and struggle of modern business hadn't manifested itself to his naked eye.

Graham & Clinton, Incorporated, was one of those vast, indeterminate businesses. The corporation seemed to have letters of marque. It did about anything that promised to give it a chance to turn an honest penny. It built office buildings, and managed them, and apartment houses and hotels and railways. It developed mines, and had been known to take over a bankrupt steamship line and play nurse to it until it was paying twenty per cent on watered stock. Sometimes it acted for investors, on a commission business; sometimes for itself. It had intimate dealings with millionaires and the presidents of South American republics, janitors and West Indian elevator boys.

But Steve got the elevator boys, not the millionaires. He couldn't seem to get in touch with the great and thrilling enterprises. After an apprenticeship as a sort of glorified office boy, while he was learning the ropes, he was set down in half-completed apartment houses still heavy with the smell of unset plaster, and bidden to make himself agreeable to ladies who were trying to decide whether or not to move in. Later there was a period during which he had to nerve himself daily to go to the office at all, since he knew that when he arrived he would find a batch of complaints, properly annotated, and that he must, after making himself familiar with them, go around and apply balm to the wounds of tenants who had turned at last upon their janitors.

He did his work well enough, because he had a feeling that all this sort of thing was necessary; that it was like the long winter's work on the rowing machines, or the dreary grind of drill

in signals and tackling the dummy during the early stages of the football season. Ultimately, he supposed, he would make the team or the crew, so to speak, and get some fun out of life again.

Of James Gray Clinton, Steve saw little during this troubled time. The relation between them was more or less like that between the captain on the bridge and the stoker in the bowels of the ship, anyway.

Yet the time came when Mr. Clinton, willy-nilly, had to give Steve a chance. It was pretty late in the day; Steve should really have been away from the office, like every one else, except Mr. Clinton's confidential secretary, who had no fixed hours. But he wasn't; he was at his desk, finishing up some routine job, when Mr. Clinton came storming through the office, calling for one man after another who had gone home.

"Not here! Lot of clock watchers!" he raged. "You—Magruder! Come into my office! You'll have to do!"

It wasn't a complimentary summons. It wasn't a bit like sitting on the side lines during a big game, among the substitutes, and having the coach look up and down the line and finally stop at him. But somehow Steve went into Mr. Clinton's room with much the same thrill running through him that he had known as he threw off his blanket and ran out on the field in his junior year to take his place with the bruised and battered team that was lining up to repel an assault in the very shadow of its goal posts.

"Here!" said Mr. Clinton. He held out an envelope bulging with papers. "We want John Runyon's signature to this option—it's in a separate envelope. The other papers he'll want for his information. But the thing for you to keep in your mind is the option. Know Runyon by sight?"

"Yes, sir," said Steve. Who didn't?

"He's verbally committed to us," Clinton went on. "But—we can't feel safe until he has signed that option. It happens that other people have found out what's in the wind, and I'm afraid

of attempts to cut in ahead of us. Damn it! I suppose I'll have to explain——"

He glowered at Steve, as if that were his fault.

"Runyon owns what is practically the key to one of the biggest real-estate deals in this office. The Hannis-Blair outfit is ready to build. They're ready to take the site we offer—a whole block practically. We've gone ahead, getting the land a little at a time. We took a chance on doing it that way, acting for ourselves, because it was the only chance there was to get Hannis-Blair to build this year instead of waiting. We'll make our big profit out of the construction contract—and we want, aside from that profit, to keep the organization busy.

"If we don't get this parcel of Runyon's, it's all off. We'll be stuck with the rest of the block, and Heaven only knows how long we might have to carry it. Now—Runyon's been West. He gets in at the Grand Central Station, as seven o'clock. You'll have to meet him, and stick to him like a leech. He won't want to talk business; he never does. Up to you to make him. Go along with him; make him come through. Here—I'll give you a couple of hundred dollars for possible expenses. You might have to stick to him all evening. Think you can do it?"

"He'll have to go some to get away from me," said Steve grimly.

"H'm! Well, I've no choice! Do it myself, but I can't for various reasons. Look bad. Make Runyon suspicious for one thing. Oh, by the way! Spoiling your plans for to-morrow, I suppose? Planning to get a day off and be at New London, were you?"

Steve flushed. He'd been feeling virtuous just because he had resolutely declined half a dozen bids to join parties for the boat race. A year before he'd rowed in a beaten shell; when he had first made up his mind to stick to the job and stay away from New London it had seemed to him that he was making a supreme sacrifice. And this was all the credit he got!

"No, sir," he said. "I'd decided to pass the race up for this year."

"H'm!" said Clinton again, as if he didn't believe it. "All foolishness—boat races—football games—marbles! Bah! Get along, now! I'll look for that option to-morrow!"

Steve went out grinding his teeth. He'd always supposed before that that was just a figure of speech. But he knew now how it was done, and why. Still, no matter what he thought of Clinton, he had his chance. He was a good deal excited as he made his way toward the Grand Central Station.

It wasn't the place he would have chosen to be. Men and girls he knew were passing him every minute, hailing him joyously, talking about the race. They all took it for granted that he, like them, was bound for New London. It wasn't easy to concentrate his mind upon the need of meeting a man he knew only by sight and to try to prepare some greeting that would arouse his interest and lead him to do what Steve had to make him do.

But Runyon's train was rather late; before it came in the last of the gay crowd that was bound for New London, for the Griswold and the Mohican, for house parties in cottages on the two points and along the river, for yachts that were making New London Harbor their rendezvous from points all along the coast, had passed through the gates. And then, at last, an announcer rumbled out a message that drew Steve to the proper gate, and almost the first man he saw was Runyon.

Runyon looked affable. He was a big, florid chap with ruddy cheeks; a man who enjoyed life obviously. He was enjoying it fully as he came from the train; he laughed and slapped his companion on the back, and the negro porter who carried his bags wore a broad grin. It was men like Runyon who made the porter's job worth while with their tips. Well, Runyon could afford enormous tips. He was a pretty rich man, and was getting richer all the time. Steve trailed him for a minute; when he stopped he was at his side.

"Have you got time to sign that option for me now, Mr. Runyon?" he asked.

"Option! What option?" asked Runyon, wheeling upon him. "Who the devil are you?"

"Stupid of me!" said Steve genially. "Thought you'd know all about it. That bit of land we—Graham & Clinton, Incorporated—are buying from you, you know. I've got all the papers here—won't take you a minute."

"Oh!" said Runyon, staring. Then he smiled. "You're all right, old man! Thought you were a bunko steerer for a minute!"

He laughed, and every one within hearing, which meant every one in the concourse, turned to stare.

"Tend to that later," said Runyon. "Got important business finish first. Most 'portant. Say—you know they don't sell drinks on that train? Got to go Biltmore and buy you an' old Reggie Brewster here drink—me, too. You know dear old Reggie Brewster? Best fellow ever lived! Say—you're all right! Like your face! What's name? Most 'portant, that! Like your name—then you're friend o' mine!"

"Magruder," said Steve, grinning. "Steve Magruder!"

"Ain't that elegant name—p'fec'ly elegant name, Reggie?" said Runyon almost tearfully. With a sudden movement he took Brewster, who, it was plain, hadn't had anything to do with the exhaustion of Runyon's private stock on the dry train, and Steve each by an arm. Steve was amazed by the strength of Runyon's grip; the man looked soft, but belied that look. He turned to the porter as he dragged them off.

"Come along, George!" he roared. "You tote those bags right along. 'Portant bags—most 'portant!"

"Yassah—yassah, boss!" said George, grinning from ear to ear.

"Missed train," said Runyon. "Train hurt my feelin's—wouldn't wait. Not pally of train—not pally at all. Wouldn' ride in it now if it came back from Stamford get me! Right, Steve, ol' friend?"

"Right!" said Steve. "Only way treat 'em. Put 'em in their place."

"You hear him, Reggie?" said Runyon. "You hear that man? Didn' I tell you—great—great—int-intellect? Understan's trains. Probably raised 'em himself. Got to be firm with 'em. Have special—that's what I'll do. George—you go tell president of road I want special train. Tell him send it over here for me."

"Yassah, boss!" said George.

"No—telephone," said Runyon, concentrating all his faculties.

And, with the most perfect politeness and the most absolute sobriety apparently, he gave a number to the young woman at the switchboard, entered a booth, and closed the door. Steve lifted an inquiring eye toward Brewster, who was regarding him attentively.

"Just a little merry," said Brewster. "Fine chap! I say—I haven't a doubt that it's quite all right—but would you like to let me see your credentials? Business card—that sort of thing? You understand——"

In a moment Steve was pressing all the identifying papers he carried upon Brewster, who barely glanced at them—including the unsigned option—and then returned them with a nod.

"All right, of course," he said. "But, you understand, old man? With Jack feeling as fine as he does——"

"My dear chap!" Steve said protestingly. "Of course! I take it that you've got a large-sized evening ahead of you?"

Brewster sighed eloquently for answer. And then Runyon returned.

"Fixed that train!" he said malevolently. "Teach it not to wait for me! C'me on!"

They had a drink, with George, still clutching the bags, hovering discreetly in the background. And then, it seemed to Steve, in view of Runyon's growing affection for him, it was time to introduce the option again.

"You want me sign, Steve, ol' pal?" said Runyon solemnly. "Steve—do anythin' for you!"

"Fine!" said Steve. He produced

the option and a fountain pen. But, at the sight of the pen, a look of cunning came into Runyon's eyes.

"Steve," he said. "Got rule. Most 'portant rule. Never break it. Never sign anythin' 'cept with quill pen. You got quill pen? Goose-quill pen? *You* know!"

And he burst into a roar of laughter. Steve had to laugh himself. But suddenly he happened to look at Brewster, and something he saw in Brewster's eyes made him extremely thoughtful. Who was Brewster, anyhow? The intimacy between him and Runyon obviously meant nothing; it wasn't a bit thicker than the intimacy a stranger, appearing now, would see existing between Runyon and Steve.

"Come 'long!" cried Runyon suddenly. "Got hurry! You, George—come 'long!"

Once more he seized Brewster and Steve each by an arm, and dragged them along with him. Steve began to see dimly what he was in for. But only dimly! Even when a station master greeted Runyon deferentially, and led the way to a gate, Steve didn't grasp the full import of things. But, by the platform, he saw a diminutive train—an engine, baggage car, and private car.

"By Jove!" he thought. "The beggar did order a special! Going up to his country place on the Sound probably!"

He knew about Runyon's place near Greenwich. But at Greenwich the special didn't even hesitate. And Runyon roared with laughter when Steve finally asked where they were going.

"New L'nd'n!" he said. "Got to whoop her up for dear old Yale! Here's to good old Yale, drink her down, drink her down! Here's to good old Yale—drink her down, drink her down!"

He suited the action to the word, and instantly grew melancholy.

"You college man?" he asked, gripping the lapels of Steve's coat. "You Yale man? You be grateful, young man! In-in-in-est-estim-ineestimable priv'lege! Me—I nev' went college!

But I b'lieve in it! Always go football games—boat race—whoop her up for dear old Yale!"

It was—more or less—true, and Steve knew it. He had a vague recollection of having read pieces in the *News* about gifts from John Runyon, who was not even an alumnus, that ought to make Yale men sit up and take envious notice. But he was obsessed for the moment with his own troubles. He had not yet got Runyon's signature to that option. It didn't look as if he would soon. And suppose Clinton discovered that he was on his way to New London and the boat race! Still, he didn't see how he could have altered his course. He had been told to stick to Runyon through thick and thin. Well, this was pretty thick, but he was obeying orders!

After all, it wasn't an eventful trip. Runyon, quite suddenly, grew sleepy. The private car was well equipped; Steve found a comfortable brass bed at his disposal. And, his conscience being clear, he slept. In the morning a clear-eyed, smiling Runyon greeted him. There was a twinkle in his eye; the suspicion of a smile parted his lips.

"Glad to see you, Magruder," he said. "About that option——"

He broke off, amused by the surprise that Steve could not conceal.

"My memory is—adequate," he said dryly. "I hope I haven't made trouble for you by kidnaping you this way. Still—you'll see the race. Yale man, aren't you? The Magruder who rowed Number Five last year, by any chance?"

Steve nodded.

"Good man! You stuck to it like a good un! Well—that option. I expect to sign it for you. There are one or two points I want to clear up. Let me have those other papers. Better wire your office—or telephone. I think J. G. C. will understand—if he doesn't, I'll try to make him! Now we'll have breakfast. I've got a boat around here somewhere—we'll run up the river to see the early races in a motor boat.

As long as you're here you might as well get some fun out of it."

"Thanks," said Steve. "But if you could clean up the other papers in time and let me have the option, I'd like to make the first train I can——"

"Nothing doing!" said Runyon resolutely. "Hold your horses, son!"

This was a very different Runyon; a Runyon who left Steve in no such doubt as he had felt the night before as to how he had amassed his millions. Steve did worry about getting back, but his conscience was still clear. And he decided unwisely, as he felt later, against sending any word to Clinton. He felt that he had what was as good as a promise from Runyon. And Brewster was smiling and cheerful. The faint mistrust of him that Steve had felt the night before evaporated, for now, at least, there could be no doubt that Runyon really did know him intimately.

It was pleasant to walk up from the special, in the yards, past the observation trains, already bright with color, through the thronged principal street of New London, hailing friends and being hailed by them at every step. It was great to get the feel of the race again; to see the familiar river. And, as he passed a shop, a sudden inspiration sent Steve scurrying inside. He had seen a veritable quill pen in the window; he bought it and crushed it into his pocket, grinning. And then, a little later, he, Runyon, and Brewster went aboard a rakish-looking motor boat, and went scooting up the river, past the Navy Yard, up within sight of Red Top, flaunting the crimson banner of Harvard, and Gale's Ferry, where the blue of Yale brought a lump into his throat somehow. When he saw the two junior varsity crews fussing around the stake boats he wanted to stand up and yell.

During the two races that followed, Steve gave little thought to that option. The old stir was in his blood; even Brewster responded to the enthusiasm that set Steve and Runyon to slapping one another on the back when the Yale

freshmen, by a gallant spurt in the last quarter of a mile, won by a nose.

And after that five hours remained before the varsity race. And the Prohibition cause has made few converts in New London.

It was in the Thames Club that Steve grasped the flying coat tails of opportunity. He produced his quill with a dramatic flourish.

"Quill pen—here you are!" he said. "Sign on the dotted line!"

"Quill pen—'portant point that, most 'portant!" said Runyon. "Man after my own heart, Steve; after own heart!"

He signed! He made Brewster sign as one witness, and a distinguished New Londoner as another! And then, as Steve, scarcely daring to breathe, reached for the option, he snatched it away with a chuckle.

"No—nay, nay! Naughty, naughty!" he said. "Little old Stephen W. Foxy Quiller Magruder you are! Give you that and you'd leave me and good old boat race flat! Wait till we've whooped her up for good old Yale!"

And into his pocket went the option. Steve achieved a grin. After all, the precious signature had been affixed and witnessed. After the race he would get the option. And if he brought the bacon home, he could afford to endure Clinton's reproaches.

This is not the story of that great race. Let it be enough to say that after several Crimson years New London's air was blue that night. Ashore from his launch surged Runyon, whooping her up for good old Yale.

"And, believe me, it was some whoop!" Steve used to say, when a nightmare had been mellowed by the perspective of time.

Steve met friends, also whooping her up, who fell upon him and sought to drag him away from Runyon. But Runyon protected him. His method was simple.

"Celebrate? Sure we'll celebrate!" he said. "All li'l' pals together. Whoop her up for good old Yale! Nex' stop, Broadway an' Forty-secon' Street! Pile aboard my train, boys! Lots o'

room! Frien's my ol' pal Steve—frien's mine!"

It sounded logical to Steve's friends. They didn't know who Runyon might be, but they were prepared to adopt him, and to be adopted by him. It was so ordered. Even if Steve hadn't intended to stick until he got that option, he couldn't have got away. He was separated from Runyon, but he had a capable escort. Dutch Raymond and Pi Carter undertook to get him on board the train—and saw to it that he got there. And it was by pure chance that Steve, being swept along through the yards, encountered James Gray Clinton, just descending, stiffly and with the look of an early Christian martyr, from a car of one of the observation trains!

"Magruder!" he cried. He didn't see Runyon.

Steve struggled frantically to escape, to reach Mr. Clinton and make explanations. It was in vain. The memory of Clinton's face spurred him to frantic efforts, all the way to New York, to get that option. But about Runyon there was a cunning fairly diabolical, and once, at least, when Steve had almost succeeded in abstracting the precious paper, Brewster, seemingly by accident, spoiled everything by caroming into him.

It was what Steve would have called a large evening. But Steve did not enjoy it. He looked neither upon the wine when it was red nor the champagne when it was golden—or, rather, he looked and let it go at that. And always he watched Runyon's coat pocket as a cat watches a mouse. In Steve's mind, that evening, as he looked back upon it, was always a kaleidoscope. Dinner, a show, a vote that the show was punk, a descent upon another, a ride around in taxicabs in the rain that had ceased, it seemed, for the race, and had now come back, supper, tables at one of the midnight shows, more taxicabs, scrambled eggs and bacon in Sixth Avenue, still more taxicabs—

Stragglers fell away one by one, but it looked as if Runyon could—and

would—go on forever. Steve began to reel from sheer weariness—and still he didn't have the option. And then, when he had looked at his watch, and seen, to his amazement, that it was only half past two, he got his chance. The crowd had started taxicabbing again, and Brewster had become separated from Runyon and Steve. Runyon turned upon Steve.

"Steve—ol' pal, Steve!" he said, in a heartbroken voice. "You're not happy! Can't—can't hide it from me! Steve, ol' pal—I'll make you happy! Here!"

And he thrust the option upon Steve, who, dazed, incredulous, tucked it into his trouser pocket, following an old instinct to bestow in that pocket any particularly valuable thing he had to carry.

At the moment they were at the northern end of Central Park. And, just as the cabs headed out into Eighth Avenue, there was a violent explosion. Both cabs stopped; the party piled out.

"Black Hand!" yelled some one.

It was in the elevated station that the explosion had occurred. Policemen came running; somehow, even at that hour, a crowd gathered. The shriek of a fire-engine siren split the air. Every one pressed forward. And suddenly Steve saw his chance and took to his heels. Brewster gave the alarm; in a moment Runyon was leading the chase. But Steve, heading for the park, was not to be caught; he leaped the low wall, and, though he fell sprawling in the soft, wet dirt, he was up in a moment and off, running as fast as he could for laughing. Soon the tumult died away, and he cut back, across toward Eighth Avenue. He meant to head across town to the subway.

"Gosh!" he said to himself. "Some Indian! Anyhow—I've got the option!"

He stopped to consider damages. He was pretty well covered with mud; he was bleeding from a cut on his cheek, received in running through the park shrubbery. But he didn't care.

Friday morning it was. And by ten o'clock he would be in the office mak-

ing his report and handing the signed option to Mr. Clinton—in plenty of time to have the deal closed, as it must be, by noon.

He came to Broadway. And, as he turned the corner, he saw two policemen, one of whom was talking into one of those telephones that are affixed to lamp-posts, while the other listened. A universal instinct made him stop and look on, gaping. Automatically he listened.

"Sure, loot'nant—I got you," said the policeman at the phone. "Tall guy—panama hat, with a bright-colored band. Nice-looking coot—might be one of them college cut-ups? Brown suit—brown shoes—tan raincoat? Wears a ring set with a big black stone with a lady's head carved on it—huh? Cameo? Sure—I got you. If he comes along, hold him for bein' mixed up in the explosion. Citizen saw him running and gave his description? Right, loot'nant!"

Word for word, detail for detail, Steve had heard himself described! Instantly his thought flew to Brewster! Too late he saw the truth. Brewster must represent those other interests of which Clinton had spoken. For the moment, as he lifted his hand and stared at his cameo ring, sheer horror held Steve rooted to the spot, staring at the policemen, his mouth wide open, his knees shaking. Even when the policemen turned toward him he couldn't move. An astonishment, a ludicrous dismay as great as his own, seemed to possess them. Steve began, without volition, to back away from them.

"Hey—you—there!" said one of them. "You—you look like a guy there's a general alarm sent out for! Come here!"

"You go to blazes!" cried Steve, and, turning, began to run.

He had just sense enough to steer a zigzag course, as a threatened liner does when it sees a submarine. First a couple of shrill whistles, then a tattoo beaten on the pavement by a club, mingled with the running fall of heavy feet, sounded behind him, and a wild shouting. And then, as he ducked be-

hind a providentially placed hoarding, a pistol shot, and another and another, rang out. He heard bullets whistle.

Somehow he reached One Hundred and Tenth Street and turned east, running downhill clumsily. Other whistles sounded ahead of him; in the light of street lamps, through the driving rain, he could see running figures. He turned frantically into Morningside Park, and ran north on the grass. On his left now, growing steeper and craggier as he ran, was a clifflike hill.

It would have been a good climb in daylight. Under the conditions only sheer terror could have helped him up that rocky ascent. He slipped and fell, slid back, won to his feet, and climbed like a mountain goat. His raincoat caught in a bush, and one sleeve was torn out. But he could hear confused shouting below, and he knew that he wasn't being followed. Then, above, came another whistle, more shouts. He was headed off, after all. Almost sobbing, he stopped. He was near the top, but if he went on he would surely be caught.

"Come and get me!" he said hoarsely. He thought he was shouting, but his voice wouldn't have carried ten feet, and, luckily for him, didn't. He found a sort of cave, and crawled into it for shelter from the rain. For the moment he didn't care what happened to him.

And now he could hear the men at the top and at the bottom of the hill shouting to one another.

One or two men tried to clamber down, but gave it up as a bad job. And gradually, as he heard the growing note of indecision, the rising tendency to wrangle, among his enemies, a mad hope came to Steve that he might yet, if he lay hidden in his cave long enough, escape this particular trap. True, if he did, every policeman was still his enemy—every honest man's hand would be turned against him. But—while there was life there was hope.

In the east the first faint harbingers of dawn were brightening the sullen, dripping skies when Steve began to worm his way cautiously along. He went forward a step or two, paused,

listened for some cry from above that would tell him that the noise he couldn't help making had been heard. None came. And at last he dared to complete his climb, and emerged upon Morningside Drive, peaceful, deserted, untroubled by a single lurking blue-coat. He took a deep breath, and edged his way along toward Amsterdam Avenue. And there it was that, seeing that policeman just in time, he dodged behind the billboard and waited, listening to that measured tread. Left, right! Left, right!

The steps came close, passed, died away in the distance. It was growing light. The rain was ceasing. Steve, with a shudder, let his raincoat fall from his shoulders. He took his cameo ring and dropped it into his pocket. He couldn't get rid of his brown suit and his brown shoes. But a good many men wore such raiment, and his hat he sacrificed without hesitation, even though he realized that a man without a hat is almost as conspicuous as one wearing one that has figured in a general alarm.

Trying to look unconcerned, Steve emerged and walked north. He was collecting his wits.

He had to get, a free man, to the office. After that they might put him in jail; he wouldn't care, if they would let him sleep. But if he were arrested first, all would be lost, in the classic phrase, despite ultimate vindication. Because he wouldn't be able to get the option—he felt for it, and found he still had it—to James Gray Clinton in time. And it ran out at noon. There was some reason for that absurdity; Clinton had explained it, but Steve was too tired to remember the explanation. Anyhow, he mustn't be arrested.

He came to a place where an apartment house was being built. Over a fire the night watchman was heating coffee. A sudden inspiration came to Steve. This man had water. And he had a hat, of sorts.

"Sport," said Steve, "I've been out all night!"

"You look it!" the watchman agreed, without much interest.

"And I've lost my hat, and I fell down and got muddy. And my wife won't be pleased if I go home looking like this."

The watchman began to laugh. And just then Steve produced a five-dollar bill.

"See this?" he said. "It's yours—if you'll give me your hat and a cup of coffee and some water to wash my face and hands and some waste to rub the mud off my clothes and shoes."

The watchman assured himself that the bill was genuine. Ten minutes later Steve walked away almost jauntily. But when he saw a policeman, as he laid a crooked course for the subway at Manhattan Street, he instinctively crossed the street. Still, boldness was his only play. He had to court detection. And he strode into the subway station like any other straphanger. He sought for a nickel. He had none. Annoyed, he fished for a bill. Gradually he realized the truth. He had given his last cent to the watchman!

It was the last straw that broke the camel's back. Steve leaned against the wall, sick and shaken, and tears stood in his eyes—tears of rage and mortification. He couldn't walk to lowest Broadway; human flesh and blood and bone rebelled against the brutality of the thought that he might. And then the satirical smile of Brewster, that hint of superior knowledge in his eyes that had haunted Steve all the time, seemed to appear. He staggered out into the street. In a stray taxicab he found inspiration.

"Eight and a half Broadway—and take it easy!" he commanded, opening the door.

He could sleep all the way downtown! But—the chauffeur did not make the customary leap toward his crank. He eyed Steve with suspicion.

"That's a long way, bo," he said. "Let's see your money—"

"You'll be paid down there—"
Steve began loftily.

"Nix! Nix! Can that chatter!" said the chauffeur disgustedly. "Beat

it while your shoes are good, bo! That's the oldest gag there is!"

Wearily, without hope, Steve slouched along eastward. He had done his best. He was through. He fairly bumped into policemen, but they paid no attention to him. He wasn't acting as a fugitive for whom there is a general alarm should act. So, unscathed, he came into One Hundred and Twenty-fifth Street. Before him loomed the pillars of the L as desirable, as remote to one lacking the nickel talisman as water seen in a mirage to one dying of thirst in a desert.

A familiar-looking structure, its doors flanked by two green lamps, sent Steve, by an action purely reflex, edging off across the street. A police station! And then suddenly he squared his shoulders. The taunting eyes of Brewster rose again in his mind's eye. And, anyhow, in a cell he could sleep—sleep—

Behind the desk, as Steve strode into the station house, a lieutenant of police drowsed. Before him, had Steve known it, was his own description.

"Well, sir?" said the lieutenant crisply, being of the new school.

"Here's my card, lieutenant," said Steve. He knew that Brewster couldn't have dared to give his name. "And some papers. I've lost what money I had, and it's a long walk downtown. I wondered if you'd lend me a quarter and let me send it back to you—in a box of cigars maybe?"

The lieutenant stared at the card, and then at Steve.

"Sure thing, Mr. Magruder," he said affably. "Better take enough, though."

And he slid a dollar bill across the desk.

Steve, sound asleep, was sitting in Mr. Clinton's chair, his head on Mr. Clinton's desk, when that autocrat entered his private office. Vigorous words formed themselves on Mr. Clinton's lips. And then he choked them down. For, clutched in Steve's fingers, Runyon's familiar signature protruding, was the option!

“Hope Springs Eternal——”

By “James Wesley Dane”

This contribution, signed “James Wesley Dane,” was accompanied by a letter giving the real name of the author and requesting that the above nom de plume be used—for obvious reasons. You will understand the “obvious reasons.” It is as graphic a portrayal as we have ever read of actual conditions in prison—and if there is a topic, outside of the war, that has arrested the thought of the country it is prison reform. There is a realism about it that takes it out of the realm of fiction. Life in its various aspects—but real life—is what we try to give you in the POPULAR. Here is the life of a convict—the things that happen to a man on the “inside.”

CHAPTER I.

MY FIRST GLIMPSE OF THE “INSIDE.”

IT is afternoon of an April day. A passing shower has freshened the air with a moistened balm, and the sun is shining brightly again, imparting to the raindrops lingering on leafing trees and sprouting grass a diamondy luster. There is no breeze—everything is quiet, so the noises of spring, the fluster of early birds above, and, way off, the gentle tinkle of cowbells catch the ear and draw you to the open places. It is a day when small boys hear, above the schoolroom dome, the call of the wandering river. It is a day when clerks gaze with longing from the gloomy caverns of their shops. It is a day when aging men look back through the years and see, as through a mist, the “old swimmin’ hole.” It is a day when youth looks greedily into the future and grasps life with a renewed zest. The tonic of dawning summer is everywhere. The warming fever of spring bids you to the freedom of the meadows and the woods and the stream. It was on such a day as this that I went to prison.

I was accompanied by a man to whom I was greatly attached by the link of a handcuff. The car line ended abruptly,

and out of sight of my destination. There were others like myself on the car. All had come to the penitentiary town on the same train, but from different places. I did not know them, but when I saw their chained wrists I felt a sort of kinship. I strove to have conversation with one, a burly man, who I afterward learned was a burglar. He gently repelled me. Later, when we had joined the throng in the walled city, he apologized.

“I tawt you was de dick,” he said shamefacedly. “When we was on dat car I met you kinda cool, but I didn’t mean nuttin’. I tawt all de time you was de dick and de odder guy was de vic. Excuse me, pal, fer takin’ you fer a bull.”

That explained it. My captor, not dressed so well as I, was taken for the prisoner. I was glad of that. Maybe, I thought, the other folks who had seen us that day believed the same thing, and my burning shame under their eyes was needless. I thought particularly of a young woman who had observed us on the train. She had turned pitying glances upon us; I hoped she didn’t think I was the prisoner.

In the shambling procession that took up the march from the end of the car line was a boy—not more than

twenty. I noticed that the older prisoners regarded him with softened glances. I saw they tried, by light remarks and simple attentions, to distract his mind from the horrors that awaited him a quarter mile beyond. I found myself taking an unusual interest in this youth, for he was weighted down with a heavy burden; you could see that by the paleness of his face, hollow eyes, drawn features. He tried to be brave, but it was of small avail. No mask so thin as feigned laughter could hide the tragedy of his life.

"What'd the kid bring?" my custodian asked of a prisoner who had come with the boy.

"All of it," the prisoner replied.

That was it—"all of it." Life. He had slain some one.

I looked again at the boy. He was good looking; that is, he was before months in jail had changed him. Now he bore the pallor of long confinement. But there still was the light of Youth, even though dimmed by a crushing blow, in his eye. There was so much about him that reminded one of Youth—instinctively I thought of a younger brother—I could scarcely believe that he had raised a murderer's hand. But, yes, he had. He had killed a policeman who had caught him robbing a store. They had given him "all of it."

It seems as though they built that penitentiary so it would burst upon the sight of the doomed with the suddenness of a bomb flare. We walked along a street, at the edge of town, and then turned a sharp corner. There it was. In the middle of a great field was set the squared mass of rock and steel. The gray walls, surmounted at intervals by guard towers, spread their forbidding embattlements before your gaze quickly. There was not the warning of a gable or a flagstaff or a smokestack or a fragment of the place or anything to serve notice that you were approaching the end. You walked along, with evidences of freedom and liberty about you. Children stopped their play to gaze, half fearful, at the grim procession. Housewives held their carpet beaters suspended, and

gave a word of cheer. They had sons of their own—and *they* knew. You smiled at the children and the women, though you were sick within. You looked about hungrily for a last glimpse of the world you were leaving. You breathed deeply the free air of the outside, like a man about to dive to some great depth. You saw the trees, the grass, the birds, scarcely noticed in your heretofore free life, and you dwelt upon them longingly. Then, smash! the whole dreadful "works" was before you.

There was a quick intake of breath along the line of prisoners. "There it is," one said in a whisper.

We tramped along a road, across the field, and up to the great gates. We had no trouble getting in. We filed through the main doorway, through a gateway, through still another gateway. There was the sound of swinging doors behind, of grating bolts and dangling keys. I was "inside."

CHAPTER II.

"ONLY" EIGHTEEN MONTHS.

My case was quite notorious throughout the State, so my coming was expected. I had been sentenced to eighteen months for embezzlement. I was guilty. There were mitigating circumstances—but here, I'll not plead my case again. I told all that to the judge.

I had been quite prominent in politics and business. I knew the warden, the deputy warden, and the assistant deputy warden, as well as other prison officials and attachés. I was greeted by the assistant deputy warden as I stood in line in the commitment room.

"Awfully sorry to see you here, old man," he said simply, and turned away. I was indebted to him after that for many favors.

The preliminary Bertillon was soon over. Just my name, age, color of hair and eyes and principal physical characteristics. The remainder, the minute measurements of my body and finger prints, was to come next day, after I had been "dressed in" and had gone through the barber shop. Then I was

numerically christened. "2896" it was. One day I added those figures up and found they made another "25," a number that had been prominent throughout my case. I was in my twenty-fifth year, I entered prison on the twenty-fifth day of the month, I had been arrested on the twenty-fifth day of another month. My bond had been twenty-five hundred dollars, and my sentence seemed like twenty-five hundred years. I thought of all these twenty-fives in prison one day. Men inside dwell on trivial things sometimes.

After my new name, "2896," had been pinned upon my breast I was photographed, front and side view, hat on and hat off. Then I filed into the storeroom with the "line."

In the storeroom I first met "18." He was a huge negro, anthracite in color. His duties consisted of passing out uniforms to incoming prisoners, picking out the various sizes from the piles about him, and in dressing out in citizen clothing the outgoing prisoners. He was a patient worker, but, best of all, he was a dispenser of cheer to the down-hearted as they came to him. I wish you could have heard him this day—I mean, of course, I wish you had been a bystander and not in the "line." He was outfitting the first man in our party.

"How much yuh got, boss?" says 18, circling the newcomer's waist with a tape measure.

"Five years."

"Oh, dat ain't bad. You'll make dat easy 'nough."

Then to the next: "Whut you lug-in', buddy?"

"Ten years."

"Well, dat's a little worser, but dis ain't a bad place. You'll git a good job and make it all right."

The next in line is the youth with "all of it."

"Looka dis chile," says 18. "Whut you doin' here, boy?"

"Life."

"Is dat so, chile?" There is a tremor in his voice, and a wave of sympathy sweeps across the black face. "Dat

judge doan have no right to t'row de whole book at you, I swear. But dey gits out, chile. Doan you worry 'bout dat. You put up a little time and den you'll be out. Shoo! Dey done dat to skeer you. You'll git sprung, shoo as de world."

Then to another: "Whut'd dey write after your name, brudder?"

"Two years."

"Two years! Huh! I can stan' on my haid dat long. You ain't got no time to fuss about."

I'm next: "Is you satisfied with whut dey give you, cap'n? How many pages did dey turn over fer you?"

"I—mine is eighteen months," I answer. I feel ashamed. I am a piker. Why was that judge so penurious? An hour ago eighteen months was an age to me, but the homely philosophy of 18 had made me brave when I thought of the "time" that had stood in line ahead of me. So much for a kind word and a kindly heart to a man in despair.

A trace of scorn gathers upon the face of 18 as he whips the tape about my waist.

"Eighteen months!" he ejaculates.

Oh, how cheap I feel! For a moment I am tempted to stretch it and say carelessly: "Ten years."

"Man, whut you mean by comin' way down here fer dat little time?" he demands. "Why, we won't git to know you at all. Whut's de use to dress you all up in nice new clo'es? You's goin' right out."

There is nothing I can say. I must bear my shame. My eye catches the stamped number upon the negro's shirt bosom: "18." He must have been here a long time, I think. I am the last in line, so 18 does not hurry to outfit me.

"How long—how much—what was your sentence?" I venture.

"Who, me?" says 18. "Oh, I'se got a natural."

Yes, 18 had a natural. Natural life. How could he say that so lightly? I marvel that the tragedy of the thing does not bear him down. In a few moments I again become inquisitive.

"Have you been here long?"

"Boss," says 18, and his voice is solemn with the silent numbness of long suffering, "I come in in ninety-two."

"Ninety-two!" I say to myself in surprise. Then:

"In eighteen-ninety-two?" I cannot restrain the incredulity and sympathy that is in my voice. "That long ago?"

"Yeah, dat's it. Eighteen-ninety-two. I come in 'way back in de ole ter'torial days."

"My God," I think, "and this is nineteen eleven! Nineteen years. Why, when I was five years old they were bringing this man to prison! And now he stands and deals out comfort to newcomers. How many has he seen come and go? And with a 'natural' ahead of him!"

They told me that 18's crime was the slaying of two negroes. According to the story, he had been in a gambling room, where liquor flowed freely. He had taken his full part in the games and in the liquor. Successful in "breaking" his competitors at poker, they attacked him en masse, and he, grasping a hatchet that lay near by, had swept the place clean. Two of his assailants died of their wounds.

The negro had first been sentenced to hang, but a commutation to life imprisonment had been won when it was shown that his previous life had been free of offenses against the law, that he was a hard-working man, and that he had shown a genuine remorse over the tragedy. Eighteen never mentioned the murder to me, and it always had been a forbidden topic among other prisoners when he was near by. I don't believe any one regretted the summary taking off of the two negroes more than he, not only for his own plight, but because his was not the heart of a murderer.

It was a hideous crime, but I cared not for that. When a man stands amid all the grief of a prison, and, forgetting his own overwhelming sorrow, strives to impart cheer to others in lesser, far lesser, misery than he, there is a big white spot upon his soul. Sym-

pathy that in others would long since have dried made those about him forget the blackness of 18's body and his crime.

CHAPTER III.

MY NEW SUIT.

I was rigged up in my new uniform. You should have seen me! I'm glad you didn't, for I know you would have laughed at me. I was permitted to retain my own underwear, socks, and shoes. I was clad in the regulation "hickory" shirt, and the *yellow* coat and trousers. Can you imagine anything less conducive to a tranquil mind than a suit of clothes brighter in its yellowish hue than a lemon peel? I am a man a little below medium stature, and quite heavy. My new suit had to be pretty big in size to fit me around, and it did very well in all respects except that the trousers were about five inches too long; consequently I turned them up, which resulted in a baggy cuff about my ankles; 18 said he would get me a shorter pair next day. My hat was the very latest thing in penological millinery. The new styles had just come in, so 18 assured me. The caps worn in winter had been exchanged for straw creations, and of these I received one with a wide brim and of a shape and texture that was nothing to brag about. I also received a shoe lace which, I was informed, was to be threaded around the hat as a band. I made all haste to do that. I didn't want my new hat to lose its shape the first day. Thus I stood—all dressed up, and no place to go.

I was then conducted to the barber shop, where I sat upon a stool and watched my hair falling about at the snip-snip of the barber's clippers. The barber was inquisitive. Where was I from? I told him.

"Oh, are you ——?" he asked.

I told him I was.

"We been readin' about your case," he said. "D'ye think you can make it?"

"Oh, I can make it all right," I assured him. "I haven't got very long."

"Well, the higher they are the harder

they fall," he said. "Most of the big birds on the outside have the toughest time in here. There's a banker in here with a year that takes it harder than I do with ten of 'em."

I assured him I was determined to take the thing philosophically, and he expressed admiration for my spirit. I learned later he was a safe blower.

When the barber had done with me I ran my hand over my stubbled head. It felt odd. It was the first close hair cut I had had since I was a lad.

I joined the other newcomers in the prison yard. I wondered if I looked as self-conscious and as funny as they. Soon we were called down to the "gate," an opening that led from the yard to the various shops and work places. The man, an official who assigned new arrivals, asked us each in turn what we "followed on the outside." The boy who had "all of it" had had some experience in carpenter work, so his number was marked up with the carpenter gang. Others were slated for the shoe shop, the tailor shop, the mason gang, and so on. When my turn came, and I, abashed, had told the gateman my business on the outside, he looked puzzled.

"I don't think we got any of that business in here," he said. "Guess I'll have to see the 'office' about you."

So we loitered about the yard all afternoon, the target of jests and questions from "old-timers." There were probably a score of them in the yard, laying off on account of sickness or during transfer from one job to another. I was a particular object of interest. It was seldom persons in my station of life came among these people. I imagined some of them relished seeing me there. Others strove to make friends with me. I learned later they saw in me an aid in writing their letters or in humble counsel.

My first meal in the big dining hall was scarcely touched. It consisted of dried apples cooked to the consistency of thick soup, and bread, oleomargarine, and tea. From the line that marched with folded arms—that was a rule—we new prisoners were plucked by a

guard and held in the rotunda until the others had been locked up. Then we were grouped in twos, the colored men marching to one cell house and the white men to the other. This was a State in which a "jim-crow" law existed, and the color scheme was worked inside as well as outside. There were two cell houses, one for the blacks and the other for the whites. Two long rows of benches in the dining hall were for negroes, and two others for whites. The population of the prison was about evenly divided, with the negroes on one side and the whites and Indians on the other.

I was assigned to a receiving cell on the first tier, in company with one of the men who had come in that day. He was a horse thief—pasture burglars, they call them inside—he of the five years. He was an exceedingly uncommunicative person, and responded only feebly to my attempts at conversation. I don't think he liked the way I wore my hair. Or maybe the fit of my trousers didn't suit him. He was a tall man, and had obtained a fairly good fit in the storeroom. At any rate, we soon lay down on our respective bunks—and silently faced our first night on the inside.

CHAPTER IV.

THE SONG OF THE PRISON.

There is no song like the song of a prison. Who can describe the rolling clang of cell doors, the clinching of tens and scores of bolts and locks into place, the shout of a guard to some inmate who rises above the permitted level in his call to a companion in another cell or on another tier, the um-m-m-m-m of muffled conversation from hundreds of throats, the dull, rumbling reverberation of sound along the corridors of rock and steel, the soft, croony whistle or gay laugh of some happy soul who is going out on the morrow, who will "hit the ground," as they term it? Who can describe the gentle relapse of this medley, first into scattered words and sounds, then the gradual tapering off into the deep silence of night?

"Bong!" A great bell rings, and the lights go out. You are staring into the blackness of the cell. You turn your head and gaze out the doorway and out a window across the barred corridor. You see the lights of the town, but even they are snuffed out one by one as you look, until there is no light—nothing but the night. A shadowy figure creeps along the corridor, his step noiseless on rubber heels—the guard on his rounds, with ever a keen eye for the beacon light of a forbidden cigarette. It is an oppressive silence, and a first nighter cannot sleep. You welcome the heavy breathing that grows in volume as sleep becomes deeper to the hundreds of dwellers in these little niches of steel.

I hear gentle sobbing in the cell next door. It is the boy with "all of it," yielding himself up, now that he is away from the eyes of the crowd, to the horror of his situation. I hear scattered words of comfort from his drowsy cellmate, and then I doze fitfully, then sleep, and dream of pleasant things. One gets to welcome the nights and the dreams. In them he lives again.

I was awake and ready for the call long before the bell summoned next morning. I ate more heartily than on the night before. It was fried liver, bread, gravy, and black coffee for breakfast, and I enjoyed it, for I was hungry. I put in half the forenoon watching the gangs being checked out at the gate and in loitering about the yard.

"Twenty-eight ninety-six!" I heard a man call from the gate. I paid no heed. I was like a small boy's new dog. I didn't yet know my new name."

"Twenty-eight ninety-six!" the voice shouted again, impatient this time.

Another prisoner who saw the numbers on my back brought me to my senses.

"They're pagin' you, buddy," he said. "Better drift down to the gate."

I made all haste to get there. I was told I was wanted "up front," so I went through the gate and into the rotunda, where a prisoner clerk met me and

conducted me to the Bertillon offices. There I was measured, finger-printed, biographed, and otherwise put on record. Then I was turned over to the physician and examined. He pronounced me physically fit—capable, he said, with a smile, of living up to the mandate of the judge, which was eighteen months at hard labor.

As I turned to leave the doctor's office I came face to face with a man about whose features there was something familiar, but he was the funniest-looking little duffer I ever saw. My first thought, when I looked at this strange creature, was of a grotesque clown I had seen once at a circus. But where had I seen him before? A smile of recognition started on my face, but it faded as I looked again. I was gazing at my own reflection in a huge mirror that stood by the door.

Such a transformation! Can it be possible? I asked myself. My hat was off, and my slick poll loomed up like the dome of a statehouse. I never knew I had such a funny-looking head. I clapped my hat onto my head to hide this stubbly patch, and the effect was worse than ever. The hat didn't become me at all. And there was my lemony suit, with the baggy cuffs on the trousers. I smiled in spite of myself. Then a wave of anger swept across me. Why did they dress a man in such a grotesque costume? They not only degrade him with their numbers and their clippers, but they make him ludicrous in scarecrow garments.

"How do you like yourself?" the doctor asked.

"Wouldn't this Barnum and Bailey you?" I replied. I knew the doctor on the outside.

"You'll get rid of them in a few days," he assured me, and I was relieved.

I was turned loose in the rotunda and told to make my way back to the yard, which I proceeded to do, but was intercepted by a gray-haired man, an official, the custodian of the cell houses, who asked me if I was looking for a job. He was a kindly looking man, and I liked him right away.

"Aren't you—— —?" he asked.

I pleaded guilty.

"Would you like a job as one of my clerks in the cell houses?" he asked.

I didn't see that I had much choice, but, even if I had, I think I would have chosen to work under this man, so I signified my desire for such a position. I was employed. It turned out to be a soft job, and I learned later that the assistant deputy warden had fixed things up for me. Had it not been for him, I know not where I would have been assigned.

CHAPTER V.

THE SCHOOL OF CRIME.

Thirteen forty-seven was the head clerk of the cell-house force, and therefore my boss. He was an agreeable man, encumbered by a stretch of five years, about half of which had been "put up." We became friends, and his tips and pointers on prison life helped me greatly. He knew several "routes" for obtaining food delicacies from the hospital kitchen, the bakeshop, and the big kitchen, and the monotony of the regular fare was broken. He knew of letter "routes," so that I was enabled to correspond with friends on the outside about matters I did not wish to come to the attention of the officials.

Our duties consisted of sorting and distributing mail, and, twice a week, rationing out plug tobacco. These plugs were legal tender, and served as our wherewithal in exchange for food delicacies. We always managed to save a good many plugs over the ration. We did not look upon this as dishonest. The State was engaged in getting what it could from us, and we were getting what we could from the State. A prisoner always proceeds on the theory that he is entitled to anything he can get while under the handicap of servitude, and I think he is. At the most, it isn't very much.

In regard to stamps. We watched the letters that came into the prison, all of which passed through our hands, and when we found a stamp that had been canceled in such manner as to

make the marks barely noticeable, we peeled it off very carefully, and with a rubber eraser worked on it until only the very closest scrutiny could have detected the fraud. I never knew of one of these stamps having failed to carry a letter. It was painstaking work, and many times we have put in two hours on a single stamp. There was an average of five hundred letters a day, so we did very well in the stamp line. Of course, we had many more than we used for our personal business, thus we retailed the "plasters" for cigarettes and food delicacies.

In my duties as mailman I developed a wide acquaintance throughout the prison. I learned much from burglars, horse thieves, pickpockets, safe blowers, murderers, highwaymen, "con" men, embezzlers, forgers, and all the rest of the "charges" that compose the population of a penitentiary. I got the viewpoint of the inside. I found that all of them, each of them, believed he had gotten a raw deal. Very few of them were guilty at all, and even these sincerely believed that their sentences were far too heavy. The man serving twenty years could convince you he should have had ten only, the man with ten swore up and down that he had five too much, the man with five regarded it as a travesty on justice that he had a minute over two, the man with two cussed the judge for the injustice of giving him more than a year, and the man with a year was sure a thirty-day jail sentence was plenty for what he did. I myself felt that a year was all I had coming to me, but now, when I compare my case with others, I feel fortunate that I wasn't labeled with five years.

These men I have just referred to, of course, are the ones who would admit any degree of guilt. They were few. Most every one in the prison denied guilt. Even some who had pleaded guilty maintained they did it because they were being "jobbed," and would have gotten much more had they stood trial.

I came to believe that the cause of dishonesty in the world was the fact

that most of the honest men were locked up.

When I became better acquainted with these folks, however, I found many of them planning shady ways of making money when they were liberated. One of them, a notorious confidence man, tried to get me to team with him when we both should have been "sprung."

"You'd make a great 'con' man," he said. "Meet me on the outside and we'll make some money."

I declined the invitation, however. I wanted to run no more chances of being separated from that thing represented by the statue in New York harbor.

A man has to fight in prison the temptations of making money by unlawful means the same as he does "outside." There always are prisoners who, seeing in another man promising timber for a successful career of shady thrift, besiege him with the most alluring stories and plans for "cleaning up" when he is released. Some of the greatest swindles are the fruit of plans laid while the perpetrator is paying the State for other crimes. Schemes matured during days and months of quiet reflection are more effective.

One man had a bank he was going to rob; another was obsessed with a real-estate swindle he was going to operate; another was constantly "framing" new "con" schemes; another practiced the art of picking pockets until I thought he some day would relieve all the guards in the place of their keys; another man, an employee in the machine shop, had perfected an apparatus which he said would "pull" the "com" of any safe in the world; others, many others, engaged themselves in the delicate operation of changing their finger prints, by such means as scratching their finger tips and their hands. One man patiently, with a pin point, traced new lines upon his fingers. Time after time he would sit for hours until, he said, he had Old Man Bertillon backed off the boards. Most of these men invited me to join their prospective escapades, but I had had enough. The

law and myself would travel parallel courses hereafter, I was sure. I have often read of crimes similar to those I know were planned in that prison, and I have wondered if they were perpetrated by the men I knew.

There are other prisoners who think of nothing but getting out. The suggestion of crime to them fills them with a dread superinduced by the horror of their present situation. I was one of those.

CHAPTER VI.

THE FORGOTTEN "LIFER."

I had been moved up onto the third tier of cells, and my cellmate was 1347. About half the tier was given over to professional men. There were doctors, lawyers, bankers, and other men of business on the tier. My yellow suit had been exchanged for a brown suit, and my straw hat was discarded for a cap of military pattern. My new clothes fitted me, and I felt much better. In a couple of months my hair attained a length that made me look more like a man than an ape. There are grades in prison which are denoted by uniforms—the clerks, the tradesmen, the common laborers, and the incorrigibles. The clerks and tradesmen, tailors and shoemakers, wore the brown suits, the common laborers the yellow and striped suits, and the incorrigibles the "ringtails." The striped suits were white, with barred stripes running lengthwise, while the "ringtails" were white, with barred stripes running around. Thus you could look into a crowd of prisoners and pick out the men who had escaped and been captured, or who had attempted to escape or who had assaulted a guard or who otherwise were dangerous citizens. Before I got through with it, I wore everything in the prison.

Weeks before, when I realized I was bound for this place, I had determined to make the most of it. I would seek material for writing, I had concluded, so, now that I was on an easy job and had the chance, I cast about for some likely topic.

"Is there any one in here who has

absolutely no chance of getting out?" I asked 1347.

"Oh, I suppose there's a bunch of 'em," he said.

"Which one would you pick out as having the least chance of any?"

My friend had been cell-house clerk nearly two years, and knew every prisoner by name, and most of them intimately. He studied a few minutes, and then gave his answer.

"Well, there's 18," he said.

I was sorry to hear him say that, because I liked 18, as did every other prisoner who had come in contact with him.

"He hasn't got a friend on the outside," 1347 went on, "and he's doing life. His jolt was commuted from hanging, and I don't suppose there's a human being on the outside but what's forgotten him. All the friends he has is prisoners or ex-prisoners, and ex-prisoners don't have much influence with a governor. Eighteen's absolutely broke, and I don't see as he's got a possible out."

I determined to talk with 18. That was one thing I thought I would do when I came to prison—get the viewpoint of a man who has absolutely lost hope. It would be sad, I knew, but interesting. There is a difference in lying sick, with no hope of recovering and being in full health, with all the desires for the things that make for happiness and being caged in from them. That afternoon, going to the storeroom to deliver mail to the prisoners there, I stopped to talk with 18.

"You shoo does look nice in you' browns," he said. "I'se glad to see anybody shed dem yallers. Dey makes a man look like all git-out."

"I'm glad to get out of 'em, too," I said. "There's no mail for you to-day, 18, but maybe I'll bring you something to-morrow."

"Boss," he said, "I ain't got a letter in eighteen years."

I realized I had touched a sore spot, and I made some lame remark to pass it off.

"My sister writ me a long time ago,"

he went on, "but she done stopped after she got married. I ain't heard fum her, and ain't got no idee where she be."

"Maybe she'll write one of these days," I said.

"No, I doan spect she will. Folks what's laid offen de writin' bus'ness fer eighteen years ain't goin' to pick it up to-morrow. But I'll hunt her up when I gits out."

When he "gits out!" Do you know, this man absolutely believed he some day would get out? I talked with him quite a while that afternoon and many times after that, and, though he couldn't define his hope, he had it, nevertheless, just as strong as mine. Nineteen years hadn't dimmed it. There wasn't a thing he could pin that hope to. Something would happen—it couldn't be anything short of a miracle—to bring him freedom. He was sure of that. His faith was profound and pitiful. It was upon that he lived. Without that hope, 18 would have died long ago.

"Hope springs eternal in the breast of man." I had seen a living example of that.

CHAPTER VII.

A CRUEL CLIMAX.

I must tell you about 2934. He was a fine-looking young fellow, about twenty-one years of age, who had been sent up on a charge of assault with intent to kill. He told me the story. He was in love with a pretty girl, and, as is usually the case, he had a rival. Twenty-nine thirty-four was a farmer boy, while the rival was a member of a well-to-do family who lived in a near-by town. The rival's people were influential. The girl displayed a preference for the country boy, and well she might, for I afterward saw the rival. One night the two men met in the road. The city youth was driving a horse and buggy, and he drove, to all intents and purposes, in an effort to run the farmer boy down. The man on foot, however, jumped aside. Both were on their way to the girl's house. The city youth had more than once expressed his scorn for the "clover

picker," as he called him. They had words in the road. The rival clambered from his buggy, and they went to it. All the pent-up anger of weeks of taunts and insults was rankling in the bosom of 2934, and he administered a most unmerciful beating to the other fellow. He beat him until he became alarmed, and then piled him into the buggy and wildly drove to town and to a doctor's house. The young fellow's life was in no danger, but he didn't leave his bed for several weeks, and his features were ever afterward slightly out of joint. The father was indignant, so the farmer boy was tagged with a three-year sentence and sent to prison.

The girl was faithful to 2934 about three months. Every week she wrote him a letter, and he wrote her as often as he could. He gave up his tobacco allowance so he might have more letters. He wrote his mother regularly, too. He used to let me read the girl's letters. They were cheerful and loving missives, full of "what we'll do when you come back." The boy's time was easy so long as he was bolstered up by the woman's love. Then her letters suddenly stopped. I never will forget the agony that was written upon the boy's face each night as I was forced to tell him no letter had come from "her." He got so he looked for me as he filed into the cell house, before it was time to deliver mail to the cells, and sought by the expression on my face to learn whether anything had come. For a few days I met his gaze, and shook my head. Then I averted my face after that—I couldn't bear to signal him the sorrowful truth. He was a changed man. Then one day his mother wrote him the worst. She couldn't keep from it, as 2934 demanded in all his letters news of the girl. She had married the rival—the man whom he had whipped. I thought the affair was ended, but it wasn't.

Twenty-nine thirty-four was a farmer on the outside; therefore he was a common laborer on the inside. He was working in the stone-crusher gang, not a hard job for a strong young

fellow like him. One day he let loose of his wheelbarrow handles and uttered a cry first of joy and then of rage and despair. Upon a platform that was built between the second-story floors of the cell houses, and from which a view could be had of the whole prison yard, stood a young woman and a young man. She was very pretty. He was a shallow-looking youth, whose nose was somewhat out of gear, as though it had been broken. It was the bridal couple. This was one of the incidents of their honeymoon—a trip to this city of grief. It was a few moments before they picked 2934 from the throng of laborers below, and if he hadn't cried out maybe they wouldn't have found him. The bridegroom pointed a finger, and the bride saw, too. But there was such a furious rage upon the face of the man they had come to taunt that they soon fled back to the group of visitors with whom they had come. Twenty-nine thirty-four told me of having seen them.

Of all the cruel things that came to my attention while in that prison, I think that was the climax. This vapid, cowardly creature was unable physically to seek revenge, so he came with his red necktie, and green hat and slinking chin to parade his joy before the striped and wretched man who was slaving away his three years in a prison. The foulest criminal that he saw that day would have hesitated at such a trick. And the girl, who had permitted herself to be led there by her craven husband, I wonder if she will ever forget the despairing face that was turned up to her from that prison yard, the face of a man who had brought himself to such a level for love of her. I hope they both read these lines. *They'll* know of whom I write.

Twenty-nine thirty-four became an incorrigible. He repeatedly broke prison rules, and didn't seem to mind the punishments that were inflicted upon him. I counseled him as best I could. I told him he was approaching the point where some of his "good time" was in danger, but he didn't seem to care. He was that way when I left

the place. I know not how he finished, but I hoped, and am still hoping for him, the best. Of course, he is out now.

All this reminds me of the subject of letters. Do you realize that letters are about all a man has to look forward to in prison? There is more agony caused by neglectful relatives and friends and sweethearts than one would imagine. A day, not so very long on the outside, is an age on the inside. A letter to-day will save a sleepless night. If you could see them peering from their cell doors as the mailman goes along, gazing hungrily at the pack of letters in his hand, then you'd understand.

CHAPTER VIII.

MAKING "BOOZE" IN JAIL.

And now I come to my own decline and fall from grace. I had been inside about five months when my "time" began to hurt me. The unusual experiences of prison life had become commonplace, and I longed more and more for the better things of life. I had made a friend, 1973, foreman of the bakery. On the outside he had been a broker. Some time in his early days he had been a baker, and a good one, so he had been put in charge of the bakery. He was a valuable friend, for he used to concoct delicious delicacies, such as pies, cakes, doughnuts, pancakes, and so on, of which we would partake in some secluded spot. He did the baking for the warden and other officials who lived near the prison, so he was always supplied with eggs, milk, sugar, and other appetizing things, to which I was given free access. He was a highly educated man, and had been quite prosperous until liquor depleted his finances and he had made a mistake and signed another man's name to a check instead of his own. He was playing a four-year engagement at the prison.

One day 1973 came to me in a very "Hist, pal!" manner and told me to drop around to the bakery in a few minutes. On some pretext or other, I

left the cell house and met him in a little shed back of the bakery. With an air that was most mysterious and cautious, he raised a board from the floor of the shed, and, from a hole beneath, he took a gallon bucket, which he handed to me after having removed the lid.

"Drink!" whispered he.

I did, and then he did. Several times we tilted the bucket, with the general result that we were both gloriously drunk before the day was over. Of course, we became bold, and went about the yard clapping fellow prisoners upon the back and having altogether a most enjoyable time. We swore eternal friendship over the bucket, and wept into it about our misfortunes, and dwelt upon what a whale of a time we could have if it wasn't for the walls they had built around the prison. Altogether, we conducted ourselves in the approved manner of drunken men. Some "snitch" got busy along late in the afternoon, and a guard voted us dry by putting us in the "hole." No one had discovered the source of our joyousness.

The stuff in the bucket was a most ingenious preparation. Nineteen seventy-three had learned of it from some old-time prisoner a few days before, and he, having all the facilities, had hastened to make up a "batch" as a surprise to me. About once a week stewed prunes were served in the prison. He had obtained two bucketfuls of these, and then poured off the juice. The prunes were thrown away, but the clear juice, about a gallon and a half, was the base of the drink. Into this he had thrown a yeast cake and a pound of corn meal. Then he had bound cloths and paper around the bucket so carefully and tightly as to make it almost air-tight. This mess had been allowed to ferment about forty-eight hours. Then the bucket was opened, and the fermented accumulation on the top removed. Strained into another bucket, the liquid made a gallon of the most cantankerous prune juice that ever assailed a man's senses.

But such a sickness! We lay in the

"hole" a long time, fast asleep, and then we awakened, too sick for words. Never have I put in such a night. We couldn't tell when daylight came, for, you know, the "hole" is a dark cell, absolutely dark, as black as a stack of black cats, with no bunk—nothing but a cement floor to lie on. When we had been in there about seven years some one opened a little door and passed us a loaf of bread and a twelve-quart bucket of water. We threw the bread on the floor, and gulped at the water. Thus, to a certain extent, we succeeded in putting the fire out. Late that afternoon they took us out of the "hole" and onto the carpet; that is, into the assistant warden's office.

The assistant warden smiled in spite of himself; we had such a distressed "morning-after" appearance.

"Now, I want you boys to tell me who smuggled in that booze to you," he began.

We respectfully refused to shed any light on the matter. Certainly we wouldn't yield up our secret, and we saw it was safe, because the officials were proceeding on the theory that some one, some trusty, or mayhap a guard, had supplied us with liquor. We might get a chance to drown our misery again, we thought. The official coaxed, threatened, cajoled, but we were obdurate. Finally he sent us back to the "hole."

"Send for me when you get ready to tell what I want to know," he said. "You'll stay there till you do."

We were in there three days on bread and water. The assistant warden relented then, and we were brought out. We were taken to the storeroom and stripped of our browns. It was striped suits they gave us. I was put at work in a little tool house out in the yard, all alone, having charge of the picks, grub hoes, axes, and shovels that were used by the various road gangs. It wasn't a hard job—just checking out and checking in the tools, but it was lonesome, and I missed the privileges, especially the food, I had been able to obtain as a clerk. Nineteen seventy-three joined the woodchoppers. I saw

little of him after that; he was paroled about a month later. I met him on the outside, however, and we had an enjoyable visit. My other friend, 1347, also was paroled, and I had rather a lonesome time of it. I also met him on the outside.

There was a man in there who had lost his mind, and he made the cell house ring at night with his cries. He was in a cell on the ground floor. A commission was coming in a few days, it was said, to pass on his case, and he probably would be taken to an asylum. His home had burned up while he was in prison, and his wife and two children had lost their lives in the fire. The weight of the ten-year sentence and this latest tragedy were too much for him. His mind had toppled, and he raved about his babies. He was permitted to run about the corridors in the daytime, as he wasn't so violent as when locked in a cell.

One day I sat upon a stool in the doorway of my tool house, and was struck with horror at a sight upon the platform between the cell houses. The warden's daughter, about eight years old, Celia was her name, was standing upon the edge of the platform with another little girl, watching the huge stone crusher beneath grinding the rocks into bits. Behind them, and creeping toward them, was the insane man. Some careless guard had left unlocked a corridor door.

There was a fiendish grin upon the man's face. He was bent upon some terrible deed. It was dangerous to shout at the children, I realized in a flash, for had they turned and seen the horrible face they would have leaped—and into the whirling machinery of the stone crusher. I rushed toward the man at the engine of the crusher, but my heart turned sick when I realized that before I could have him stop the machinery the maniac would be upon the children.

Then I saw the head and shoulders of a huge negro rise above the edge of the platform from the other side. This man sprang upon the platform, and with one blow of his fist brought

the other man down before he could reach the little girls. It was No. 18. He had seen the plight of the children from the rotunda, and had climbed, by a superhuman effort, up one of the pillars. He led the frightened little ones to safety, while a guard led the insane man to a cell.

Every few days after that Celia brought 18 a basket of fruit, but never once did her father, the warden, mention the incident to the man who had saved the children. I knew 18 felt bad about that, but I couldn't believe that the warden, for he was a good man, had overlooked the affair. I felt sure something was in the wind.

CHAPTER IX.

I ESCAPE AND "18" GOES FREE.

I decided to escape. It's a peculiar thing about a prison sentence—the shorter it gets the longer it seems. I had been inside about eight months. With allowances for good time, I had about four months more to serve. Christmas was approaching. That made me heartsick, and my four months looked like an age. The lonesomeness of the tool house, the monotony of the regular prison fare, the thoughts of the folks at home at this holiday season of the year—all these things were too much for me.

I might confess here that my application to be made a trusty had been turned down. I wasn't regarded as a good risk, because I had fled clear across the country once, and had given the county authorities a devil of a time in finding me. I was unmarried. In short, I had nothing in the State to hold me except four walls, and they couldn't just believe that I would come back if ever permitted beyond the range of a guard's Winchester. I don't believe, however, that I would have broken promises I had made when I applied to be made a trusty. I know I would not.

I had imparted the secret of the prune juice to the new foreman of the bakery, but he was too good a prisoner and thought too much of his job to en-

gage in any pastime like that which had brought 1973 and myself to grief. The days hung heavy—oh, so heavy, on my mind! In my cell at night things weren't so bad. My new cellmate was a most agreeable fellow, a real-estate man until he had separated an Indian from a couple of hundred acres of land without the formality of paying the red man for it. But the days—they were long and lonesome and weary. I sat around the tool house and read when I could content myself in that peaceful occupation, but most of the time I was too nervous to do that. I paced up and down, thinking of some plan by which I could get out of this place. An effort I had made for a parole had been unsuccessful. My time was too short, they said, to bother about a parole. Too short! From the door of my tool house I could see the gate where the trusties were checked in and out the walls of the prison. There was a board on which were chalked their numbers, with little holes beside them. When a trusty was checked out, a peg would be put into one hole; when he was checked in, it would be moved to another. Thus the gateman could tell at a glance just which trusties were outside the walls and those who were within. I used to watch him checking them out. A line of twenty-five of them would assemble at the gate, and he would go to the board. As they called their numbers he would switch the pegs around, day after day, without looking to see who was calling the numbers. That part of it looked easy.

They were building an ice plant in the prison yard, just a few yards from my tool house. A half dozen civilian mechanics were employed in the work, in addition to the scores of convicts. These civilians used to leave their working clothes in the ice plant, which was nearly completed. One Saturday afternoon, when work had been suspended early, I went into the new structure and made way with a pair of overalls, a jumper, and an old derby hat that hung upon a peg. I secreted these beneath a loose board in my tool house.

In about a week, the day before

Christmas, my chance came. A trusty, a young negro, came into the tool house at noon and checked in his tools. He stopped to talk a minute.

"I ain't goin' out no more to-day," he said. "I'm goin' to stay in an' get trimmed up at de barber shop. I ain't had a day off in a month."

His number was 2244. Soon he went away, and then I made my decision. In the tool house I dressed in my stolen overalls and derby hat. This was a Southern State, so the weather was moderate. After the dinner hour had passed and the inside workers had been distributed to their various posts, a group of trusties began assembling at the gate. When they lined up for the checking-out operation I walked across the yard and took my place at the end of the line.

With my heart beating like a trip-hammer, I listened to the numbers being called until the man ahead of me had passed out.

"Twenty-two foahy-foah," I said.

"Twenty-two forty-four," the gate-man repeated, busy at his pegs, and, with face averted, I passed through the gateway.

I heard the gate rolling shut behind me. A trusty ahead of me turned and divined my purpose. He knew I was not a trusty, and he knew I had given a false number. But he said nothing—just smiled and went on about his business. The gang scattered, and I leisurely started across the great open field that surrounded the prison.

Twenty yards, thirty yards, forty yards, a hundred yards, I walked, carelessly, and no speeding bullet from the gun of a wall guard brought me down. On and on I went, expecting every instant to be laid low. At last I made the group of buildings that would shut me from view, and then hastily stepped out along the road that led to the railroad yards two miles away. When I had traversed a mile the huge siren at the prison burst upon my ears, the siren whistle that notified the surrounding country that a prisoner had escaped. I hastened my steps, and was not molested until I had gained the yards.

14A P

There was a freight train standing there, and, to all appearances, it was about to pull out. It was a solid train of sealed box cars, so there was nothing but the "bumpers" for it. I stood near the train, not wishing to get aboard until it had started. A railroad man came along, and glanced narrowly at me, his face breaking into a broad smile.

"Are you the boy they're whistlin' for?" he asked.

"I am," I answered, "and I hope you'll let me make it."

"Go as far's you like," he said. "I hope you have luck."

Now, there is a reward of fifty dollars for the capture of an escaped convict, but I don't believe this railroad man cared anything about that. I think he would rather see some unfortunate man gain his liberty than he would to acquire fifty dollars by the distasteful means of "turning him up."

I made a mistake in going to the railroad yards, for I might have known that was the first place they would look for me. The train gave signs of pulling out, and I clambered aboard, but it was scarcely moving when my friend, the deputy assistant warden, came alongside and covered me with a revolver.

"Jump off," he said, and he called me by my first name, "or I'll have to shoot!"

I jumped off, and back into captivity again.

"You're a very foolish boy," my friend told me. "You didn't have long, and now you've hurt yourself a lot."

We drove back to the prison in the little roadster he had come over in. We were alone—he made the guards who had ridden with him walk back. He was genuinely sorry for me, and before I was locked up in solitary confinement he whispered that he would do all he could to save my good time.

I spent Christmas on "sol," and eighteen days after that. Never during this time did I pass a word with any one. A negro brought my food and bathtub, but he was not permitted to speak to me. On the row with me

were a number of condemned prisoners. The laws in this State provided for executions in the counties where the crimes were committed, but during the appeal of cases, and for safe-keeping, condemned men were brought to the prison. One was taken away to be hanged while I was on "sol." I got a glimpse of him as he passed my cell, with a guard on each side of him. I remember his gray hair and thin face yet.

I had nothing to read—nothing to do except pace back and forth, back and forth, back and forth. I addressed a word now and then to the guard on the row, but he paid no attention to me. Once a day the prison physician came and silently looked me over, but he said no word. Occasionally I could hear the condemned men praying aloud; they prayed all the time, I was told later, but once in a while they would put their supplications into outspoken words. It was a harrowing experience, and I was relieved when they took me away and dressed me in the ignoble "ringtails."

Just try some time to go nineteen days without speaking to any one.

I wore my suit of degradation about a month, being shunted from one job to another, and having a most disagreeable time. Then suddenly the attitude of the officials turned toward me. One day I was taken to the storeroom and dressed in a becoming suit of browns. The next day I was made chief clerk to the storekeeper, an easy and attractive job that I held until my release. Again I had the assistant deputy warden to thank.

My work was mainly in compiling weekly and daily reports of goods issued from the storeroom. I had access to a typewriter, and when not busy employed my time in writing letters and petitions for other prisoners. I wrote several letters for the boy who had "all of it." He looked much better than he had on the day he came to this place. He had been doing outdoor work, and the hope of getting out had firmly taken hold of his mind. I don't know how he came out. It has been

nearly five years since I have seen him. He is getting into manhood now, and it pains me to think he has "put up" all that time. I'm sure something will happen to bring him liberty.

During my tenure in the storeroom 18 and myself became better acquainted, and my pity for the negro grew. He used to talk to me about the simple things of his life, and always there was that ceaseless yearning to "git out an' look his sister up." I doubted very much whether that joy would ever come to him, although I never intimated my doubts to him.

One day in February, along in the afternoon, the storekeeper, a fine old man who treated the prisoners as though they were human beings, addressed 18, who was preparing to go to his supper. The negro ate on an early "line," with negro barbers and hospital attachés. The storekeeper had just been talking on the telephone.

"Don't go to supper yet a while," he said to the negro.

"I spect there's some new ones comin' in," 18 said to me in a whisper. "Here's whar I gits a late supper ag'in."

In a few minutes the warden came into the storeroom, followed by Celia and her mother.

"There he is, papa," said Celia, pointing to 18. The negro was all flustered.

The warden and the storekeeper talked in undertones a moment, and then the former turned to 18.

"Boy," the warden said, and there was a smile on his face, "would you like to go and visit your sister?"

The negro's suspense was pitiful.

"Oh, Mistah Warden," he said, "doan fool with a ole nigger like me." He was trembling all over.

"I'm not fooling you, boy," the warden said. "You're going out."

The convicts in the storeroom rose to their feet and cheered, and some of them nearly wept. For myself, I felt better than at any time during my imprisonment. The prisoners cheered for the warden and for 18 and for Celia and her mother. Prison rules were suspended. The negro, poor soul, had utterly collapsed. He had sunk into

a chair, and sat there now, laughing and weeping in turn. It took the entire storeroom force to get him dressed. We all had a late supper that night.

And such a dressing as they had prepared for him! A suit of clothes, an overcoat, underclothing, shoes, and everything had been purchased by the warden. They were much better than the prison-discharge clothing, and they fitted him well, too.

"Bress de Lawd! Bress de Lawd!" 18 moaned to himself, as with trembling fingers he laced up his "goin'-out" shoes. "How'd dis ever come, how'd dis ever come?"

"I'd like to take 'Rabbit' out with me," he said after a time.

Rabbit was a negro who had "celled" with him about ten years. He was doing twenty-five years.

"I'll work and git him out," he went on. "I'll git a lawyer and pay him myse'f."

There was a round of good-bys. Rabbit was sent for, and these two old prisoners wept over each other's shoulder.

"Doan worry, Rabbit," said 18, "I'll git you out."

"Nev' mine 'bout me," said Rabbit. "I've only got 'bout six more years."

"Hope springs eternal—" The story of 18 has done more than any other thing to cheer downhearted prisoners in that place. When one of them gets in the dumps and feels that he has lost his chances some one tells him the old negro's tale. Why lose hope, they say, when 18 made it? Something will happen—something must happen. It is a hope that works wonders, a hope that eases unbearable burdens.

We watched 18 as he walked away from the prison, with Celia and her father and mother with him. We could see out the storeroom windows. Way across the field, where they turned to go to the car line, the old prisoner stopped and faced the walled city fully a minute, waving at us, although he couldn't see us. I knew he was still sobbing. As the news spread around the prison there was genuine joy, for

this patient negro was a favorite of all. It hadn't been a very hard job for the warden to get him out, we learned, but they had held him until his sister was found, and, wishing to surprise him, no word had been said to him; even the warden, grateful for his rescue of Celia, had dispensed with his thanks in order not to excite the negro's suspicion that any move was being made for him. At last the sister had been located in Kansas, and was fairly well to do. Her husband had promised 18 a home and a job on his farm. Thus the impossible was accomplished.

As for myself, I was called into the warden's office on the second day of April, my birthday, and told that all my good time had been restored. I was grateful, and so expressed myself. I was to go out on the sixteenth of the month.

I remember my last night in prison. I scarcely slept. I awoke from a doze long before the bell, and didn't go to breakfast. After I had been to the barber shop, and emerged with my hair trimmed and my face cleanly shaven, I dressed in my new suit. I had been provided with a hat and shoes better than the ordinary discharge variety, and I presented a good appearance. My suit was a good one, tailored by an expert workman in the prison. My friends on the outside had seen to it that I was provided with plenty of money. I shook hands all around, and went up to the gate that led from the rotunda into the offices. Soon a guard asked me if I were 2896. He let me through the gate. There was a group of officials in the offices to bid me good-by. I knew then that I had friends there, and I knew I had received good treatment, considering the misdemeanors I had committed under the stress of confinement. There was another round of handshakes, good wishes, the sound of swinging doors behind me, of grating bolts and dangling keys. I was "outside."

It was exactly eleven months and twenty-one days since I had come in. It was a fine April day now, too, and—

oh, how much better the world looked! I knew I would never leave it again in life. I walked across the great field, and, at the corner, stopped to wave back at the faces I knew would be watching from the storeroom windows, faces of some who had a long time yet to go.

And now I am done. Since that tragic experience I have prospered. I have a home and a wife and scores of friends, and am again reestablished in

the business I love so well. The past has never yet risen to darken my life. It seems to be all behind me, and I pray that it is. If I could wield a wand and transform all the lives that are inside into lives that are as happy as mine, I would not lose an instant in doing so. I wish for them the best—the complete realization of the hopes that I know are ever springing in their breast and will not be downed.



The Fireman

I STARTED to figurin' yesterday night
 When I was a-smokin' my cob,
 An' if my arithmetic's halfway near right
 I've sure got a bum of a job,
 For 'cordin' to dope that I've ciphered out clear
 An' takin' my work as it runs,
 I've shoveled, to date, in my navy career
 Some fifty-odd thousands of tons.

An' when I looks forward through years that's to come
 An' sees myself, shovelin' coal,
 Just shovelin' coal till my muscles grow numb,
 I kinda gets sick to the soul,
 To think of the heat an' the glare of the fire
 An' the scrape of the scoops on the floor;
 It ain't just the work that a guy would desire
 To keep at for thirty years more.

An' if there's a battle, the fellows who gets
 The glory is up on the decks,
 A-firin' the guns; while we parboils an' sweats
 Until we are tarry-skinned wrecks.
 An' if we're the winners we drives the ship home,
 Which means we must shovel again;
 An' if we should lose, we go under the foam
 In a scaldin' hot, steelly walled pen.

Still, thinkin' it over, perhaps I will stick;
 For, spite of the sweat that I spill,
 I'm free to sleep in when I've finished my trick,
 An' I don't have to scrub or to drill.
 An' if I am good, maybe some day I'll land
 In an oil-burnin' boat, glory be!
 Where you just turn a cock—say, it oughta be grand,
 An' I reckon I'll hang round an' see!

BERTON BRALEY.

The Scapegoat

By Charles Saxby

Three things will dwell in your memory after reading this uncommon story of the west coast of Africa: First, the influence of the Russian ballet on colonial administration; second, the weird "Kaffradiddi Rag," with its more weird banjo accompaniment; and third, the establishment of The Order of the Goat

THEY came in a flock of six, bleating down the path through the palm scrub back of old Quasie Baidoo's compound, two nannies and four kids. From the gallery of Hastings' quarters we lazily watched them as they went straying after special titbits of rotten bananas or moldy cous-cous, cast out from that human rabbit warren of a nigger household. Then, across the inertia born of the sodden heat of the afternoon, Hastings spoke.

"Queer beasts," he murmured reflectively, with a wave of his pipe in their direction. "Able to extract a living from all the things we don't want. Did you ever think of that? I like to watch 'em; they remind me——"

"Remind you of what, for Heaven's sake?" asked one of us.

"Of lots of things, most of which I have no intention of telling you," Hastings retorted. "Of the influence of the Russian ballet on colonial administration for one thing. Also of the mysterious ways in which our government moves to perform its wonders. Other things, too; of great, naked, black-winged niggers flitting through the silence of the Bush; and souls—strange, half-animal souls of lion or leopard or crocodile. Bodiless shapes, with the rain beating right through them, that hang over the villages at night, seeking a human form in which to incarnate."

"All of which sounds as if you had been meddling with Fetish," the other returned in virtuous severity. "Better leave that mess alone. I knew a man once——"

"So did I," Hastings interrupted, with some firmness. "I knew him several times; he is quite frequent on the west coast of Africa, that man. But *this* fellow——" He paused, his eyes following one of the browsing kids below, as though seeking further reminiscence. "He was different, you see, though it took me some time to find that out. I never really knew him until that day when it all started. He had dropped into the colony, apparently from nowhere in particular, just before I left on a six months' furlough, and he was shelved and ticketed in my mind as merely 'Carr—oh, yes—that telegraph chap.'

"It was at Kaffradiddi that it happened. Things do happen there somehow; it is one of those places. It is so curiously obscure, in spite of its importance, tucked away up on the edge of the Bight. A sort of deliberate obscurity, as if it were holding a mantle about itself. No wonder those pestilential nuisances, the Three Societies, those secret black brotherhoods that are at the bottom of all the native troubles, chose it as the headquarters for their mysterious Sanhedrims. Or possibly it is the other way round, and that is why it is so hidden. Anyway, there it is, a sort of African Vatican, with its invisible tentacles reaching out over a considerable portion of the west coast. A sleepy place, with a perpetual beat of tom-toms and the flags of the societies fluttering over the roofs—Lion, Leopard, and Crocodile, aristocratic affairs, the members of which

must be born, according to the tincture of their souls as decided by the juju men at their birth.

"It was several years ago, and one of those times of a queer, black unrest, with the Three Societies striving in a bitter rivalry that seeped up even into the fabric of government. Our cue was to support the one most potent at the moment, which happened to be the Lion Men, and it was with their chiefs of council we were holding palaver; fine, lean old fellows, blood to their finger tips, with the subtle faces of priests.

"Then came a bombshell of a code telegram from the governor, with a fatal mistake in it, as it proved, that made it read 'suppress' instead of 'support' the Lion council. No one could understand it, but orders were orders, and the administrator 'suppressed' very effectively. The chiefs stalked indignantly off under their state umbrellas, while the Leopards and Crocodiles jeered, and, in a week, the three were waging a nasty, underground warfare from Coomassie to the Niger.

"That was while I was away. For me it all began that night the governor came down from Accrome and summoned all the white men involved to meet him in the fort. Who was responsible for the mistake in that telegram no one seemed able to determine, but somebody had to pay for it, we knew that. The particular gods of the government machine were demanding a victim, and his excellency had come to find one.

"Thanks to that lucky furlough, I was out of it, but the tension was inescapable, and I paced up and down outside, waiting to hear the verdict. Then, all at once, this chap Carr came lounging up beside me, with a backward nod at the obsolete bulk of the fort behind us and a terse, 'Well—they've settled it.'

"I had suspected that as soon as I saw him emerge from the black tunnel of the gateway, a white figure of significant solitariness. He read the question on my face, and added:

"'Oh, I'm to be the goat—of course.'

"Till then I had scarcely met him, hardly looked at him; but, as he spoke, he stood out with sudden sharpness, as though the acid of his words had etched him on my eyes. A long, lean fellow in the later twenties, with a long, sun-tanned face, a head of dark-red hair, and a slash of black eyebrow clear across his forehead, from under which he looked out at you with an effect of cynical consideration.

"I scarcely knew what to say. In fact, I was annoyed at having placed myself there, right in his path, as a sort of candidate for confidence. I made a noise like sympathy, illustrating it by a proffered cigarette case, and waited for him to pour himself out in profanity or self-pity. But, to my surprise, he stood silent, looking down at the town, a figure of contained concentration until, with an almost uncanny directness, his speech leaped to the very heart of the matter.

"'It simply couldn't have happened anywhere else,' he said. 'Look at it down there—the queer, infernal place.'

"It lay below us, squeezed between lagoon and surf, vocal with the nigger yap of a night of full moon. A queer place, and with damnation enough under its half-Arab surface of whitewash and moonlight. The terminus of a dozen of those old, old African trade routes; a sort of West African melting pot, bubbling with a fusion of strange races that came drifting in and then drifted out again, spreading over half a continent with the poisonous chatter of those alleys down there. I took his cue and carried it on, determined to keep to the impersonal view of things.

"'You know what the niggers say: 'The Kings in Jenneh hear the mouths of the harlots in Kaffradiddi,'" I quoted, but he merely stared, and I saw he was a jump ahead of me in his mind. He had a way of being that, I found; he would suggest a thing that set you to thinking, and meanwhile he would be at something else. He would suggest a cloud of imaginations and then disappear behind them, like a cuttlefish escaping in a cloud of its own

ink—only in his case he made *you* furnish the ink.

"I never even saw that telegram," he said. "Of course, as head of the telegraph office, I have a certain responsibility, but I was up the line that day."

"Then how the dickens——" I began, and he laughed.

"I'm not exactly popular here, you know."

"I could understand that, as I remembered him on the only other time we had met. It had been a singsong in somebody's quarters, and Carr's contribution had been a song of his own making. 'My Kaffradiddi Rag' he called it; some twenty verses of local hits to a banjo accompaniment of syncopated fragments of native airs. The humor of it had been immense, but the sarcasm a shade too biting, and these things have a way of traveling in the government service.

"Surely, if you proved to his excellency——" I began, in conventional protest.

"It wasn't only the telegram," he interrupted. "They made a good job of it once they began."

"He was suggesting things again. It was a long time since Kaffradiddi had had an official housecleaning, and things had been piling up; sins of omission mostly. I knew those men in that council up there. Since Carr had been selected for victim he might as well take the burden of the whole lot, to the purged relief of the entire station.

"Still—if you didn't really do it," I persisted, but he cut me short with a flat finality.

"Oh, rats—you know all about it as well as I do!"

"Of course I knew, and so do all of you, that the machinery of government—of any government—is geared to expediency only. But I had never before heard it said so plainly, and it shocked me a little. I remembered what I had heard about him: 'A queer chap, he says such things.' 'Where the devil did he come from, anyhow?' and, most damning of all, 'You never know what the fellow is going to do.' He

puzzled me, for all his biting knowledge of the injustice of it he was so cool and quiet. But there must have been a raw spot in him somewhere, for he misinterpreted my silence.

"All right, I understand," he said, gathering himself together for leaving, as if his body had been a package he had momentarily forgotten. "They will all be coming down directly, and of course—now—you wouldn't want to be seen—you needn't be afraid, I'm off."

"He turned toward the steps that led to the market place, and I let him go. Not that I cared in the way he suspected; it was merely that I was taking a look at the situation. I had heard of such cases before, cases of men over whom the official juggernaut had rolled, but this was the first time I had watched the process. But he was marked for such an end, coming from nowhere in particular, without backing, influence, or any one to raise awkward questions on his behalf. I couldn't help admiring the sheer, unblushing 'expediency' of it all.

"He was at the top of the steps by then, standing out white against the pit of shadow below. He looked extraordinarily alone at that moment. I had seen them before, these solitary fellows who somehow never quite fit in the safe, middle course of things, and I knew there are only two ways for them to go—to the very top or the very bottom. It was ridiculous, of course, but just then those steps struck me as symbolic; he was going down them. Then, suggested by his own description of himself, came the comparison of that scapegoat of the Jewish scriptures, thrust out to bear the sins of a whole community. I had an impulse to go after him, though for just what I couldn't have said—to pat the goat's head perhaps. But he struck me as entirely too quiet for safety; I had known men to blow their brains out for far less.

"Look here—what are you going to do?" I asked, as I came up with him. I must have rather shouted it, for the woods echoed back from the blank wall in a mocking, 'Do—do—do——' and he

grinned as he stopped, a step or two below me.

"I'm not that kind, you know," he said. "Thanks all the same."

"You had better clear out of here—there's a steamer for Lagos due in the morning," I suggested, but after a moment's consideration he tossed it aside.

"I think I like it here."

"But you can't stay *here* after this. You'd find it beastly unpleasant," I protested, and he seemed to take my words under advisement until, with that perverse penetration of his, he arrived at a conclusion:

"You mean that the other fellows would find it beastly unpleasant having me around after this?"

"That was just about what I had meant, but there was no necessity for him to say it so plainly as all that."

"But what are you going to do if you stay here?" I asked.

"I don't know yet. I never do know until I'm doing it," he answered, and it flashed on me that probably we wouldn't know until he had already done it.

"None of the traders will give you a position, you know," I began; then a suspicion struck me. "Look here, if it is that you simply haven't the money to clear out with——" I stumbled on, then stopped as he looked up at me from under that eyebrow.

"Say—you are rather a decent sort of ass." He nodded, and turned deliberately down the steps, singing the most indiscreet verse of that "Kaffradiddi Rag" thing.

"As I listened to it, whining up from the shadows with its atrocious minors and too-biting sarcasms, it occurred to me how little I knew him. I had been with him, in the last few minutes, through what, with most men, would have been a revealing time, but all I had discovered about him was that I simply couldn't make him out. I was angry, too. After all, I *had* been decent. To carry on my previous comparison, I felt as though I had patted the head of the goat only to have it turn and butt me in the stomach.

"It was quite a little while before it occurred to me that that was probably the most natural thing for a goat to do.

"So that was the end of that," Hastings went on after a moment. "I left for the Bush next day, and never expected to see Carr again, but my return found him still in Kaffradiddi, to the intense disgust of our fort circle.

"He had taken a house by the lagoon; a big, two-story, half ruinous place known to us as the *Casa Despensa* (Tumble-down House), and, since he was never seen about the town, he was popularly supposed to be drinking himself to death. I doubted that, but that mess of a native town, steeped in the deviltries of the Three Societies, with its long, empty days and its nights too full of crowded possibilities, was no place for a white man cut off from the restraining influence of his own kind. I was sorry for the fellow, but it was none of my business to be running about playing amateur maiden aunt to young wasters.

"It was from Miss McNeish, Kaffradiddi's one white woman and the head of the Mission House, that I received my first direct news of him. She stopped me in the market one day, a thin, uncompromising woman of about thirty-five, in severe linen and an unbecoming sun hat. She had been many years on the coast, and her eyes looked out on things with an air of complete disillusion. I was surprised when she marched up to me, for one of her disillusionments was the methods, morals, and manners of colonial officials, both in general and in particular, and she rarely noticed us if she could avoid it without actual rudeness.

"Have you seen Mr. Carr lately?" she asked, surprising me again, for I had not known that she even knew him. "I hear he has been ill."

"She looked at me hard, but I let it slide off, telling myself that I was no professional nurse. 'Why on earth doesn't he go away?' I said.

"Why should he?" she demanded, more directly still. Then, as I shrugged my shoulders, there flickered in her eyes

that curious woman's sympathy for the under dog. 'I think it is splendid of him, staying to face it out. I have sent him over some medicine and a few little comforts—things he could not buy here in the town,' she went hastily on, saving Carr's pride before my face. So he had found manna in his wilderness, I saw. 'But he is ill and alone—in that horrible house.'

"'Have you been to see him?' I asked.

"'No, I thought it better for you men to do that,' she answered, with a slow flush that almost made me gasp. It had never occurred to me that Miss McNeish could regard herself as a possible target for scandal.

"'Since he has been dismissed the service it is hardly my place, as a government official——' I began, but she cut me short.

"'And as a *man*, and—presumably, at least—a Christian?' she asked acidly, and walked away.

"I watched her cleaving her uncompromising path across the bustle and glare of the market, and I felt as though I were seeing her for the first time. It was as 'poor McNeish' that she was known to us, one of that most unattractive type, the withering virgin. But it suddenly struck me, remembering that flush, how little we know of how people seem to themselves.

"Her last words rather stuck in my craw, and I went out to see Carr that very evening, partly, I'll admit, because I wanted to see what sort of an establishment he might be keeping. It was a sickly night, heavy with heat, the sort of night that sits on your breath and sets your nerves awry. The place looked most unattractive, looming up in the dark, its bulging walls splotched with leprous damp. It belonged to Efuah—Hastings pronounced it *Eff-wah*, in true Coomassie-side fashion—"an old, old Ashanti woman, the widow of one of the head juju men of the Lion society. She also kept a stall in the market, where she was enormously respected. We always avoided her, for her tongue could be quietly flaying and she feared none, but Carr, in one of his perverse

caprices, had chosen to take a fancy to her.

"She met me just inside the courtyard, looking like an incredibly aged little brownie against that background of rank vegetation and crumbling disrepair.

"'The *Aoora* has come to see the *Brinnie*?' she asked.

"'For what else?' I snapped, annoyed at her giving that young derelict the higher title. 'And why do you call him so? Is he, then, a chief?'

"'Are not *all* white men great chiefs?' she asked, with a nasty twinkle.

"'Even chiefs lose favor sometimes,' I returned.

"'Hoo—the mouth of the *Aoora* speaks truth,' she answered. 'But even so, the blood of chiefs remains.'

"'There are no chiefs save in the king's eye,'" I quoted, but she could match proverbs with any one.

"'The ear of the king is behind his eye, and the roar of the lion comes even to the king's compound.'"

"There was no arguing with her, I saw, and I left her, going up a crazy stone staircase to where a light showed above, and there I came on Carr, stretched out on a cot on the upper gallery.

"What I had expected I hardly know, but probably dirt, drink, drugs, and a grinning nigger wench. Since one never knew what Carr would do, it was even possible that he might do the usual thing. But the place was clean and swept; he wore pajamas, too, instead of the strip of 'country cloth' that is the first sign of your white man going downward. He was thin and pretty pallid, but he grinned as he saw me.

"'Hello, Native Secret Service,' he drawled. 'Is this an official investigation?'

"'No, purely private,' I replied, and he sat up and reached for a banjo that stood by his cot.

"'I see,' he grinned again. 'An errand of uplift—eh? A helping hand to the fallen. Welcome, Little Brother of Mercy.'

"There was just enough truth in that

to sting, and, as he saw it, he tickled a laugh from that banjo that was positively obscene. The empty reaches of the house caught it up, passing it from room to room until the whole place seemed chuckling with softly sneering mirth. I determined that, since it was she who had let me in for it all, I would be very short with Miss McNeish the next time we met.

"'You might be civil, at least,' I growled. 'It is usual, for instance, to shake hands with a guest.'

"'So I have heard,' he said, with a stare straight at me. 'But, you see, I wasn't sure if you'd want to.'

"Oh—he behaved damnably, that is the only word for it. He played every trick, touched every note, and then he had such a way of suggesting things. Just those words, for instance, coupled with his circumstances and surroundings. That ruinous, macabresque hulk of a house, the slip-slap of the lagoon against its walls, and that stifling, nigger reek sifting in from the alleys outside. He seemed so frightfully alone in it all, and he had wondered if I'd shake hands! Later on I was glad I had not let him see how effective that had been.

"'You ought not to be here at all,' I said, and he bent over the banjo with a pathos that almost fooled me again, as he began playing that 'Kaffradiddi Rag.'

"'I know it,' he murmured. 'I really *know* better, but it's my infernal disposition, you see. I ought to go away—far away—to some new land. Wipe the slate, start afresh, and live it all down, with stage business of repentant soul struggling upward. Ba-ah!' he jeered, the banjo blating a chord in accompaniment. He could produce more insulting sounds from that instrument than any one I ever heard. 'And all that—for what?'

"'You are getting yourself frightfully disliked, staying on like this,' I told him.

"'Rotten bad taste, of course,' he agreed. 'But then what can you expect—of *me*?'

"'He rather 'had us,' you see. Hav-

ing kicked our goat out, we had practically given him a license to be as irritating as he pleased, out in his private wilderness, and right well he knew it.

"It was the first time I had seen him in a place of his own, and my eyes had been busy with the few belongings scattered about, mute evidences that his life had been one of considerable wandering. West Indian baskets, some Spanish copper, and, in a corner, a long, spiral sort of object that puzzled me until I recognized it as a conch shell, probably purloined from some Hindu temple. There was something else, too; something that had been so intensely present between us all the time that I had expected an explanation of it at least, if not some apology, but he had remained infuriatingly unaware of it.

"It stood just back of his cot on an upturned box draped in red and black cloth. The bleached skull of a ram, its empty eye sockets covered with red paper, behind which burned a candle, its horns wreathed with a chaplet of paper flowers, drunkenly awry. With its glowing eyes and that bacchanalian wreath it was about the most leering, cynical-looking thing I had ever encountered. Though I saw how much he was enjoying my curiosity, it proved too strong for my pride, and I spoke:

"'What the devil—'

"'Hush! Not the devil—my household god,' he interrupted, transferring his grin to his eyes. 'The distinction is a subtle one, though, I'll admit. "The Order of the Goat," I call it,' he finished, with a meaning nod and stare.

"'It's a beastly unwholesome thing to have about,' I snorted, but he just rubbed his fingers down the strings of the banjo in a series of insolent sounds. 'You make your own troubles,' I went on. 'Why the dickens don't you behave like other people?'

"'Partly because I can't, and partly because I don't want to—which is probably the real reason why I can't,' he said frankly. 'Just how would you like me to behave?'

"'Well—that thing——' I began, nodding at the skull.

"'Oh—that? It makes me think,'

he answered. 'Nice, deep, solemn thoughts. The Egyptians used to keep a skeleton at the feast, you know. It suggests things, too. The niggers say that there are Lion souls and Crocodile souls and Leopard souls—so why not some Goat souls, too?' As he said that it occurred to me to wonder if he had perhaps hit the nail of his own perversities square on the head? 'I think I'll start some,' he went on. 'It ought to be popular—"The Order of the Goat"—there ere enough of us in the world, Heaven knows. Can't you see it?' he asked, as under his words he began a running accompaniment on the banjo. Bits of songs that made me wonder where he had learned them, unless from that old bag of bones and unholy knowledge down in the courtyard. Fierce Arab war songs, such as seep down from the edge of the desert. Then that weird death chant of the dwarf people, full of the drip of the sodden Congo forests and all the voiceless ache of a dumb revolt. So it ran in an undercurrent of tone that seemed to come from the very heart of that which he spoke.

"Can't you see it—up in the Bush there?" he asked. "The great Super-goat, the father of all the goats there are, brooding over the night, sounding the call as he sends out his messengers through the villages to drop nice little goatlets into the bodies of squalling, just-born, human kids. And the mothers-to-be, cowering in the plantain gardens on the edge of the dusk, as the messenger swooshes by on his black wings. How many of us are there? Goats all of us, I tell you—goats on thrones and goats in gutters—all of us somebody's goat—"

"He dropped the banjo, and his hands went to his head. He was sicker than I had thought, merely going on pure nerve, and he had come to the breaking point. His wrists were blazing, and I shouted down to old Efuah to send some one to the fort to summon help. But she ran out herself, leaving me alone with him until she returned, to my astonishment, with Miss McNeish, laden with hot-water

bags, medicine case, and bottles of champagne.

"She took command at once, keeping Efuah and myself on the jump as she directed the fight. She directed it magnificently, too, with a sharp fury of struggle against that presence that seemed encroaching on him from within himself as, hour by hour, the shape of his bones showed more clearly through his flesh. I wondered at her intensity, for he seemed so exactly all that she most condemned in life. Lying there with his red head and slash of eyebrow, behind him that leering, flower-crowned ram's skull, there was about him a touch of something that could only be expressed by the overworked word 'pagan,' while she herself was the very prototype of all the iron-bound repressions of her Scotch faith.

"It was one of those short, sharp affairs that are over, one way or another, in a few hours. Toward dawn he came to in a lucid moment of sheer exhaustion, a dangerous moment of a deadly sort of sweetness. He tried to press my hand, forgiving everything with his eyes, just waiting to drift out in a sentimental surrender. He was very dignified just then, and I was sorry—one always is, you know—but I couldn't help thinking how much better it was for him to go; it simplified things so, you see. Efuah plopped down on the floor, her dry knees cracking as she rocked to and fro with that soft 'keening' that the niggers use to waft each other out when death comes.

"I felt very solemn, with formless, slushy thoughts about 'wasted life' and 'the pity of it.' Miss McNeish mechanically reached for her prayer book; then her face, gray and worn by the night, broke with a spasm of rebellion. I could feel the struggle as she flung the book down, and, with one swift, sure movement, caught up the red-and-black-draped pedestal with the ram's skull on it and placed it deliberately just where he could not help seeing it.

"That would never have occurred to me; it took a woman to think of that. It worked—worked magnificently. That sentimental sweetness fled from his

eyes, and there came a faint flash of his old grin. As I bent my ear to his lips I could hear his whisper: 'I'd forgotten—good old McNeish—she knows.' Then, after a moment: 'I'll be damned if I'll die—the Order of the Goat—perhaps they'd like to hear about it up in the fort.'

"There was the pop of a champagne cork, and Miss McNeish motioned me away as she knelt by his side and began feeding him the wine with a spoon, while Efuah packed fresh hot-water bags about him. I was no longer wanted, so I went. Looking back from the stairs, I was struck with the sight of that long, white boy stretched out between those ministering women. The two extremes they were; the white Mission lady and the old, black witch wife; the pinnacle of condemnatory virtue and the repository of all the darkness of Fetish, met in common cause over a man to whom it would probably never occur to give a second thought to either of them.

"There seemed to be an added leer on that beastly goat skull, watching, red-eyed, behind them like the presiding deity of the whole affair.

"So that was the finish of *that*," Hastings resumed. "He got over it; Miss McNeish told me that the next time I saw her, some weeks later. She was looking rather ghastly, her face all ravaged by lines of struggle, which her eyes somehow denied, as if they knew that that struggle, whatever it was, was all over long ago. And yet, in a way, she looked better than ever before. There was a hint of defiance, too; a sort of 'I know I'm wicked, and I don't care,' and I came nearer liking her than ever before.

"There was some joking about her, just then, up in the fort. An enormous packing case had come through the customs for her, with a French manifest that read, '*Effets du théâtre*,' and we wondered, in a coarse way, if 'poor McNeish' was about to blossom out in stage finery. But she vouchsafed no explanation, and went about her business of saving souls and cleansing

bodies as uncompromisingly angular as before.

"Carr disappeared soon after that case came, and old Efuah's stall in the market was empty and untended. Where they had gone, or if they had gone together, no one knew. He had just slipped out, and Africa had swallowed him up; it was easy to do that from the Casa Despena, with its convenient water door that gave right upon the lagoon, stretching away in a shifting, uncharted maze of creeks and swamps.

"After a while some queer reports began to come down from the district commissioners up in the Bush. At first we took little notice of them, knowing the men who sent them—young Wilson, up at Kapputti, and Halkett, of Kay-ancor, fellows with a habit of seeing bears in every tree stump. But when such a time-tried man as Blair, of Akim, reported similarly, we began to sit up. There was nothing very definite as yet; merely a strange call from the depths of the Bush at night and a weird, winged shape that flitted through the villages in the dark. Ordinarily we should have hardly considered it, but, as I said, it was one of those times that come every so often. Times when those strange dreamers of Africa seem to stir in their sleep and things get thin and mixed up. Times when the flutter of a straw may have more deadly significance than the roar of a hurricane.

"Of one thing we were sure: If there was anything back of it, it would be known in Kaffradiddi, so I bent my ear to the ground in every way at my disposal. There was an unpleasant atmosphere in the market; furtive gossip behind the stalls, a smothered chuckling as we passed. The chiefs of the Lion Council, too, scraped their feet and bowed too low when we met them, their subtle old faces creasing as with a knowledge that was hidden from us. My agents brought me rumors of a fresh Fetish; rumors of rumors of a new dispensation out in the Bush, but whence those rumors really came there was no telling.

"I went up to Akim, a week's weary

hammock journey, and saw Blair. It was still going on at irregular intervals, he said, and for several nights we hid on the edge of the village, where the cassava gardens melt into the forest, and waited till dawn.

"Then at last it came. It was a moonless night, but clear, with that grisly earth shine that just makes things visible. The wall of the Bush rose black against the stars, and the broad leaves of the bananas slopped buckets of dew down our necks. The village was dark save here and there, where a flickering 'borning light' before a hut showed an expectant mother. I was drenched and shivering, ready to give up in disgust, when there came a sound, faint and far off, yet tremendously present in its penetration. It wasn't a blare nor a blast nor a trumpet nor a cry; it was something like all of them and like nothing else at all, and yet I was sure that I had heard it before somewhere. It was inexpressibly eerie, coming out of that dew-dripping, poisonous African night, where, even after years of familiarity, everything reminded one of how strange it all really was. The chatter of an ape out among the trees, the sharp points of a palm fan against the sky, the splashing grunt of a crocodile down on the mud flats of the river. And that sound, coming again and again—I was remembering now, and gradually it came back, in detached flashes. Sun—sweat—and the scent of crushed marigolds; a blaze of blue sky, a poised hawk ready to swoop. I had it then. I was a kid again, back in Madras, and that sound was the call of the conch shell in the Jain temple back of the big oil tanks.

"A conch shell—there was a connection there, I knew, but Blair gripped my arm, pointing up the path that led to the Bush.

"It came skimming along, noiseless, fleet-footed; a huge figure of a naked nigger magnificently built, but from his shoulders sprouted a pair of enormous black wings, and his head was as nothing human. As the figure came abreast of our hiding place I saw that, instead

of a face, it had a great goat's skull, red-eyed and grinning, its horns wreathed with a chaplet of flowers.

"It passed us by and on up the street. For all its darkness the village was awake and peering through its wattle-and-dab walls. As the thing skimmed by, with only the swoosh of its wings to mark its passing, there was a sound that followed it from the huts. A half sigh, half groan, and one shrill, woman's cry from behind one of those doors with a little lamp before it.

"All the rest of that night I paced Blair's veranda, piecing things together. I was certain that that was no nigger work; it was too effective for that. It was just the sort of thing the niggers would do, if they could, but no black could be so simple. There was an elemental, almost naïve sort of poetry about it, too, splendidly calculated to catch the native imagination.

"I ran it down thread by thread; conch shell, goat skull, and Carr's wild talk on that night of his illness, and each thread led straight back to the Casa Despena. I was surprised at the obviousness of that connection, for I had thought him clever enough to cover his tracks. What he was up to I couldn't imagine, but the fact of a white hand back of it lifted it out of my province. It was too dangerous to be permitted to continue, so I cut back across country to Accrome and laid the matter before the governor. From Kaffradiddi we learned, by wire, that Carr was back in the town, and next day the governor himself started with me for the port.

"It was morning before we sighted Kaffradiddi, and we had ourselves ferried across to the lagoon gate of the Casa Despena, a dank and uninviting portal, its steps alive with toads and covered with sun-cracked mud left from the last high water. The gate was open, and we walked straight in on Carr, seated in the shadows of the courtyard with the crumbling old house rising about it, yellow against the sky.

"He looked very fit, very bathed and shaved, lounging over an entirely respectable breakfast of coffee, toast, and

half liquid, canned butter. There was no sign of goat skull nor banjo; even his sarcasms seemed gone, and I wondered if he kept them also exclusively for the nights. He greeted us with just the right shade of respect for the governor, just the right hint of a lift to his eyebrow, as if to ask what the devil it might all be about. But, once we began, he was frankness itself.

"I am afraid perhaps I *am* the cause of these Fetish rumors, sir. You see, I wanted something to occupy myself with," he said, much as he might have mentioned taking up tennis or golf. "It was a bit dull for me here in Kaffradiddi."

"I can quite understand that," the governor agreed, with a dangerous suavity. "Excessively dull, I should imagine. But just why did you elect to remain here?"

"There's an Arab proverb, sir," Carr answered. "'Where the lock is, there the key fits.'"

"But you were—er—hardly locked into Kaffradiddi, Mr. Carr," the governor parried.

"No, but I was—er—very much locked out of it, your excellency," thrust Carr.

"It was first blood to him, and the governor tugged at his mustache.

"And how far has this goat affair gone, Mr. Carr?"

"I give you my word I can stop it all to-day—if——"

"Ah—"if"—" the governor smiled rather grimly. "But suppose there is no 'if'?" Then, from the blue sky of his suavity came a clap of official thunder: "Young man, do you think you can bluff the imperial government?"

"I assure you there is no bluff about this," retorted Carr, and it was like the lightning to that thunder. Things were getting interesting now.

"And do you imagine that we shall sit quietly by and permit a dismissed government servant to upset the whole colony?"

"Oh, *no*, sir," Carr answered, quite shocked. "I fully expected you would do all in your power to prevent *that*."

"As, for instance, having you in

jail in half an hour," the governor pleasantly suggested, and Carr as pleasantly considered it.

"That would certainly suit *me*," he announced, and the governor's "Suit you! How?" was something like a man springing away from a trap.

"There'd have to be a trial then," Carr explained. "And I should petition, on the basis of possible prejudice, for a change of venue—preferably to Lagos, I think."

"As once in heaven, so there was silence in that courtyard, broken only by the buzz of a 'marrowbone' drowning in that liquid butter. I knew the governor was looking at the same picture that Carr's words had painted on my mind. A pretty picture of us washing our colony's soiled linen before the critically amused eyes of Lagos. There were so many private garments might be hauled to that laundry, too. That wretched mess over the telegram, for instance; there were rumors of Leopard intrigues in Accrome itself, and that that Lion suppressing message had been twisted before ever it left the capital. Though how Carr suspected that I couldn't conceive, unless from that old, underground gossip conduit, Efuah.

"You are a clever young man, Mr. Carr," the governor nodded, clearing his atmosphere to a sunny blue. "Had I realized, some months ago, just how clever you are you would be in a very different position to-day."

"Yes, I should probably be staked out in some nice official *oubliette* of an unhealthy station up in the interior, a hundred miles from everywhere," Carr casually remarked. "That is the usual end of too clever young men in the government service, I've noticed."

"I expected an explosion, but none came. As they sat there, smiling warily across at each other, I could see why old Efuah had called Carr 'Brinnie,' though how she had nosed it out I couldn't tell. The governor liked him, so did I; but all the same he was wise in pinning his faith to something more potent than men's liking. We had no quarrel with that wasp in the butter—but we weren't rescuing it.

"'All the same I am afraid I must order your arrest, Mr. Carr,' the governor said.

"'Yes, sir. And on what charge?' Carr asked.

"'It is a serious thing, instituting rites of Fetish among the natives. Your "Order of the Goat"——' But Carr interrupted with a laugh:

"'Did you ever see the Russian ballet, sir? Wonderful thing that, so suggestive. I saw them do one about the flight of the soul once, and when I was here, all alone, I thought I'd like to try it. You know—background of the Bush—touch of the real thing—quite poetic. So I got some things from Paris——' So that was the explanation of Miss McNeish's packing case, I saw. 'There were only three of us in it all—old Efuah, myself, and a big buck nigger.'

"'Even so——' the governor began, then stopped. 'And just why did you choose those especial places for your—er—performance?'

"'I wanted an appreciative audience,' Carr grinned. 'I knew Wilson and Halkett; nice, imaginative chaps, both of them. Give them an inch of evidence and they'll have a universe of conjecture,' he went on, looking straight at me. 'I tried it at Akim, too,' he finished, and I flushed savagely as I remembered those nights of waiting among the dripping bananas while he chuckled in some comfortable hut.

"'Quite a confession,' the governor nodded to me. 'A nice little case just as it stands.'

"'There's one thing, sir,' Carr put in apologetically. 'I'm afraid it may make some trouble for you. I tried to keep Efuah quiet, but you know how women are about a secret. She talked of it down in the market, and to some of the Lion chiefs, too, I believe. In fact, I'm really afraid they got the idea it was some sort of a joke I was playing—a joke on the government itself. Frightfully impertinent of them, of course, but—well, there it is, you see.'

"'Not even Heaven ever accomplished the silence that descended on us as he spoke. So that was the explanation of

those chuckles and smiles. We knew our Kaffradiddi, and we knew our niggers, and we knew that the news of that projected joke was in Timbuktu by now, in Sokoto, and being discussed round the village fires on the Kru coast. We could see a large slice of the continent waiting to yap with nigger laughter if we sprang that trap for ourselves. And of all things a government fears perhaps ridicule is the worst.

"That 'marrowbone' was dead now, and Carr fished it casually out on the point of a knife. That struck me as symbolic, too. If his own sting had not been in good working order, we would have left him to go down in that morass of Africa all about us, just as inexorably as we had left that wasp in the butter. As it was, if we brought him to trial, we could almost hear the songs they would sing about us for the next twenty years. Those insolent nigger songs, too full of too indiscreet detail, that are so amusing when they are about the other fellow.

"For the last time in that place Carr was suggesting things, but this final suggestion was the most potent of all. It opened out before us with larger and larger vistas. We could see that joke going across the sea, leaking its acid into brains to whom we ourselves were no more than insects. There is so little appeal from humor; if that joke got abroad in Africa, it would take a year of black tragedy and the red of blood to wipe it out.

"Then the governor rose with the dignity of a good loser.

"'Your talents are wasted here, Mr. Carr,' he said. 'I happen to know of a vacant commissionership on the east coast. An unruly district and a bad climate, but the chances of advancement are great. I have some influence in these matters, and if you care to consider it——'

"'When shall I start?' asked Carr promptly.

"'There's a steamer for Lagos due this afternoon,' I said, making my sole contribution to the interview.

"From the beach that afternoon I saw him off to the steamer lying out-

side. Just before he left I snatched an instant alone with him.

"Look here," I said. "Will you kindly inform me if I am one of those 'nice, imaginative chaps' for whom you laid so neatly?"

"Oh, well—you *got* to have imagination in the Native Secret Service," he said soothingly. "Of course, I knew that, but you really are a decent sort." And he had the courtesy to stop just there.

"As I turned away from the beach I saw Miss McNeish lurking in the shadow of a trader's veranda. She was apparently the same as ever, her greeting just as aloof, but there was something in her face like the break of a hard winter. For a moment we stood there, watching the surfboat bobbing out over the bar.

"So that is the end of *him*," I said.

"No, it is only the beginning," she answered, her eyes lighting with a mingled hunger and triumph. "I knew *that* all along."

"I went on up to the fort, wondering just how she had known that. Then, since Carr still suggested things even in his absence, it came to me to wonder just what that scriptural scapegoat had done with that load of the people's sins, once he got them out into the wilderness. I wondered for a long time; then the answer came to me——"

We waited long for that answer, but to no purpose. Hastings merely sat there in silence, smiling slightly, his eyes on the animals below. A flock of six, two nannies and four kids, bleating contentedly as they absorbed the contents of Quasie Baidoo's trash pile, and thrived thereon.



A NEW JOB FOR FRANK HARRIS

FRANK HARRIS, the distinguished English novelist, playwright, and essayist, claims that many Americans have no knowledge of contemporary British writers. He goes farther than that—he is an emphatic man—and claims that many American newspaper editors have no comprehensive acquaintance with either the work or the personalities of the authors on the other side. The following is one of his items of proof:

One afternoon, several years ago, Harris presented himself, with a letter of introduction, to the editor of a great New York newspaper. The editor read the letter and scratched his head. "Like the original ape," says Harris, "there is a type of editor who scratches his head to denote profound thought."

"Ah—hum," ventured the editor. "Mr. Harris, have you ever done anything?"

Harris construed the vague inquiry to refer to writing.

"Well," he returned, with lazy sarcasm, "I did write a book on Shakespeare once."

"Ah," breathed the editor, in evident relief. "Harris, the book on Shakespeare—a commentary on Shakespeare, I believe it was. I have heard of it. Strange that it slipped my mind. Now, what would you like to do for us, Mr. Harris?"

"I would suggest," replied the author, still concealing his indignation, "that you send me down to the docks to meet the incoming ships and interview the notables who arrive."

"That's a good idea," agreed the editor. "Would you like that sort of a job?"

"It's not a question of whether I'd like it," answered Harris, reaching for his hat; "but the notables would. I know 'em all."

A Chat With You

DID any one ever ask you why you read *THE POPULAR*? Maybe you said it was because you liked it, or because it had the best fiction. And how do you know that it has the best fiction? And is just the fact that you like a story enough to prove it a good story? Are you a good judge of fiction? Are there any rules beyond those of personal taste for determining the quality of a story? Is it enough to say that you don't know anything about writing, but that you know what you like? Wouldn't it be a little better to be able to show that your liking was founded on real quality in the story, and not on some whim of your own?



AS a matter of fact, you are a good judge of stories, and whether you admit it or not, or have ever tried to formulate your ideas, you know a good deal about them. The ability to judge a story is like any other ability—it has a twofold source. Part of it is born in a man, and part comes from experience. The fact that you ever started reading fiction is an indication of your taste for it; the fact that you have read good fiction for some time has given you the experience. As issue after issue goes by, you acquire new standards of comparison. You are growing harder to please all the time. If we had never published any superlatively good stories you would not know

what you had missed, and you would be satisfied with less. The man who has never left his own little town thinks that Main Street is a glittering thoroughfare till he has seen Chicago or New York. The Catskills are mighty peaks to one who has never looked up at the towering battlements of the greater mountain ranges. A ten-acre meadow is a great plain to a boy who has never looked out across the Kansas corn fields.



YOU write to tell us that we publish better stories now than ever before. Of course we do. We must—to hold you. Years ago we got by with yarns that would never satisfy you now. We had lots of good ones always, but now that your critical judgment is keener you demand a little more thrill, a little more truth, a little more character and finish in everything. We have been educating you and ourselves. Was it worth doing? Anything that teaches you anything is worth doing. The more you know the bigger man you are. The wider your background the better able you are to execute anything you put your hand to. The best specialist in any line is the man with the biggest reserve of knowledge and experience. And fiction, if it be sound, is nothing but experience of men and things in the most agreeable and easily assimilated form.

A CHAT WITH YOU—Continued.

WE don't trouble too much about rules. Pedantry is the father of those horrible twins—dullness and stupidity. There are almost as many exceptions to the rules of literature as there are to those of grammar or pronunciation. Just being negatively good gets nowhere. Holman Day's great novel, "The Dictator," which you get complete in the next number of the magazine, is a great deal more than negatively good. It has the positive, electrical quality that counts for more than anything else. That it is timely, that it deals in a most interesting fashion with the problems of militarism, of preparedness, of corrupt politics is not enough. It is the vital reality of it, the strong humanity of its characters, good and bad, the stirring drama of the life of to-day it discloses, that gives it its pull and force. "The Soldier's Way," by Dane Coolidge, which starts in the present number, and gets still better in the next, is another example of the positive and unusual. To say that it is a rattling good adventure story neither adequately describes it nor does it justice as a narrative. For vividness, interest, and stirring quality it is in a class by itself. We have nothing to compare it to.



WHY do you buy THE POPULAR in preference to some other magazine? Why does a man buy one automobile instead of another? Some for one reason, and others for another. Lots of people pass up a Ford because they want to outshine their neighbors. Lots of other people buy the car that is recommended to them most strongly, and are contented with it because they

know no other. There are other reasons for buying cars. Streamline bodies, beautiful upholstery, fittings, and paint sell a good many. The man who has been using motor cars for some time, who has acquired some judgment by experience, has another reason entirely for selecting his car. It is the engine. That is the thing that makes the car go. What wins the race for the Marathon runner is neither his sweater nor his shoes, nor yet the classical contour of his features. It is his heart and lungs and legs—his engine and transmission, if you please, because that's what makes him go, and going is what wins races.



SO there is your answer as to why you read THE POPULAR. It is on account of the engine. It is the best engine in the magazine field. You can find pictures and other exterior decorations elsewhere, but THE POPULAR is built for speed, strength, and reliability. Its transmission is the best in the world. It transmits to you a glow and enthusiasm, a zest in life that you can get nowhere else. The engine is always running on all twelve cylinders. As for hill climbing—there is no hill of blues or despondency that THE POPULAR won't lift you over. The world is moving, and THE POPULAR will carry you along with it. Why take the dust from other people? The stories in THE POPULAR are the things that make it go. They are the engine. Isn't the finest engine better than all the upholstery in the world? What good are pictures if the story can't lift you out of yourself? But of course you know all this as well as we do.



— if you use

COLGATE'S RAPID-SHAVE POWDER

TRADE MARK

The plentiful, softening, soothing lather of Colgate's Rapid-Shave Powder is quickly and easily made.

Moisten the face, sprinkle a little powder on the wet brush—then *lather*. The beard is softened quickly—the lather is worked up on the face; no mussy “rubbing in” is necessary.

A little powder makes an abundant, creamy lather—there is no after-

smart or burn, but on the contrary the face is left with a soothed, comfortable feeling. Colgate's lather does not cling to the razor edge, and is easily rinsed from the face.

The same perfect lather may be obtained with either Colgate's Shaving Stick or Colgate's Shaving Cream.

Sold everywhere—or a trial size of Stick, Powder or Cream sent for 4c. in stamps.

COLGATE & CO., Dept. B, 199 Fulton St., New York

Makers of Cashmere Bouquet Soap—luxurious, lasting, refined

A new size at 10c. a cake



More Lasting More Comfortable Soles are Neolin Soles

To take a pair of Neolin Soles and compare them with leather soles is almost invariably to prefer Neolin Soles.

To try to flex a pair of leather soles is to reveal their stiffness, just as to flex Neolin Soles serves to reveal their pliancy.

To test your leather soles in any kind of wet is unfair to them. Yet water cannot soak Neolin Soles; neither can it stiffen or shapeless them.

Leather soles will not comfortably grip the ground. Neolin Soles possess the ground-adapting certainty of the feet of animals. Neolin Soles are tread-sure.

And then—most important to you—leather soles show no invariable wear. Neolin Soles last. Their wear is dependable and long. They won't scratch floors or furniture. They are light and modern looking for all their toughness.

In black, white, tan. Grown-ups' and children's sizes.

To avoid imitations, mark that mark; stamp it on your memory: Neolin—

the trade symbol for a never changing quality product of

The Goodyear Tire & Rubber Co.
Akron, Ohio

Neolin

Trade Mark Reg. U. S. Pat. Off.

Better than Leather

Dress
Up!

Your socks fit like a glove when you wear the

Boston Garter

It prevents unsightly wrinkles and keeps the ankles trim all day. Get the "Boston" and enjoy garter-luxury. It embodies the finest materials and workmanship—gives the most comfortable security—the longest service and costs no more.

At stores everywhere, 25c—35c—50c.

GEORGE FROST COMPANY, Makers, BOSTON

DIAMONDS \$2 A MONTH

OWN A DIAMOND NOW! OUR CATALOG TELLS HOW

21 JEWEL ELGIN ONLY \$2.50 A MONTH

Sent on Approval with lowest price ever made on a genuine 21 Jewel Elgin. See Special Offer with our Free Catalog.

Why Pay Cash? Our New Easy Payment Plan Helps Thousands and Will Help You—

Our New Catalog teems with Watch Bargains. It shows the very watch you have always wanted at the **low** price and **Easy Terms** you can afford to pay. A Guaranteed \$10 Elgin as low as \$7; \$25 Thin Models at \$17.50; and on Railroad Watches, **we save you a third.**

Free Catalog *Write for it Today.*
Postal will do. This New Book will post you. It tells you just what you want to know about Watches, Diamonds and Jewelry.

Harris-Goar Co., Dept. 37 Kansas City, Mo.
The House That Sells More Elgin Watches Than Any Other Firm in the World.

WATCHES

21 JEWEL Watches, 16 \$12.50; that will pass Railroad Inspection **\$2.50** A Month **CREDIT TERMS AS LOW AS** →



Watch Prices "Down to Bed Rock"

Our prices on high-grade, standard Watches are always the lowest, while values are top-notch. **Send for Watch and Diamond Catalog** and get posted about Watches before you purchase. Our Catalog illustrates and describes all the new models—Elgin, Waltham, Illinois, Hampden, and others—15, 17, 19, 21, 23 Jewels, adjusted to temperature, isochronism and positions. You do not have to take any one special make when you buy of us, for we have all the best for you to select from, and you judge for yourself after you see and examine the watch. Our watches are guaranteed by the factory and further guaranteed by us. We make any necessary repairs, barring accident, free of charge, for a period of three years from date of purchase.



Diamonds On Credit

Diamonds Win Hearts

SEND FOR CATALOG and see the splendid Diamond Rings we are selling on credit terms as low as \$2.50 a month; Diamond La Vallieres as low as \$1 a month; Diamond Ear Screws, Studs, Scarf Pins, at \$2 a month; all mountings solid gold or platinum. Wrist watches at \$1.60 a month. **Anything you select will be sent prepaid by us. You examine the article right in your own hands.** If satisfactory, pay one-fifth of the purchase price and keep it, balance divided into eight equal amounts, payable monthly. If not what you wish, return at our expense. You are under no obligation. **Send for Catalog today.**

LOFTIS BROS. & CO., The National Credit Jewelers
Dept. N845 100 to 108 N. State Street, Chicago, Illinois
(Established 1868) Stores in: Chicago; Pittsburgh; St. Louis; Omaha

Say Good-bye to Laundry Bills



TRY CHALLENGE CLEANABLE COLLARS

An invitation to economy. Long wearing, ever-white, and made with stitched edge effect and dull linen finish. Jiffy cleanable—off or on—with a damp cloth. No laundry bills ever. Challenge Cleanable Collars insure you against dirt, grease, rain and perspiration. Try them! 25c each—at your dealer's or post paid. State your (half) size and style. A booklet on request.



THE ARLINGTON COMPANY
725 Broadway, New York



"What y' Doin' Now, Bill?"

You don't have to ask that question of a **trained** man, because you **know** his position is a permanent one—that he is not at the mercy of conditions that affect the **untrained** man.

You can always be sure of a good position and a good salary if you have the **special training** that puts and keeps you in demand. The International Correspondence Schools will bring **special training** to you, no matter where you live, or how little spare time or spare cash you have.

To learn **how** the I. C. S. can help you, and **how** you can easily qualify for success in your **chosen occupation**, mark and mail the attached coupon today. Doing so costs you only the postage. You assume no obligation. If you **think** you're ambitious, marking the coupon will **prove** it. **Do it NOW.**

I. C. S., Box 3284, Scranton, Pa.

TEAR OUT HERE

INTERNATIONAL CORRESPONDENCE SCHOOLS

Box 3284, SCRANTON, PA.

Explain, without obligating me, how I can qualify for the position, or in the subject, before which I mark X.

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> ELECTRICAL ENGINEER | <input type="checkbox"/> SALESMANSHIP |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Electric Lighting | <input type="checkbox"/> ADVERTISING MAN |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Electric Car Running | <input type="checkbox"/> Window Trimmer |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Electric Wiring | <input type="checkbox"/> Show Card Writer |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Telegraph Expert | <input type="checkbox"/> Outdoor Sign Painter |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Practical Telephony | <input type="checkbox"/> RAILROADER |
| <input type="checkbox"/> MECHANICAL ENGINEER | <input type="checkbox"/> ILLUSTRATOR |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Mechanical Draftsman | <input type="checkbox"/> DESIGNER |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Machine Shop Practice | <input type="checkbox"/> BOOKKEEPER |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Gas Engineer | <input type="checkbox"/> Stenographer and Typist |
| <input type="checkbox"/> CIVIL ENGINEER | <input type="checkbox"/> Cart. Public Accountant |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Surveying and Mapping | <input type="checkbox"/> Railway Accountant |
| <input type="checkbox"/> MINE FOREMAN OR ENGINEER | <input type="checkbox"/> Commercial Law |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Metallurgist or Prospector | <input type="checkbox"/> Traffic Management |
| <input type="checkbox"/> STATIONARY ENGINEER | <input type="checkbox"/> GOOD ENGLISH |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Marine Engineer | <input type="checkbox"/> Teacher |
| <input type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECT | <input type="checkbox"/> Common School Subjects |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Contractor and Builder | <input type="checkbox"/> CIVIL SERVICE |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Architectural Draftsman | <input type="checkbox"/> Railway Mail Clerk |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Concrete Builder | <input type="checkbox"/> Textile Overseer or Supt. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Structural Engineer | <input type="checkbox"/> Navigator |
| <input type="checkbox"/> PLUMBING AND HEATING | <input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sheet Metal Worker | <input type="checkbox"/> Poultry Raising |
| <input type="checkbox"/> CHEMICAL ENGINEER | <input type="checkbox"/> AUTOMOBILES |

Name _____
Occupation & Employer _____
Street and No. _____
City _____ State _____

If name of Course you want is not in this list, write it below.

Wanted—Another Ostermoor

“Somewhere in this happy land,” as De Wolf Hopper used to say in his immortal “Casey,” there is another Ostermoor.

Not necessarily another mattress.

In this case “Ostermoor” stands for a lot of other things, at present unknown, which might be made equally famous by Magazine Advertising.

Once there was no nationally known soap. Now, probably folks buy by brand name more soap than any other household article.

Not so long ago very few housewives thought of using canned soups. Soup could be made so easily at home. Yet the sale of canned soups, advertised extensively in magazines, increased 204% from 1909 to 1914.

There’s nothing so constantly worn and so frequently worn out as shoes, and yet for this country of something like 25,000,000 families there are mighty few shoes advertised.

True of canned vegetables and fruits, too, and yet the tendency in housekeeping is surely toward ready-prepared dishes. Can you think of a brand name for tomatoes?

You can’t name, right off hand, a brand of canned salmon, can you? Chances are you just ask for “a can of salmon.” Also you might eat more salmon if you were sufficiently urged.

One would think that the Life Insurance companies, since their market is so universal, would constantly drive home in Magazine Advertising the protective value of life insurance, and pave the way for their agents. It would speed up the writing of life insurance, make life insurance really popular, and increase the incomes of thousands of agents.

A former big ——— concern would give a lot of money if it could find a way out of its failing business. It has had all kinds of insurance, except Magazine Advertising.

Mr. Manufacturer, think, *think* over your line. Is there not something in it which could be made a speciality—the leader? Do enough people use it to make it a safe bet that a million might? Offer it to them through Magazine Advertising. Will you talk it over with us?



NATIONAL PERIODICAL ASSOCIATION
(FOR FIFTEEN YEARS THE QUOIN CLUB)
FIFTH AVENUE BUILDING NEW YORK CITY



Ainslee's
American Magazine
Century
Christian Herald
Collier's Weekly
Continent
Cosmopolitan
Country Life
Countryside Magazine
Every Week

Farm and Fireside
Garden Magazine
Good Housekeeping
Harper's Bazar
Harper's Magazine
Hearth's
House and Garden
Independent
Judge
Leslie's Weekly

Literary Digest
McCall's
Metropolitan
Mother's Magazine
National Geographic
Outlook
Popular
Red Cross Magazine
Review of Reviews
St. Nicholas

Scribner's
Short Stories
Smith's
Something-To-Do
Sunset
To-day's Housewife
Vanity Fair
Vogue
Woman's Home Companion
World's Work

DIAMONDS ON EASY PAYMENTS ONLY

LOOK **\$2.50** A MONTH



No Security. No Red Tape. Buy "Direct." Save Money. Wear Diamond as You Pay.

SEE DIAMOND FIRST

Sent for inspection without one penny down. We trust you absolutely. Examine diamond at your leisure—wear it 30 days FREE. Send it back at our expense if not satisfactory. You are not out a penny. Don't pay three or four dealers' profits. We sell "Direct" from diamond cutter to YOU at practically European prices. Save ONE-THIRD to ONE-HALF of your money.

FREE DIAMOND ART BOOK SEND FOR IT TODAY

Read the TRUTH about Diamonds. Read how to judge a good diamond, read about our splendid BUY BACK offer at full value. Read our EASY PAYMENT PLAN arranged to suit you.

Every Diamond Guaranteed

Money put in a diamond is saved and forms one of the best investments on earth. Begin saving NOW. Write today for FREE booklet of diamonds and high grade diamond jewelry.

Also Send for our FREE Watch Book

SANTA FE WATCH CO.

Dept. 476 TOPEKA, KAN.

The Burlington Smashes

Mail the Coupon TODAY for Free Watch Book

All Watch Competition Look!



21 Ruby and Sapphire Jewels—Adjusted to the second—Adjusted to temperature—Adjusted to isochronism—Adjusted to position—65 year gold strata case—Genuine Montgomery Railroad Dial—New ideas in Thin Cases.

Every fighting vessel in the U. S. Navy has the Burlington Watch aboard. This includes every torpedo boat—every submarine as well as the big Dreadnoughts. Some have over 300 Burlingtons aboard.

\$2.50 A Month

Only

And all of this for \$2.50 — only \$2.50 per month—a great reduction in watch price—direct to you—positively the exact prices the wholesale dealer would have to pay. Think of the high-grade, guaranteed watch we offer here at such a remarkable price. And if you wish, you may pay this price at the rate of only \$2.50 a month. Indeed, the days of exorbitant watch prices have passed

See It First!

You don't pay a cent to anybody until you see the watch. You don't buy a Burlington watch without seeing it. Look at the splendid beauty of the watch itself. Thin model, handsomely shaped—aristocratic in every line. Then look at the work! There you will see the masterpiece of watch makers skill. A timepiece adjusted to positions, temperature and isochronism.

Free Watch Book

Get the Burlington Watch Book by sending this coupon now. You will know a lot more about watch buying when you read it. You will be able to "steer clear" of the over-priced watches which are no better. Send the coupon today for the book and our offer.

Free Watch Book Coupon

Burlington Watch Co. 19th St. and Marshall Blvd. Dept. 1144 Chicago, Ill.

Please send me (without obligations and prepaid) your free book on watches with full explanation of your cash or \$2.50 a month offer on the Burlington Watch.

Burlington Watch Co.
19th St. & Marshall Blvd., Dept. 1144 Chicago

Name.....

Address.....

Tobacco Habit BANISHED in 48 to 72 Hours



No craving for tobacco in any form when you begin taking Tobacco Redeemer. Don't try to quit the tobacco habit unaided. It's a losing fight against heavy odds and means a serious shock to the nervous system. Let the tobacco habit quit YOU. It will quit you, if you will just take Tobacco Redeemer, according to directions for two or three days. It is a most marvelously quick and thoroughly reliable remedy for the tobacco habit.

Not a Substitute

Tobacco Redeemer contains no habit-forming drugs of any kind. It is in no sense a substitute for tobacco. After finishing the treatment you have absolutely no desire to use tobacco again or to continue the use of the remedy. It makes not a particle of difference how long you have been using tobacco, how much you use or in what form you use it—whether you smoke cigars, cigarettes, pipe, chew plug or fine cut or use snuff, Tobacco Redeemer will positively banish every trace of desire in from 48 to 72 hours. This we absolutely guarantee in every case or money refunded.

Write today for our free booklet showing the deadly effect of tobacco upon the human system and positive proof that Tobacco Redeemer will quickly free you of the habit.

Newell Pharmacal Company, Dept. 570 St. Louis, Mo.



DEAF?

Here's
Free Proof
that

YOU CAN HEAR!

You see the wonderful improved Acousticon has now enabled 276,000 deaf people to hear. We are sure it will do the same for you; are so absolutely certain of it that we are eager to send you the


1917 Acousticon
On FREE TRIAL
No Deposit—No Expense

There is nothing you will have to do but ask for your free trial. No money to pay, no red tape, no reservations to this offer. Our confidence in the present Acousticon is so complete that we will gladly take all the risk in proving beyond any doubt that **The Joy of Hearing Can Be Yours Again!**

The Acousticon has improvements and patented features which cannot be duplicated, so no matter what you have ever tried, just ask for a free trial of the New Acousticon. You'll get it promptly, and if it doesn't make you hear, return it and you will owe us nothing—not one cent. Address

GENERAL ACOUSTIC CO.
1324 Candler Bldg., New York City


DRUMS FREE



You can learn Drumming by Mail. Real, professional orchestra drum comes with first lesson; is yours at end of first term. You pay weekly as lessons are taken. With the help of our new original and exclusive **MOVING PICTURE PHOTOGRAPHS** that analyze all beats you should soon be able to **earn money or to play dance music for home amusement.** Drum is easiest to learn; good drummers earn more than any other instrumentalists. Demanded for processions, dances, theatres, hotels; year round, everywhere. **Frank E. Dodge**, Instructor, has been 1st drummer and manager Boston Opera Orchestra, (72 members), 5 years. Write today for particulars about our wonderful Moving Picture method of instruction and our easy tuition terms.

International Cornet School 705 Federal St., Boston, Mass.

Pay As You Wish



We'll send you a genuine Lachnite Gem for 10 full days free trial. Put it to every diamond test—fire—acid—the diamond file—make it cut glass—then if you can tell it from a mined diamond, send it back at our expense. If you decide to keep it pay as you wish. Write today for new catalog.

Set in Solid Gold

Genuine Lachnite Gems keep their dazzling fire forever. The newest mountings—all kinds of jewelry. Write for new jewelry book.

HAROLD LACHMAN COMPANY,
12 N. Michigan Ave., Dept. 1145, Chicago, Ill.

SECRETS OF PITCHING

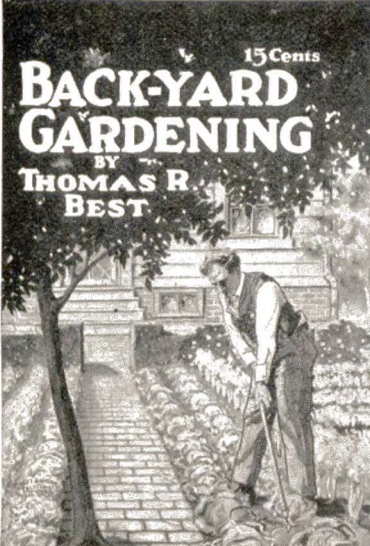
By Burt L. Standish

This book will tell you something new, no matter what you know about baseball. Every player or fan who wants to know how to make the ball accomplish all kinds of feats should own a copy. It is the best book on pitching ever published. *Profusely Illustrated.*

Price, 15c, postpaid.

STREET & SMITH, 79 Seventh Ave., NEW YORK CITY

Be a Farmer!



15 Cents

BACK-YARD GARDENING
BY **THOMAS R. BEST**

HAVE you a backyard, or vacant lot, now growing flowers, grass or weeds? If so, plant a vegetable garden and be independent. Last year there was a shortage in all crops and the demand was the greatest in history. That is why vegetables are now an expensive luxury.

Back-yard Gardening

By Thomas R. Best, has been published to help avoid another shortage in the vegetable crop. It tells what can be done with a small plot of ground; how to lay it out and plant; what to plant early and how to secure a succession of crops—and thus get double service from the same ground in one season.

Price, Fifteen Cents

From your news dealer, or sent postpaid, upon receipt of nine two-cent stamps by

STREET & SMITH, Publishers
81 Seventh Avenue, NEW YORK

Free—Six Big Issues of Investing for Profit



If you will simply send me your name. Special Introductory FREE Offer. Six fine Monthly Issues—each worth \$10 to \$100 to you.

How much do you know about the Science of Investment? Do you know the *Real Earning Power* of your money? What is the difference between the *Rental Power* and *Earning Power* of your money? Do you know how \$100 grows into \$2200?

Why you should get **Investing for Profit**: Only one man in a thousand knows the difference between the *rental* power and the *earning* power of his money. Few men know the underlying principles of incorporation. Not one wage earner in 10,000 knows how to invest his savings for profit, so he accepts a paltry 2% or 3% from his bank, while this same bank often earns from 10% to 30% or more on *his money*—or he does not know the science of investing and loses his all.

Russell Sage said: "There is a common fallacy that, while for legal advice we go to lawyers, and for medical advice we go to physicians, and for the construction of a great work, to engineers—financing is everybody's business. As a matter of fact, it is the most profound and complicated of them all."

So let me give you just a glimpse of the valuable investment information you will get in my six big issues, "The Little Schoolmaster of the Science of Investment," a guide to money-making:

- | | |
|---|---|
| The Science of Investment. | Capital Is Looking for a Job. |
| The Root and Branch of the Investment Tree. | The REAL Earning Power of Your Money. |
| How to Judge a Business Enterprise. | Investment Securities Are Not Investment Opportunities. |
| Where New Capital Put Into a Corporation Really Goes. | The Actual Possibilities of Intelligent Investment. |
| "Watering"—Its Significance. | The Capitalization of Genius and of Opportunity. |
| Idle Money vs. Active Money. | |

Wait till you see a good thing—but don't wait till everyone sees it. You will then be too late. Never was a time more auspicious for a public campaign of education on the logic of true investment. A revolution in the financial world is now going on—to the profit of the small investor.

You are now face to face with your opportunity—if you have the courage to enter the open gate to the road of fortune.

I believe you will find much interest in reading my six issues of **Investing for Profit**. From

cover to cover it contains the fundamental principles of investment it has taken a lifetime to gather—from my own experience and from every available authoritative original source of information.

If You Can Save \$5 a Month or More

Don't invest a dollar in anything anywhere until you have read my wonderful magazine. **Investing for Profit** is for the man who intends to invest any money, however small, or who can save \$5 or more per month, but who has not as yet learned the art of investing for profit. Learn how \$100 grows into \$2200.

Use This Coupon for the Six Issues and Financial Advice FREE

If you know how to invest your savings—if you know all about the proposition in which you are about to invest your hard-earned savings—you need no advice. But if you don't, if there is a single doubt or misgiving in your mind—I shall be pleased to answer any inquiries you may make, or furnish any information I can regarding the art of saving and making money through wise investment.

So sign and mail this coupon now. Get "Investing for Profit" **FREE** for six months. Ask me to put you on my mailing list for Free Financial Advice. Don't put this off. It means too much to you now and in the future. Sign and mail this coupon at once.

H. L. BARBER, Publisher, Chicago

Mail This Now



H. L. BARBER, Publisher
423-18 W. Jackson Blvd., Chicago



Please send me **FREE** "Investing for Profit" for six months. Put me on your mailing list for Free Advice on Investments.

Name

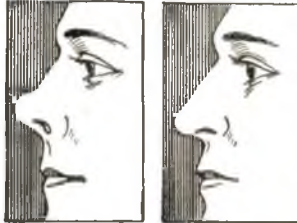
Address

IN THIS DAY AND AGE attention to your appearance is an absolute necessity if you expect to make the most out of life. Not only should you wish to appear as attractive as possible for your own self-satisfaction, which is alone well worth your efforts, but you will find the world in general judging you greatly, if not wholly, by your "looks," therefore it pays to "look your best" at all times. Permit no one to see you looking otherwise; it will injure your welfare! Upon the impression you constantly make rests the failure or success of your life. Which is to be your ultimate destiny! My new **Nose-Shaper "Traxos"** (Model 22) corrects now ill-shaped noses without operation, quickly, safely and permanently. Is pleasant and does not interfere with one's daily occupation, being worn at night.

Write today for free booklet, which tells you how to correct ill-shaped noses without cost if not satisfactory.

M. TRILETY, Face Specialist, 791 Ackerman Bldg., Binghamton, N. Y.

YOU HAVE A BEAUTIFUL FACE But Your Nose?



Before After

WHAT OTHERS HAVE TO SAY—

Dr. F. D. G. writes and says that after he had used it for two weeks he thinks that "Traxos 22" is fine and will recommend it to his patrons.

Mrs. K. W. says that she is getting fine results and is very much elated over the Nose-Shaper.

Miss C. R.—After using my "Traxos 22" for only two weeks sees a wonderful improvement in the shape of her nose.

Mr. P. writes Your Nose-Shaper is doing the work and I am certainly pleased with it; will recommend it to my friends.

Mr. J. B. is very pleased with the Nose-Shaper and his nose looks much better.



Factory to Rider SAVES YOU MONEY

Buy direct and save \$10 to \$20 on a bicycle. **RANGER BICYCLES** now come in 44 styles, colors and sizes. Greatly improved; prices reduced. Other reliable models \$15.75 up. **WE DELIVER FREE to you on approval and 30 days' trial and riding test.**

Our big **FREE** catalog shows everything new in bicycles and sundries. Write for it. **TIRES** lamps, wheels, parts and supplies at half usual prices.

Do not buy a bicycle, tires, or sundries until you get our wonderful new offers, low prices and liberal terms. A postal brings everything.

MEAD CYCLE COMPANY
Dept. H-38 Chicago

Mrs. Graham's HAIR RESTORER

RESTORES GRAY HAIR to its natural color in a few days

TRIAL BOTTLE 10¢

Perfectly harmless—easily applied—will not stain the skin or scalp. Positively sure in its results. Makes the hair rich and glossy. Price \$1. Write for **FREE** Book, "Aids To Beauty."

MRS. GERVAISE GRAHAM
37 W. Illinois Street, Chicago, Ill.

"DON'T SHOUT"

"I hear you. I can hear now as well as anybody. 'How?' With the **MORLEY PHONE**. I've a pair in my ears now, but they are invisible. I would not know I had them in, myself, only that I hear all right.

The Morley Phone for the **DEAF**

is to the ears what glasses are to the eyes. Invisible, comfortable, weightless and harmless. Anyone can adjust it."

Over one hundred thousand sold. Write for booklet and testimonials.

THE MORLEY CO.,
Dept. 758, Perry Bldg., Philadelphia

BOUND VOLUMES of POPULAR MAGAZINE now ready. **PRICE \$3.00 per volume.** Address Subscription Department. **STREET & SMITH, 79-89 Seventh Avenue, NEW YORK CITY**

GET RID OF THAT FAT

FREE TRIAL TREATMENT

Sent on request. Ask for my "pay-when-reduced" offer. My treatment has reduced at the rate of a pound a day. No dieting, no exercise, absolutely safe and sure method. Let me send you proof at my expense.

DR. R. NEWMAN, Licensed Physician,
State New York. 286 Fifth Avenue, New York. Desk C-46

TYPEWRITERS

\$10 and Up. All Makes Save \$25 to \$50 on rebuilt at the factory by the well known "Young Process." Sold for low cash—instalments or rented. Rental applies on purchase price. Write for full details and guarantee. Free trial.

Young Typewriter Co., Dept. 177, Chicago

DEAFNESS IS MISERY

I know because I was Deaf and had **Head Noises** for over 30 years. My invisible **Anti-septic Ear Drums** restored my hearing and stopped **Head Noises**, and will do it for you. They are **Tiny Megaphones**. Cannot be seen when worn. Easy to put in, easy to take out. Are "Unseen Comforts." Inexpensive. Write for **Booklet** and my **sworn statement** of how I recovered my hearing.

A. O. LEONARD
Suite 259, 150 6th Ave., N. Y. City

DIAMONDS ON CREDIT

BEAUTIFUL DIAMONDS SENT ON APPROVAL

NO MONEY DOWN. Order any diamond from our catalogue; we will send it, all charges paid. After you have made a thorough examination and are satisfied as to the quality and value, pay 20 per cent of the price and only 10 per cent per month thereafter. If not satisfactory, return it at our expense. Don't pay a cent until you are satisfied. Certificate furnished guaranteeing the quality of every diamond. Your diamond purchased from us can be exchanged at a yearly increased value of 1 1/2 per cent on a larger purchase. Own a genuine Diamond. Send for our catalogue **De Luxe No. 17.** It's free. **L. W. SWEET & CO., Inc., 2 and 4 Maiden Lane, New York City**

Former United States Senator Mason

Pioneer in Pure Food and Drug Legislation, Father of Rural Free Delivery System

Takes Nuxated Iron

to obtain renewed strength, power and endurance after the hardest fought political campaign of his life in which he was elected Congressman from the State of Illinois. The results he obtained from taking Iron were so surprising that

SENATOR MASON NOW SAYS

Nuxated Iron should be made known to every nervous, run down, anaemic man, woman and child.

Opinion of Doctor Howard James, late of United States Public Health Service who has prescribed and thoroughly tested Nuxated Iron in his own private practice.

WHAT SENATOR MASON SAYS:

"I have often said I would never recommend medicine of any kind. I believe that the doctor's place. However, after the hardest political campaign of my life, without a chance for a vacation, I had been starting to court every morning with that horrible tired feeling one cannot describe. I was advised to try Nuxated Iron. As a pioneer in the pure food and drug legislation, I was at first loath to try an advertised remedy, but after advising with one of my medical friends, I gave it a test. The results have been so beneficial in my own case I made up my mind to let my friends know about it, and you are at liberty to publish this statement if you so desire. I am now sixty-five years of age, and I feel that a remedy which will build up the strength and increase the power of endurance of a man of my age should be known to every nervous, run-down anaemic man, woman and child."

Senator Mason's statement in regard to Nuxated Iron was shown to several physicians who were requested to give their opinions thereon.

Dr. Howard James, late of the United States Public Health Service, said:

"Senator Mason is to be commended on handing out this statement on Nuxated Iron for public print. There is nothing like organic iron—Nuxated Iron—to give increased strength, snap, vigor, and staying power. It enriches the blood, brings roses to the cheeks of women and is an unfailing source of renewed vitality, endurance and power for men who burn up too rapidly their nervous energy in the strenuous strain of the great business competition of the day."

Dr. E. Sauer, a Boston physician who has studied abroad in great European medical institutions, said: "Senator Mason is right. As I have said a hundred times over, organic iron is the greatest of all strength builders."

"Not long ago a man came to me who was nearly half a century old and asked me to give him a preliminary examination for life insurance. I was astonished to find him with the blood pressure of a boy of twenty and as full of vigor, vim and vitality as a young man; in fact, a young man he really was, notwithstanding his age. The secret, he said, was taking organic iron—Nuxated Iron had filled him with renewed life. At thirty he was in bad health; at forty-six he was care-worn and nearly all in. Now at fifty, after taking Nuxated Iron, a miracle of vitality and his face beaming with the buoyancy of youth."

"Iron is absolutely necessary to enable your blood to change food into living tissue. Without it, no matter how much or what you eat, your food merely passes through you without doing you any good. You don't get the strength out of it, and as a consequence you become weak, pale and sickly looking, just like a plant trying to grow in a soil deficient in iron. If you are not strong or well, you owe it to yourself to make the following test: See how long you can work or how far you can walk without becoming tired. Next, take two five-grain tablets of ordinary nuxated iron three times per day after meals for two weeks. Then test your strength again, and see how much you have gained. I have seen dozens of nervous, run-down people who were ailing all the while double their strength and endurance and entirely rid themselves of all symptoms of dyspepsia. Liver and other troubles in from ten to fourteen days' time simply by taking iron in the proper form. And this, after they had in some cases been doctoring for months

without obtaining any benefit. But don't take the old forms of reduced iron, iron acetate or tincture of iron simply to save a few cents. The iron demanded by Mother Nature for the red coloring matter in the blood of her children is, alas! not that kind of iron. You must take iron in a form that can be easily absorbed and assimilated to do you any good, otherwise it may prove worse than useless.

Dr. Schuyler C. Jacques, Visiting Surgeon of St. Elizabeth's Hospital, New York City, said: "I have never before given out any medical information or advice for publication, as I ordinarily do not believe in it. But in the case of Nuxated Iron I feel I would be remiss in my duty not to mention it. I have taken it myself and given it to my patients with most surprising and satisfactory results. And those who wish quickly to increase their strength, power and endurance will find it a most remarkable and wonderfully effective remedy."



Former United States Senator Wm. E. Mason, recently elected Member of the U. S. Congress from Illinois

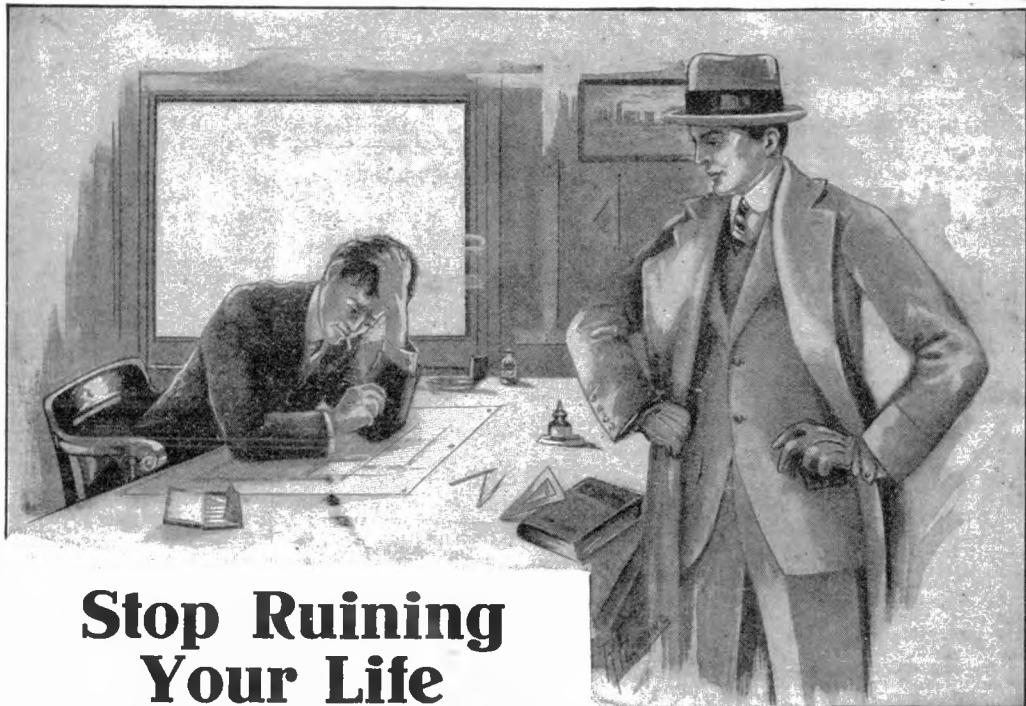
Senator Mason's championship of Pure Food and Drugs legislation, his fight for the rural free delivery system, and his strong advocacy of all bills favoring labor and the rights of the masses as against trusts and combines, made him a national figure at Washington and endeared him to the hearts of the working man and the great masses of people throughout the United States. Senator Mason has the distinction of being one of the really big men of the nation. His strong endorsement of Nuxated Iron must convince any intelligent thinking reader that it must be a preparation of very great merit and one which the Senator feels is bound to be of great value to the masses of people everywhere, otherwise he could not afford to lend his name to it, especially after his strong advocacy of pure food and drugs legislation.

Since Nuxated Iron has obtained such an enormous sale—over three million people using it annually—other iron preparations are recommended as a substitute for it. The reader should remember that there is a vast difference between ordinary metallic iron and the organic iron contained in Nuxated Iron, therefore always insist on having Nuxated Iron as recommended by Dr. Howard James, late of the United States Public Health Service; Dr. Schuyler C. Jacques, Visiting Surgeon of St. Elizabeth's Hospital, New York, and other physicians.

NOTE—Nuxated Iron which is prescribed and recommended above by physicians in such a great variety of cases, is not a patent medicine nor secret remedy, but one which is well known to druggists and whose iron constituents are widely prescribed by eminent physicians both in Europe and America. Unlike the older inorganic iron products it is easily assimilated, does not injure the teeth, make them black, nor upset the stomach; on the contrary, it is a most potent remedy in nearly all forms of indigestion as well as for nervous, run-down conditions. The manufacturers have such great confidence in nuxated iron that they offer to forfeit \$100.00 to any charitable institution if they cannot take any man or woman under 60 who lacks iron, and increase their strength 200 per cent or over in four weeks' time, provided they have no serious organic trouble. They also offer to refund your money if it does not at least double your strength and endurance in ten days' time. It is dispensed by all good druggists.

TOBACCO HABIT

Easily Conquered in 3 Days



Stop Ruining Your Life

Would You Like to Quit Tobacco Quickly and Easily and Enjoy Yourself a Thousand Times Better While in Robust Health?

Why continue to commit slow suicide when you can live a really contented life, if you only get your body and nerves right? It is unsafe and torturing to attempt to rid yourself of tobacco by suddenly stopping with "will-power"—don't do it. The correct way is to eliminate nicotine poison from the system, and genuinely overcome the craving.

Tobacco is poisonous and seriously injures health in several ways, causing such disorders as nervous dyspepsia, sleeplessness, gas belching, gnawing, or other uncomfortable sensation in stomach; constipation, headache, weak eyes, loss of vigor, red spots on skin, throat irritation, catarrh, asthma, bronchitis, heart failure, melancholy, lung trouble, impure (poisoned) blood, heartburn, torpid liver, loss of appetite, bad teeth, foul breath, lassitude, lack of ambition, weakening and falling out of hair and many other disorders.

Overcome that peculiar nervousness and craving for cigarettes, cigars, pipe, chewing tobacco, or snuff.

Here is an opportunity to receive **FREE** a carefully compiled treatise on the subject, containing interesting and valuable information that you should be glad to learn about. This book tells all about the renowned **THREE DAYS' METHOD** by which thousands and thousands saved themselves from the life-wrecking tobacco habit. Full particulars, including the book on tobacco and snuff habit, will be mailed **FREE TO YOU**, in plain wrapper, postpaid. All you need do is merely **REQUEST IT**. A postcard will do. Address

FREE

EDWARD J. WOODS, 1460 C, Station E, NEW YORK, N. Y.

NOTE—To those who are injuring their health, making themselves nervous, dyspeptic, etc., by excessive use of cigarettes, cigars, pipe, snuff or chewing tobacco—here is your opportunity quickly and easily to become your own master.

The Sealed Package

The Enclosed Blade

The Protected Edge

No Need to Irritate Your Skin

For a pleasant shave use hot water, a good shaving soap, rub lather in well—shave with the **Gem Damaskeene Blades**, made of highest grade Damascus steel, well tempered, ground and honed to perfection, they hold their edge indefinitely—a boon to even the tenderest skin—an enemy of the toughest beard. In sealed waxed paper wrapped packet—each blade and blade edge protected. **Seven blades for 35c.**



To get the right slant on self shaving you must get the right slant on your blade—that means a **GEM**. Outfit includes razor complete with seven **Gem Damaskeene Blades**, shaving and stropping handle, in handsome case **\$1.00**

Dealers Everywhere
Gem Cutlery Co., Inc.
NEW YORK

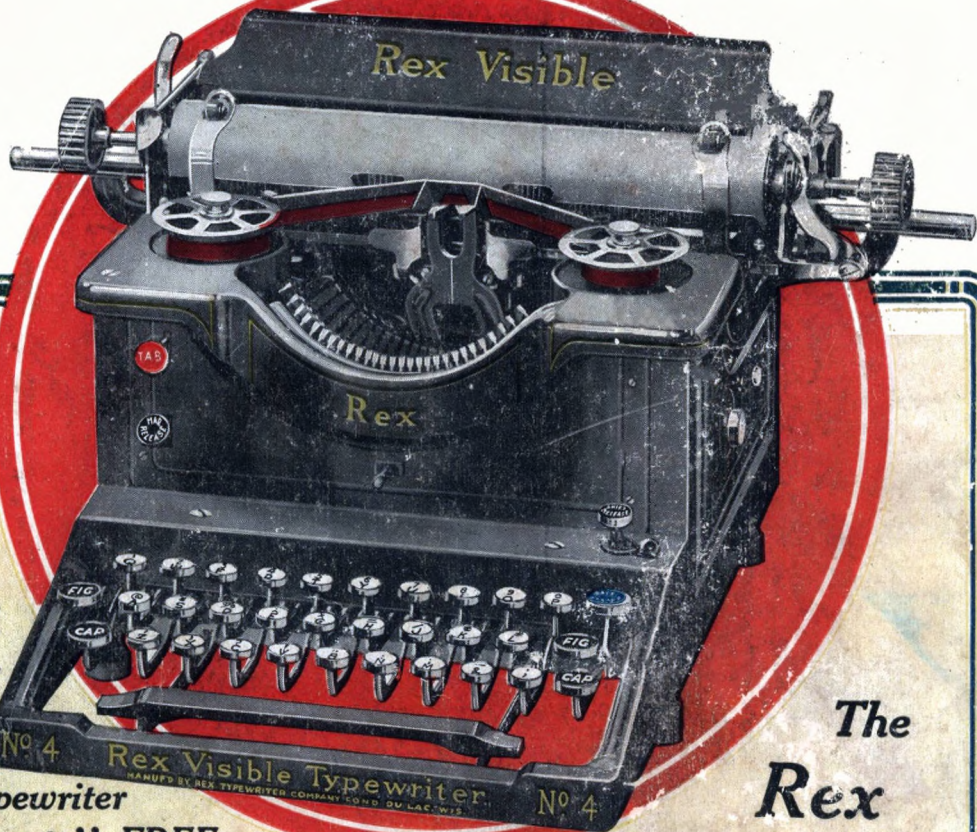
Canadian Branch:
591 St. Catherine St., W.
Montreal

The Blade Itself

The Sign of
"The Best Safety"



GEM
\$1.00



Mail
Cou-
pon
for
"Typewriter
Secrets" FREE

The
Rex

NOW \$200

ONLY \$2.00 down now puts the brand new Rex typewriter in your possession. Then, small monthly payments. Write for "Typewriter Secrets" and all about this great, new Rex offer. The typewriter which was built because the world's greatest merchandise house wanted a better machine. Absolutely the finest typewriter which can be made. Guaranteed for ten years. (Other typewriters guaranteed for only one year.) Sent anywhere on trial. See it—use it before you make up your mind.

With the brand new Rex, we have smashed typewriter prices. This is a \$100 machine if ever a typewriter was; but we have put the price so low we've made them ~~go~~. A startling, revolutionary figure! Don't think of fooling around with a second-hand, rebuilt typewriter when you can have the new Rex (with every good point of every machine and many exclusive points of its own) at a price which will utterly astound you. Our ten year guarantee should convince you of the supreme excellence of this machine. Used now by leading merchants, banks, railroads and professional men.

Rex Typewriter Co.
Dept. 9144, Steger Bldg., Chicago

Please send me your book, "Typewriter Secrets," and your offer on the Rex Typewriter. I assume no obligations in sending this coupon.

**Mail the Coupon
For Free Book!—**

Find out about our amazing typewriter price-smashing. Get "Typewriter Secrets." A book which has set them all on edge. If you want a \$100 typewriter and want it proved to you that it IS a \$100 typewriter, and want it at a price you won't believe possible until you read how we do it—send this coupon. Get our free book. Don't delay. Mail the coupon now.

Dept. 9144
Rex Typewriter Co. Steger Building Chicago

Name.....

Address.....